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POINT

Communism failed to create *esprit de corps* which is the prime requisite of making up a nation. The current ethnic crises will merely add to the past nation-building failures

CHAOS THAT'S NOT THE FATHER A REVOLUTION

It lacks leadership or a desire as well foreign — to resist because a leadership and to not stop a flood nor serve to

It is a tiny country as compared to Russia that has emerged out of the Soviet Union. Moldovans feel that they have "picked on the small" in order to crush it and re-establish power".

Crises have grown in South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh — smaller than Moldova. On the South Ossetians want to join North Ossetia which is part of Georgia. It is an innocent desire as far as the Ossetians are concerned, but the Ossetians draw attention to the fact that they are expressing similar desire to the Ossetians in South Ossetia, that's a problem with Georgia. Why? The answer is obvious. However, since South Ossetians have condemned the accord between the Georgian dictator Eduard Shevardnadze and Yeltsin to send "peacekeepers" to South Ossetia, in the long run, the pact is likely to end on both sides as it happened in South Ossetia.

Still, the Yeltsin-Shevardnadze pact is condemned only by the "northerners"; "northerner kin" are silent on the issue, although they were present in the Black Sea region of Dagomys where the pact was signed.

The temporarily dormant crisis is continuing in the Crimea which wants to join the Ukraine.

It is the oldest manifestation of ethnic disintegration. Armenia annexed this enclave inside Azerbaijan unless it conquers part of Azerbaijan. That means an all-out war. The rapidly deteriorating international situation where growing lawlessness is the order of the day, a war between Armenia and Azerbaijan is inevitable.

deposed president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, tried in vain to oust Shevardnadze this week.

This is not the only example of popular dissatisfaction with what is going on. Azerbaijan president Ayaz Mutalibov had to quit under popular discontent, making room for popular election of Abulfaz Elchibey. Almost at the same time, mass displeasure was demonstrated in Tajikistan against President Rakhmon Nabiyev, who however, succeeded in maintaining himself as head of the state.

If Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia are still not polluted politically by the dust raised by the collapse of the Soviet Union, it's no guarantee that a similar phenomenon will not repeat itself elsewhere. That is what the Russians, more than any other independent state of the former country, need to be worried about.

From what's happening in Moldova today, most of the former constituents of the Soviet Union are justified in fearing that Russia is now set on the czarist course of expansion. After all, President George Bush has already likened Yeltsin to Peter the Great, the czar who had visualised and planned the Russian expansion long before Carl Marx was born to develop the theory of communist expansion.

The two theories of expansionism were combined meticulously by the disciples of Lenin, and today Yeltsin seems interested in projecting himself as the newest graduate of both the theoretically antagonist schools.

As Moldova was burning with the fire stoked by its ethnic Russians, Yeltsin hurried to sign an accord with his greatest adversary, Ukraine's President Leonid Kravchuk, on sharing out the former Soviet Black Sea fleet. And the deft politician in him has definitely won a

former had first betrayed Gorbachev as Soviet foreign minister, and since he sided openly with Yeltsin when hardliners tried to resuscitate communism then dying in the arms of Gorbachev.

Yeltsin knows his limits. At the moment he cannot afford to have several, almost equally serious, secessionist problems all around Russia. That will alarm many unsuspecting peoples. Moreover, the greater danger is inside Russia, which like the dead Soviet Union is itself a nation of several nations and any suspicion that Russia is encouraging secessionist movements elsewhere in the name of Slavic-Russian ethnicity, would inflame Russia's ethnic minorities.

Driven to the wall, a frustrated Moldovan President Mircea Snegur said earlier this week that Moldova and Russia were "effectively at war". This statement combined with reports that the 14th army of the former Soviet Union, stationed in Moldova, is taking active part in the battles on the side of the separatist Russians in Dnestr region tells more than what Snegur has pronounced. And this is so in spite of the clean certificate US Secretary of State James Baker gave Russia that it "does not control" conventional forces in Moldova, and despite assertion of Russian Defence Ministry spokesman Nikolai Medvedev that "accusations of aggression" by the 14th army are "groundless", though admitting that the 14th army troops "acted on their own, without any orders from the command".

In Dnestr, it seems Moscow is taking the pulse of those independent republics which have ethnic Slavic-Russians minorities.

In short, these are the fruits the Russianisation — like today's Israelisation — of the lands of others. Attempts to create a greater Russia in the czarist tra-

The autonomy trap

There's a dangerous notion at the moment in the political air; and it could eventually, some months or years down the road, lead to political disaster.

It's a notion first propagated by many American officials themselves looking for a little quick relief, and also by a lot of American Jews desperate to find some way to defuse US-Israeli tensions and the polarisation within their own ranks.

And it's a notion also endorsed — in some cases overtly, in many cases covertly — by a considerable number of Israelis who think that they can themselves get off the political hook on which their country hangs at the moment with a few more clever political deceptions and semantic twists of hand.

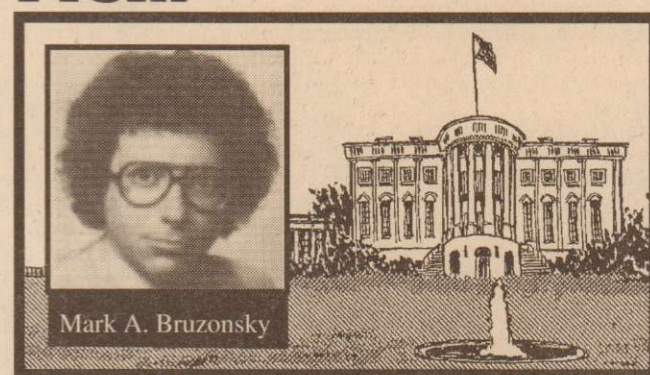
And, sad to say, it's a notion that some Arabs have themselves bought into. For some Arabs it seems — especially those who have bought into the American dream and see Washington as stability guarantor for their regimes — continue to place their hopes in the idea that if just something (even something minor and tangential) can at least be achieved now in the "peace talks" then somehow there's more hope for more progress in the future.

Now that Yitzhak Rabin and the Labour Party are back in power in Israel, this dangerous notion — the "autonomy" concept — has taken on a momentum that may be difficult to prevent; even if in the end the rail on which today's Mid-east political trains are moving leads to a cliff.

Of course in reality this is the very same Rabin as in "break their bones" and "iron fist" slogans attached to him quite recently actually when he was Yitzhak Shamir's Defence Minister in charge of brutalising the Palestinians into submission. But political moods have a way of making a lot of people forget the past substituting a lot of prayers and hopes in a process that minimises realities.

So here's the rub of the historic moment. The long-touted "autonomy trap" may be about to be sprung. And the chances that such Bantustanisation of the Palestinians will lead to a real and just peace rather than to a temporary fix that will in the end result in even more virulent future eruptions may be far slimmer than many are today prepared to admit.

From

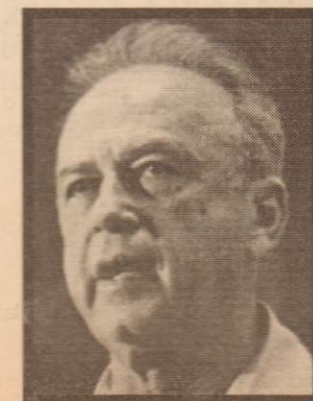


Mark A. Bruzonsky

Washington

In reality this is the very same Rabin as in 'break their bones' and 'iron fist' slogans attached to him quite recently actually when he was Shamir's defence minister in charge of brutalising the Palestinians into submission

Baker has been the travelling salesman who is primarily responsible for today's situation, creating what seems like the inextricable movement in the direction of a false autonomy and a Camp David II-type deal



many Arabs who cooperated with Washington are even more of this opinion.

Since the Americans were not willing to confront the Israelis and bring about the two-state settlement so much of the world has advocated for so long, something of a lesser nature was clearly called for and had to be attempted.

And by way of note at this point, it's only fair to add here

determination, and the PLO. How convenient!

Indeed, by the time sweet-talking Baker had finished, the Arabs (Palestinian aristocrats in the lead), had agreed to go first to Madrid and then into an endless series of rather numbing "talks" and "dialogues" even while the Israelis kept building illegal settlements (actually escalating their pace!) and even while the Israelis insisted on

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ar between Ar-
expected to be
ree wars Serbia
her against Slo-
a-Herzegovina.
ies are far from
Georgia as sup-
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met Soviet Black Sea fleet. This im-
politician in him has definitely won a
new friend as well as a moratorium on
that hot front.

And when South Ossetians were dy-
ing, Yeltsin rushed to sign another
agreement with Shevardnadze, chiefly
because Shevardnadze happens to be
close to Yeltsin since the days when the

create a greater Russia in the czarist tra-
dition, will throw the whole former So-
viet Union — including Russia — into
a turmoil of huge dimensions. Then the
new Peter the Great or his political de-
scendants will prove to be greater head-
ache for the United States or its political
descendants than any they can visualise.

prepared to admit.

At the same time that Nelson
Mandela leads the Blacks of
South Africa with a diplomati-
cally nuanced, sophisticated,
yet tough but ultimately com-
promising and conciliatory
manner, the Palestinians con-
duct themselves with far more
political naivete constantly al-
lowing themselves to be taken
in by rhetorical flourishes,
grand promises, and political
illusions. Ah, if only there were
a Palestinian version of Man-
dela!

This dichotomy is far more
than just a difference in style.
It's more a divergence of tem-
perament and sophistication.
It's a difference between what
might be termed today's Arab
establishment collective per-
sonality — one of submission
and accommodation — and the
contemporary Black African
collective personality — one of
rebellion and assertiveness.

US Secretary of State James
Baker has of course been the
travelling salesman who is pri-
marily responsible for having
brought about today's situation
— who has created what seems
like the inextricable movement
in the direction of what in the
end is likely to be a false au-
tonomy and a Camp David II-
type deal.

Politicians look for short-
term fixes; statesmen for just,
lasting solutions. And today's
world — not only in Washing-
ton but throughout Mid-eastern
capitals as well — is full of
politicians.

Baker's primary motivation
has been far more fear that
things could get out of hand
throughout the Mid-east region
rather than the far more serious
and difficult purpose of honest-
ly pursuing a true and just
peace.

For in the wake of America's
unprecedented military inter-
vention in Mid-eastern affairs
and the still continuing de-
struction of Iraq, the Americans
clearly concluded that it was
vital to somehow get the Pal-
estinian monkey off their back
— at least for a while. And

point, it's only fair to add here
that even had the Americans
decided that the time had come
to impose an Arab-Israeli peace
and bring about Palestinian as
well as Israeli self-
determination, it's not likely
the Bush administration had ei-
ther the gumption or the ability
to actually accomplish such a
major historic step. Simply put,
competing centres of political
power, mostly within the US
itself, would have fought Bush
and Baker all the way; and in
the end it is they rather than the
administration that would have
in all probably prevailed.

Moreover, the Israelis have
far too much American dirty
linen they've been accu-
mulating for just such a pos-
sible political confrontation —
and this reality as well con-
tinually acts as a major de-
terrent against such coercive
moves on the part of Washing-
ton, especially George Bush's
Washington which inherited
not only its own skeletons but
that of the preceding ad-
ministration as well.

And so, it fell on the shoul-
ders of the American Secretary
of State, James Baker, to sell
some other course of action.
And that he did, masterfully,
getting one concession after
another from the Arab side
while pretending at times that
the Israelis too were giving
something important. It was the
context, of course, which ac-
counted for James Baker's in-
cessant shuttling back and forth
to the Mid-east last year. And in
the end Baker did in fact bring
about something of a political
coup for which one would have
thought the Israelis would have
been much more grateful than
they have been. Or is it all
something of a charade, any-
way?

Not only was the very United
Nations that had sanctioned the
war against Iraq and which
been intimately involved with
the Palestinian issue since its
birth completely shoved out of
the way; but so were the very
notions of international law,
international conference, self-

“approving the Palestinian ne-
gotiators in addition to their
own”.

And this brings us to this
moment with the Israeli Labour
Party — the very party that
brought us all today's problems
in the first place — somehow
looking good after all these
years of the Likud. But this is
definitely a case where looks
are most deceiving. The Li-
kud's style is that of out-front
intransigent going way back to
the days of Jabotinsky and the
Stern Gang; whereas Labour
has a long history of similar
policies more nicely discussed,
going way back to Ben-Gurion
and the Palmach.

Autonomy as envisioned by
a majority in the Israeli es-
tablishment, and that includes
the main segments of both the
Likud and the Labour parties, is
not only thought to be the pos-
sible death-knell for Palestinian
nationalism but possibly as well
the opening bell for a fracturing
of Palestinian society and an
eventual Palestinian civil war.

Once into the autonomy trap
— so the thinking goes — the
Palestinians may well find that
they have no way out. And by
the time another five or ten
years have passed, the possibil-
ity that the Palestinians can rise
again to fight may have been
lost forever, plus the occupied
territories will be even more ir-
revocably tied to an Israel
swollen further by Soviet im-
migrants.

True enough, others see the
“autonomy” concept through
different lenses; including good
friends of mine. But for what
it's worth I offer these words of
warning from one who truly
hopes that an honest and just
way will be found, before it is
too late, for both Israeli and
Palestinian national aspirations
to flourish ... as should have
been the case long ago.

But then as now, I fear, by
failing to grapple with the basic
questions and offering instead
false cures, the ground is only
being laid for even more misery
and conflict in years still ahead.

NURAY BAMANIE

Special to Saudi Gazette

BREAK

BY

LOGUE

state enterprises and auton-
omy.

At the outset, it's mainly eco-
nomic problems that have
created the recent difficulties.
Economic planning under
communism is responsible for
the ills the Czechs and Slovaks
are suffering from. Czechland
is richer than Slovakia and the
latter demanded a fairer treat-
ment. Now that communism
has ended, it is natural that all
ills in pre-communist societies
reappear in the scene in search
of new solutions.

Klaus was willing to discuss
these issues with Mecier so as
to avoid clashes or a violent
break up that democratic Czech
leaders are seeking. The errors
of arrogance were sure to con-
demn Czechs and Slovaks to
self-annihilating wars that des-
potic Serbs have imposed on
Yugoslavia.

How did the Czechslovak
peoples suffered together the
fascist onslaught in their ter-
ritories cannot be forgotten.
After the liberation of Czech-
oslovakia from Nazi Germany,

the Czechs and Slovaks togeth-
er returned to democracy and
chose their celebrated national
hero, Masyrick, as their leader.
This new Czechoslovakia in the
aftermath of Hitler was viewed
with envy by its neighbours,
especially the Soviet Union.
Today Czechoslovakia has to
make its independent choice
again without being pulled
down by the threatening events
around it.

The Czechs and Slovaks are
known to have stood bravely
before the Soviet tanks in 1968
to defend their independence
and popularly elected non-
communist leader, Alexander
Dubcek. They had, in fact,
never succumbed totally to
communism. Today when they
faced the challenge of break-
up, Czech and Slovak leaders
opted a better solution for the
area that would be satisfying to
both by overcoming the threat
of ethnic eruptions in their
land.

There are other minorities in
Czech-Slovak territories like
the Hungarians and the Ruth-
ians and others who may soon
begin to ask for similar rights.
But these minorities are not
oppressed as in other coun-
tries.

The split, however, may not
mean an end to cooperation and
peace between the two peoples.
In time they will need to deal
with one another as they still
do, in order to save they ideals
of peace, justice security and
democracy both of them are at-
tached to.

