

PLO-Israeli peace faces an uphill battle

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The news that an agreement on the West Bank had been reached by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel on Sept. 24, should have been cause for celebration, as a further breakthrough in the intricate process of establishing peace in the region. In European capitals and in Washington, where the event was marked by a festive act hosted by the President, it was.

But elsewhere, particularly in those countries most affected by Israeli-Arab relations, the reaction ranged from mixed, to outright hostile. Not only did the groups of the rejectionist front, like the PFLP and PDFLP, predictably denounce the accord, in tune with their sponsor, Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, but several Palestinians in or around the negotiations also expressed misgivings.

A Ramallah-based Palestinian figure who used to be part of the negotiating team, said the agreement was "better than nothing." Abdallah Frangi, the PLO representative in Bonn, told German radio on Sept. 28 that he, like most Palestinians, was deeply disappointed by the accord. But, he added, "we had no choice. It is all we could get." The same judgment was offered by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in an interview with the French daily *Le Figaro*, who, taking credit for having ensured that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat would not abandon the talks, admitted, that the agreement was "the most Arafat could get."

An honest assessment of the agreement struck, at least based on what little is known of its actual content, must acknowledge that, indeed, it is highly problematic. Clearly, political pressures from anti-peace groups on both sides influenced the package, as did pressure from Washington. The final deal is so full of compromises, it looks like the fabled Bavarian *Wolpertinger*, a creature with a bird's head, a lion's paw, a gazelle's body, and a raccoon's tail. Some parts are

very attractive, others less so; put all together, they do not really match. One wonders, how it will manage to stay on its feet.

Reorganization plan

The 400-plus-page text of the agreement for extending Palestinian autonomy over the West Bank has not yet been rendered public; thus, what is known is based on press summaries of verbal reports of the contents. According to reports, the area of the West Bank, occupied by Israel since 1967, will be reorganized in the following manner:

There are three main zones or areas, designated A, B, and C. Zone A, which is made up of seven major Palestinian cities, Ramallah, Bethlehem, Nablus, Tulkarem, Jenin, Qalqiliya, and Hebron, will be under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), with a special status for powderkeg Hebron. Israeli troops are to redeploy in Hebron within six months after the agreement, to "guard Jewish residents and their movements and maintain overall responsibility for their safety," and the Israeli Army is to control the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Four hundred Palestinian police and city officials are to deploy in Hebron, but not in the city center or Tel Roumeida, which are occupied by Jewish settlers. Hebron will reportedly have a "temporary international presence" as well.

The Palestinian security force, of 12,000 police for their part of the West Bank, will take care of internal security and public order in Zone A. Joint patrols will cover designated roads in Zone A and will escort Israeli vehicles. Joint mobile units will intervene as a rapid response force. Palestinians will not be allowed to arrest Israelis, but will be allowed to check their documents.

Zone B refers to rural areas, under joint or mixed control.

The Israelis will withdraw from most Palestinian population centers in Zone B, including 450 villages. Here the Palestinians will be responsible for public order. Israel will "retain overall responsibility for external security, Israelis, and the settlements across the West Bank, and combat extremism in Area B," reports one summary.

Israeli military will control directly Zone C, which includes settlements, military installations, strategically important locations, and much unpopulated land. The areas which the Palestinian council is to administer in Zone C include education, health, and the economy.

Throughout the West Bank, religious sites will be under different regimes, some transferred to the Palestinians, gradually in Zone C, and some still to be negotiated. "Special arrangements" will be made for Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem and Joseph's Tomb in Nablus. Freedom of access to religious sites and freedom of worship is to be guaranteed to all.

From a territorial standpoint, Israeli-controlled Zone C will be 53%, and the amount under direct Palestinian authority in Zone A, will be 17%. The remaining 30% is the area under joint control. The percentages reckoned are themselves subject of dispute, as some Palestinian sources have estimated the Israeli share to be significantly larger than those figures.

Furthermore, the scheme of controls is complex, if not ambiguous. As Palestinian National Authority Minister of Justice Abu Middain told *EIR* on Sept. 26, "It will be a complicated situation between A, B, and C; A and B are our responsibility. I'm sure it will be complicated with the joint controls." He added, "Confronting terrorism will be a joint activity," an obviously delicate task.

Palestinian sovereignty

The crux of the matter, however, is another. How can territory so organized, be properly governed by a sovereign Palestinian State of the future?

That statehood is on the agenda as a result of the new interim accord, is beyond doubt, and it is one of the more attractive aspects of the agreement. Procedures for elections have been set. Both an 82-member autonomy council and a president of the Palestinian National Authority will be elected by direct vote, in which Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem (provided the latter have a residence in the West Bank as well), will be eligible. International observers are to be brought in to guarantee free and fair elections. The council will have legislative powers and a committee (the "executive authority," made up of council members and appointed officials) will have executive powers.

The issue of elections had been one of the main stumbling blocks in negotiations since Oslo, as the Palestinians demanded a legislative assembly, whereas the Israelis would accept only an administrative council. Whether Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, which Israel claims to have annexed

as part of its capital, would be allowed to run as candidates and/or vote, had also been the subject of heated disagreement.

Elections are crucial for a number of reasons. First, as Abu Middain noted, "There will be a democratic body for the first time. There will be an 82-member council and an executive council for Palestinians. It is very important to achieve democracy." Furthermore, only through free and general elections, can a governing body be given a popular mandate with which to implement the accords. Finally, by electing a body with legislative powers and a president of an executive body, the Palestinian people will be erecting the scaffolding to build an actual state.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin acknowledged this in commenting, that he opposed the creation of a Palestinian State *now*, but left the question open for the future. Abu Middain said that he was confident of this perspective; "I believe that we will have an independent State within three to five years," he said. The same was reiterated in Washington, during the festivities marking the event.

Needed: a national mission

To allow the Palestinian people finally to exercise their sacrosanct right, acknowledged in several U.N. resolutions, to create a State upon the land they have historically inhabited, is a matter of justice. Yet statehood is not a title ceremoniously pinned on someone's breast because he has been given permission to go through the motions of the electoral process. A nation, as the late Charles de Gaulle understood only too well, is not merely a collection of individuals who speak the same language and inhabit the same land, over centuries. A nation-state is like an individual in the community of nations, with a distinct personality, shaped by the particular contribution which that nation uniquely may make to humanity at large. A nation, de Gaulle stressed, must have an identity and a mission.

For Palestine to realize its identity and exercise its sovereignty, certain fundamental preconditions must be guaranteed.

The Palestinian people represent an intelligentsia and highly skilled labor force, who have contributed in a crucial manner to the edification of many states in the Middle East. If Palestinians are to achieve statehood, the government of the State must be able to provide productive labor for its people, at the highest existing technological levels. The government must have the authority to define economic policy, and the monetary and financial policy which can facilitate production and trade relations. The State must be given access to whatever technologies are required, to translate development potential into reality.

The glaring problem with the map

It is in this context that the failings of the Israeli-PLO agreement become glaring, and the uglier parts of the *Wol-*

pertinger come into full view.

From a purely economic standpoint, the territorial arrangement, as far as it is known, cannot allow for a Palestinian State to exist. Aside from the psychological, political, and security complications arising from the byzantine arrangement of "control" worked out for Zones A, B, and C, there are economic realities which make the current framework unworkable.

What has been penciled in on the map, is a number of cities and villages under Palestinian administration, responsible for organizing economic activity, trade, education, services, and so forth. Yet, as has been painfully obvious since the Oslo agreement, there are no corridors, even between Gaza and Jericho. Whereas the Israelis are completing construction of a vast network of roads linking all their settlements with one another, skirting Palestinian urban areas, the Palestinians have no such infrastructure. Thus the seven cities, plus Gaza and Jericho, are like islands in a turbulent sea.

Lack of vital infrastructure is most evident in the case of water. In the West Bank, there is not enough water. Since the 1967 war, the Israelis have taken 82% of the underground water available, pumping it out of underground aquifers, and through their pipeline, to service cities on the Israeli coast. This has left the Palestinian population, 18% of the water of the West Bank.

Along with the status of Jerusalem and Hebron, the water issue was certainly the hottest in the negotiations. Like Jerusalem, it was postponed; what the Israelis agreed to, was to increase the Palestinians' share from 18% to 23%. As in Gaza, most Palestinian cities on the West Bank have acute water crises; wells have been drawn dry, or have become so saline, as to be useless.

Water cannot be 'deferred'

Thus, when it is trumpeted in the press that a breakthrough has been reached in Israeli-Palestinian relations, and at the same time, that the "water question" has been deferred, to a committee of Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans who will "study the question," red flares should go up.

Lyndon LaRouche put his finger on the open sore, in a radio interview with "EIR Talks" on Sept. 27: "The greater problem is, that unless the Israelis and the Palestinians are able to show real progress in economic development in the region, particularly on the water question, this entire peace process remains in jeopardy.

"Exemplary is the question of water. *There is not enough water in the region to meet the needs of all of the population for development.* . . . Sharing this water that exists, negotiating the sharing of it, doesn't mean a thing, it's not worth anything. . . .

"Without mass desalination in the Middle East, you can't have economic growth. Without desalination, therefore, you can't have peace. That's the problem."

Bosnia: Next battle is against monetarism

by Umberto Pascali

On Sept. 26, immediately after the foreign ministers of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia signed in New York the "Further Agreed Basic Principles" for the Bosnian State, several, especially Bosnian sources, gave *EIR* their assessment of the situation. The evaluations ranged from the moderately optimistic, "We have established the right to have a central government, and the representative of [Serbian President Slobodan] Milosevic had to accept it," to the sarcastic, "It's all a trick; [Greater Serbian boss and war criminal Gen. Ratko] Mladic is redeploying his heavy guns around Banja Luka, and the New York agreement sanctions the partition of Bosnia."

But one comment was striking, because it addressed economic policy: "I think the point is that we could lose even if we win, unless we face now the problem of our future economic independence," he said. "Lyndon LaRouche said that Bosnia has been a rallying point for our civilization because it's a small country which resisted the international oligarchy by resisting the British Empire agenda here. It would be a continuation of that resistance for Bosnia to fight to remain independent economically and otherwise. It does not mean isolation, but it means we have to have an independent policy toward the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank. . . . The British used all their means to destroy us, they failed. Actually, we helped create a new strategic situation. Couldn't our country help shape a new international grouping against the dictatorship of monetarism?"

Indeed, this statement would be labeled a "dream" or "simplistic" by the majority of "experts," but four years ago, those experts had already given Bosnia up for dead. How could a tiny unarmed country resist one of the biggest armies in Europe? But at the end of four and a half years of genocide and resistance, a worldwide front had been formed, which allowed NATO air and ground attacks to proceed against weapons dumps and command and communications centers of the Radovan Karadzic-Mladic Bosnian Serb regime.

'North' and 'South' against genocide

That coalition included for the first time the "North," led by the United States and President Jacques Chirac's France, and the "South," i.e., the so-called Third World, in particular the Muslim countries.

It was a totally new constellation of forces that included countries ranging from the United States to Iran, a constella-