



David Owen  
Not listening

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**T**O MANY PEOPLE ALIVE AND politically aware during the 1930s, what is now being planned for Bosnia-Herzegovina in the name of peace holds frightening parallels to the appeasement of dictators in the years before World War II.

This *à vu* also applies to the failure of today's international and regional institutions, which were created to protect peace and uphold guarantees against aggression.

The United Nations, Nato, the European Community, and its foremost members — such as Britain and France — have all proved as pusillanimous in face of warlords as was the League of Nations, founded with similar noble objectives after World War I.

Manchuria — invaded by Japan in 1937 — Ethiopia — invaded by Italy in 1935 — Spain, Austria, and the former Czechoslovakia were all victims of the League's indifference to honouring firmly the principles the League was formed to defend.

In the case of Ethiopia, the League even rejected the option of declaring nonrecognition of Italy's military conquest, which, as Italian records later confirmed, would have deterred

# Repeat of 1938 in 1993

By Eric Bourne

## Britain and France prepare ground for World War III

dictator Benito Mussolini. That inaction has a familiar ring today, as do Bosnian appeals to lift a Western arms embargo and reduce Serbia's massive weapons superiority.

"Non-intervention" was the name for an Anglo-French embargo against Republican Spain. "At least let us acquire arms to defend ourselves," for-

eign minister Julio Alvarez del Vayo begged the League in 1938. This appeal fell on deaf ears.

Fifty-five years later, Alija Izetbegovic eloquently urged the UN Security Council on September 8: "Defend us or let us defend ourselves!" His plea also met a cool response.

In 1939, Czechoslovakia was sac-

rificed in a direct Anglo-French appeasement deal with Adolf Hitler in Munich. With one difference of detail, the Munich deal shares many parallels with the "peace" now offered Bosnia.

Unlike today's Bosnians, the Czechs had neither part nor voice at the appeasement talks in Munich. Two Prague diplomats were on hand but were confined to their hotel, totally ignorant of how Hitler and the appeasers were redrawing their country's map. Once the deed was done, a British official "briefed" the hapless Czechs, brusquely commanding them to inform Prague and instruct their government that acceptance was expected without delay.

The Bosnians, at least, are party to the numerous "peace" talks, but are increasingly at a disadvantage.

Early on, the belligerent Serbs — authors of aggression and "ethnic cleansing" — were accorded the same footing as the leaders of a sovereign state, even though their plans for a "Greater Serbia" were long apparent. Increasingly, international mediators — above all, David Owen of the EC — have leaned towards the Serbs with Muslim interests relegated to second place.

It is now, in fact, no more a case of

aggression, but an issue of "three warring factions", as though one is not still, in fact, the aggressor, a second its accomplice, and the third their victim.

The Munich agreement contained "international guarantees" for the protection of a truncated Czechoslovakia. Six months later, Hitler was in Prague.

Similarly, international guarantees for a pocket-sized Muslim Bosnia appear in the latest Geneva draft, which would divide the former Yugoslav republic into three ethnic mini-states. But can anyone believe it will mean more than Hitler's dishonoured pledge? The draft pays lip service to reversal of "ethnic cleansing". Can anyone see that happening?

After World War II, American journalist Helen Kirkpatrick wrote a book, *The Terrible Peace*, about Munich. This Geneva draft must qualify for the same title. It will certainly contain similar seeds for future conflict.

Other Balkan leaders insist that leaving Serbia with lands taken by force — and, consequently, a weak, unstable Bosnia — cannot possibly last. Foremost in their minds is the possible spread of Serbia's ambition against themselves.—CSM

# Other Leftist Israelis challenge Peace Now

**F**ORMER ISRAELI MAJOR GENERAL, Matti Peled — who has been advocating talks with the PLO and an independent Palestinian state for nearly 20 years — startled me a few years ago when he said, in his characteristic low-key tone: "You know, Peace Now is the worst thing that ever happened to the Israeli peace movement".

Upon further conversation I learned that what Peled meant was that over the years Peace Now had managed not only to significantly coopt many of the independent peace groups in Israel but to also held them back from advocating more bold and outspoken initiatives than those in Peace Now favoured.

Even more devastatingly Peled added that by establishing Friends of Peace Now in the United States, the Israelis who made up Peace Now had also managed to coopt many American Jews. What they had done — especially with many of the more wealthy and liberal American Jews whom they had specifically targeted, Peled outlined — was to give them something with "peace" in its title and that seemed very positive surface, but which in reality was neutralising them from speaking up on their own while at the same time enlisting them in one aspect or another of the Labour Party's approach. By operating in this way, Peled ex-

plained, Peace Now drained energy and funds into its own coffers while at the same time preventing other groups from getting the backing they needed to seriously oppose Israel's relentless quest to beat the Palestinians into submission. Encouragement and resources that might have been otherwise available for groups taking much more advanced and courageous political positions — including groups to which Peled has been associated — were instead made to flow to Peace Now and its friends.

Furthermore, of course, through this mechanism of Americans Friends of Peace Now individuals and projects endorsed by the mildly Left elements in Israel's Labour Party which had always controlled Peace Now since its founding were pushed forward while effects by truly independent peace groups — especially those most outspoken in trying to end Israel's occupation of the Palestinians and bring about Israeli compliance with international law and UN resolutions — were kept ineffective.

It takes a very sophisticated understanding of the overall political situation to be able to fully appreciate what Peled has been trying to point out by discussing things in these ways. Clearly Peled's words and warnings hardly fit the image that Peace Now had managed to project over the years.

From



Washington

By putting the word "peace" in its name and by claiming to favour true mutual recognition between the Israelis and the Palestinians, much of the world media were successfully encouraged to focus on Peace Now as the leading Israeli "peace" organisation in the struggle against Israeli government intransigence.

Peace Now managed to project itself in this way not only because they had a lot of backing from Israel's powerful Labour Party but also because they purposefully created a great deal of ambiguity surrounding the details of the positions they have actually advocated.

While always purporting to be in favour of "mutual recognition" between Israel and the Palestinians, the reality is that Peace Now has always approached any discussion about Palestinian self-deter-

mination more in ways that would make any Palestinian entity an appendage of Israel rather than an independent sovereignty.

Peace Now's approach to the Palestinians has always been, in fact, far closer to the kind of autonomy long officially favoured by the Labour Party — and this is precisely what the Palestinians are now supposed to begin to implement as a result of the recent agreement made by the PLO with the current Israeli Labour government.

And when it comes to the subject of Jerusalem being the capital for both peoples, somehow Peace Now always managed to talk in riddles and circumlocutions without ever stating a clear position — quite analogous in fact of the way Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has recently been smooth-talking as the grand wizard of the peaceful new era ahead.

And so, it really didn't come as a surprise to experts like Peled, that when a Labour government came back to power last year, after so many years of Likud dominance in Israeli politics, low and behold those in the leadership of Peace Now were suddenly no longer talking the language of opposition but sounded very much like many of those in the new government.

Now the reason they sounded that way is precisely because that's what they always have been — an important appendage precisely of the Labour Party, an appendage especially useful in the United

States to raise money and support precisely to help bring back to power in Israel the heirs of David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister.

In sum then, as is so often the case these days when it comes to political matters, the realities of just who is really in the forefront of the Israeli peace movement are quite different than the popular images.

Though long ago considerably outmanoeuvred by this Labour Party alliance with Peace Now, there still are struggling Israeli groups which have always been far more progressive and far more sophisticated in both their positions and their analysis.

One example is an organisation in Jerusalem known as the Alternative Information Centre.

For many years now, AIC has been struggling to bring honest and detailed information to the attention of Israelis as well as to those worldwide who are concerned about what has really been happening within Israel and between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

As one example of these efforts, an article recently published in AIC's newsletter, *News From Within*, is of worthy of note. The article by Tikva Honig-Parnass, whose excerpts are reproduced here, is exceptionally thoughtful and provocative and deserves a careful reading.

# Rebels exposed more than what Yeltsin wished to hide

By Alver Carlson

**O**N THE BITTER AFTERMATH OF pitched street battles in Moscow, some economic analysts wonder if it might be appropriate to mourn not only the dead but also the economic disarray the crisis left behind.

Western officials are generally trying to put a brave face on the uprising that some believe came close to plunging Russia into civil war, threatening the country's effort to install market-oriented reforms.

A senior US treasury official, speaking to reporters last week on the condition he not be identified, said he believed that Russia was now in a good position to accelerate reforms.

Western diplomatic sources, too, agree the crisis cleared the way for Russian President Boris Yeltsin to push through reforms that had been stalled by the rebellious parliament and that political upheaval was not particularly surprising. "With political matters in Russian, expect



# Israeli view of bends in road to September 13

**T**HE OSLO AGREEMENT VOIDED the Madrid formula and turned the PLO into a full partner in the peace process, giving it the power to approve the American-Israeli autonomy plan and making it responsible for its implementation and management.

Not only was the greater part of the Israeli political and military establishment — including the military and the state security services — not privy to the secret Oslo negotiations during the past nine months, news of the agreement and of its signing also came as a complete surprise to the members of PLO governing bodies in Tunis and the Palestinian national leadership. The complete version of the agreement — “the declaration of principles for an interim self-government arrangement with the Palestinians” — (including the Gaza and Jericho first plan), as published in *Yediot Aharonot* on July 31, on the eve of the 11th round of talks, was the first the members of the Palestinian delegation to the talks in Washington knew of this document, which they were supposed to deliberate during the upcoming round.

The second part of this agreement stipulates the acceptance of the decision to proclaim mutual recognition: by Israel of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and by the PLO of Israel's right to exist. At first the government announced that the signing of the complete agreement on the principles (of autonomy) would come after the announcement of mutual recognition, which would be accepted by all the PLO decision-making bodies. However, in light of the difficulties which Yasser Arafat has been confronting, Israel agreed that for the time being it would be sufficient if Arafat himself would commit himself to fulfilling that condition. Israel insists that the PLO itself support the autonomy plan and even implement it here, “on the ground”.

The details of the two parts of the agreement give a picture of what appears to be an absurd scene. The Oslo agreement states that the PLC will begin, immediately after its signing, to rule over the Gaza Strip and Jericho from its seat in Jericho, and that it will receive all the authority required for self-government heretofore held by the civil administration, including responsibility for internal security, but excluding foreign affairs and external security. In the rest of the West Bank, by contrast, not all authority over internal affairs will be in Palestinian hands. Four months after the beginning of PLO rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, in January 1994, the “preliminary implementation” of autonomy will commence in the remainder of the West Bank — with part of the authority remaining in Israeli hands.

The Oslo agreement is to be in force for a five-year period, and discussion of a per-

manent settlement will begin two years after the official signing of the declaration of principles. The future of the differences in degree of authority granted to the Palestinians in Gaza and Jericho vis-a-vis the rest of the West Bank is still unclear. As Uzi Benziman states in the September 3 edition of *Ha'aretz*: “Even though the agreement states that in June of 1994 elections will be held for an autonomous council, chances are great that the negotiations on this matter will not go well, either due to disagreements over the areas of authority of the council or because the PLO finds it convenient not to hold elections so that representatives of the opposition are not elected to the council”.

Israel's agreement to mutual recognition is conditional on the PLO's declaration that Israel has a right to exist, its condemnation of the use of all forms of violence and its halting of the Intifada, and its acceptance of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and rejection of all other UN resolutions on the Palestinian question, including those regarding the right of return (of the refugees and those expelled in 1948) and various resolutions condemning Israel for acts such as the annexation of Jerusalem, etc and rejecting those clauses in the Palestinian Charter which are “against Israel”.

Many Palestinians and members of the Israeli peace camp view Israel's recognition of the PLO and its inclusion in the negotiations — including the agreement regarding autonomy and its beginning in Gaza and Jericho first — as a momentous breakthrough on the way to what appears to be the end of the historical conflict between the Palestinian people, represented by its national liberation movement, and Israel — and, some say, the Zionist movement, of which the state is the embodiment and fulfilment.

Some have also let themselves be led to viewing the clandestine contacts which gave birth to the Oslo agreement as equivalent to negotiations held in the past between colonial powers and national liberation movements like, for example, the talks which the Americans held with the Viet Cong. But in that instance, it would have been inconceivable for the Americans to set as a condition of the agreement that the Viet Cong renounce and repudiate the use of force before full US withdrawal and declare itself a political body committed not to engage in armed struggle, should the conditions of the agreement not be fully implemented.

It was likewise inconceivable that the

Viet Cong would view itself as authorised to change the principal objective of its struggle — the complete withdrawal of Vietnam's conquerors — and to agree to give up any part of Vietnam to the occupying power or its representatives.

We should not be deceived by the word “terrorism”, that Israel bandies about in an attempt to influence world public opinion. What it is actually demanding is that the PLO renounce all the legitimate means of struggle that the Palestinian people have been compelled to hang onto in their fight for freedom — and especially the Intifada. The PLO's willingness to drop that clause of the Palestinian Charter which deals with the armed struggle thus means the final eradication of strategies which formed a significant part of its identity — i.e. their legitimate right in their battle against the Zionist state of Israel, which is responsible for the dispossession of the Palestinian people of its homeland in 1948 and for the oppression of a large section of this people under the occupation since 1967.

In the case of Israel's recognition of the PLO, the words, “recognition of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people” and its expressed willingness to speak with it does not constitute recognition of the same body which up to now claimed to represent all the Palestinian people — in the territories occupied since 1967, in the refugee camps of Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, or in Diaspora, and until a few years ago, also the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.

The words of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, spoken in answer to a question on the Israeli television programme on September 1 as to why the Israeli government had changed its mind and is now carrying on negotiations with the PLO bear witness. “There has been a change in them, not us. We are not negotiating with the PLO, but only with a shadow of its former self.”

It is interesting to note the evolution which has taken place in recent years in the use of the term, “right of return” by the Israeli and Palestinian political establishment alike. A gradual process has converted it from a term referring to the right of all the expelled and refugees of the 1948 war to return to their homeland, to one applying only to those who are prevented from returning to the territories which were occupied in 1967. Israel exhibits the same stubborn refusal to recognise the right of return to within the post-1967 borders as it always has regarding return to within the 1948 borders.

According to the details of the agreement — announcement by Peres on the

TV programme Moked on September 1 — Israel is willing to let up to 200,000 Palestinians return to the autonomously-ruled area according to the principle of family reunification (and by the following day government spokespersons had already backed down from this announcement, and were speaking of only 5,000 people). The focus of Israel's opposition against allowing in even the 500,000 who are banging on the gates of 1967 Palestine, clamouring to return, is not just their number, but also the fact that the argument for their return is based on the “right of return”. These words imply recognition of a Palestinian homeland (or part of it), i.e. that the Palestinians have national — and not only personal — rights to it, and therefore also to return to it.

All we need to do to confirm this assessment is to pay attention to the words of the Labour Party representatives in the government who keep stressing their opposition to an independent Palestinian state. Even Peres, whose words — in contrast to Rabin's blunt style — are saturated with a vision of the economic blossoming awaiting Israel, allowing it to spearhead the economic “development” of the Arab World as a whole, says: “It would be a historical mistake to establish a Palestinian state”.

Similarly, even regarding the withdrawal of the Israeli military from the Gaza, Peres stated that the Israeli troops “will withdraw from the Arab communities in the Gaza Strip to ‘security zones’ within the strip, and along the international border of 1967”. In both Gaza and the West Bank, the Israeli troops “will continue to guard the Jewish settlements and will be responsible for the defence of ‘every Jew’ passing by on the roads or in any place in the territories”. In other words, the occupation army will be everywhere it is needed, and the settlements and their access roads will be under Israeli control.

There has been much talk within the Israeli peace camp this week about a “dynamic on the ground” that will inevitably bring about the evolution of autonomy into an independent Palestinian state. It is hard to see how the balance of Israeli and Palestinian forces will change during the interim period in such a way as to pressure Israel to give up the occupation and make possible an Independent Palestinian state. On the contrary, the Intifada is what brought about Israel's willingness to make any sort of political agreement, i.e. the autonomy. But from now on, the very same conditions attending the setting up of autonomy and

its “success” are precisely the ones which will weaken the Palestinians' bargaining power when the time comes for final decisions. This contention is reinforced by the detailed reasons given below for Israel's having rushed to meet with the PLO — to express willingness to recognise it and to speed up the implementation of the autonomy plan through the decision regarding Gaza and Jericho.

The first factor leading to the dramatic switch from the America-Rabin track of the peace process was the stalemate in the peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian delegation at least since the expulsion of the more than 400 Palestinian activists in December of 1992. Despite Rabin's agreement to the appointment of Faisal Husseini as head of the steering committee of the Palestinian delegation, the delegation's status with Palestinians in the occupied territories continued to deteriorate. In fact, from the very beginning, they perceived it as a body which was partially appointed by an outside element — a joint Israeli-American decision). Moreover, the dis-appointment with positions taken by the delegation brought about a serious erosion in its authority. There were signs that the call for a broad national dialogue. This call constituted a demand for the democratisation of the PLO, for an end to Arafat's one-man rule and the establishment of a collective leadership, as a probing discussion of the peace talks and the future of the Intifada. With such a mood prevailing in the Palestinian street, the delegation could not make concessions to Israel on significant issues such as Jerusalem and the settlements, and what's more, Arafat himself asked them not to do so.

The second factor leading to Rabin's political change of direction, and connected to the first, is the Intifada. The resistance to the occupation in the Gaza Strip did not subside, despite the imposition of an increased army presence for the last five months — for the purpose of hunting down resistance activists, the “wanted men”; the demolition of scores of homes with anti-tank rockets; and a dramatic rise in the number of children killed by the Israeli military.

The feeling in Israel was that Gaza was a heavy burden. The Gaza and Jericho first plan is indeed an important achievement for Israel. As Israeli military leaders have repeatedly maintained, the Intifada is not over. It could reawaken at any time, and it cannot be completely suppressed by military means. Hamas is becoming stronger in response to the desperation caused by the continuation of the occupation and oppression. Peres expressed his apprehension about this at a recent cabinet meeting. Enthusiastically explaining the reasons for recognising the PLO, he asked: “Why not talk to them? If we don't talk to them, we'll be talking to Hamas”.

This convinced Rabin to give up the Madrid formula and to get on the Oslo track — which furnished the infrastructure for direct talks with the PLO.

“unpredictable,” said one official.

But some analysts believe it is this very insecurity that in the long run may turn out to be one of Russia's biggest problems, frightening away or delaying some of the foreign investment it so badly needs.

“Business doesn't mind economic risks but it hates political risk,” said one official.

Most analysts, as well as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), believe the key to success in the long run for Russia lies with its ability to attract overseas investment. Estimates of its foreign investment needs are running from \$30 to \$50 billion a year. Russia's Economics Ministry suggests its oil industry alone needs at least \$8 billion to stabilise output, which has been falling steadily for the past five years. Oil output, second only to that of Saudi Arabia, has been hit by lack of investment in crumbling infrastructure and poor resource management. About 30,000 wells are idle.

But analysts point out that part of the problem is that it is hard for foreign investors to figure out who is authorised to sign contracts. “Does the factory operator have the power to sign an agreement, or must it be the local official, or must one go to the government in Moscow?” asks one official. Others go further, suggesting that money from governments and multilateral lending agencies is having a hard time finding a productive use. “A lot of money is being spent on consultants around Washington...who are looking into how to spend money on the environment or how to spend money on democracy,” says Harvard University economist Marshall Goldman.

For its part, the IMF is now waiting for Russian officials to come up with what steps the government is willing to take in order to complete negotiations on an additional loan of \$1.5 billion. Russian officials are trying to complete work on a final budget for this quarter and, among other avenues of financing, are exploring use of the country's pension funds as a source of money. There are questions about this approach, however, since Yeltsin officials have discovered some of the funds are missing — along with some of those who administered them.

For most investors, the next chapter in the Russian political drama — the parliamentary elections in December — will give further evidence on the stability of the country and whether more investment should be considered.

Diplomatic sources said there is some concern that Yeltsin, who now controls the country's central bank, may be pressured to back away from anti-inflationary measures in order to secure success in the elections.

Others believe that Yeltsin has made it clear that he is prepared to accelerate reforms, already taking action on a number of fronts, now that the revolt by a nationalist-communist combine in parliament has been crushed.

“He has a window of opportunity and he is showing that he will take advantage of it,” said one diplomatic source.—REUTERS