

The United States has been looking at the PLO through oil-covered glasses. The Administration seems to be writing the scenario *as it wishes it could be*, rather than analyzing coldly what is.

A little history might be useful.

In September 1975, the United States and Israel agreed that the U.S. will not recognize or negotiate with the PLO so long as it does not accept Israel's right to exist and does not accept U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

The U.S. did not make that commitment because of a sentimental interest in Israel. A distinction was made between the PLO and the Palestinians in general. The PLO is dedicated to war against Israel, which means war in the Middle East -- and that is bad for the U.S., including its interest in oil. The U.S. adversary in the Middle East is still the Soviet Union, which can use the disorder of war to extend its influence. The PLO is an arm of the Soviet Union, armed and educated by the Soviet Union. The PLO's aims are not limited to a Palestinian state. It is engaged in helping to topple regimes friendly to the U.S. -- as its far-flung activity in Germany, Japan, Uganda, Nicaragua and elsewhere has shown. It would also like to topple the Saudi regime, with Soviet help, and isolate the U.S. altogether from the Middle East and its oil fields. Saudi Arabia would like to appease the PLO, but it won't work. The U.S. knew what it was doing in its own self-interest when it took the position that it would not deal with the PLO as long as the PLO was a war party in the Middle East.

This was a clear and unequivocal position by the United States. In recent days, however, there seems to be a "blurring" of this clarity on the part of the Administration. Several trial balloons have been sent into the atmosphere during the last two weeks which seem to indicate that the United States wants to believe that there has been a change in the PLO attitude toward Israel and that there is some way to bring the PLO to the negotiating table.

We have seen the President liken the Palestinian cause to the U.S. civil rights movement. There have been "hints" of informal talks between American officials and

PLO members in unnamed Western European countries. Robert Strauss, President Carter's special Middle East negotiator has been quoted as saying that he had received "signals" which would lead the United States to believe that it could bring moderate Palestinians to the peace talks in two or three months; that, in his words, the U.S. will "get to the state where we will be able to engage in some discussion with moderate Palestinians."

And now there is the move in the Security Council for a new formula in a resolution drafted with the approval of Yasir Arafat and introduced by Kuwait and scheduled to be considered on August 23. While the U.S. has said that it would veto this resolution as first introduced, it was responsible for the postponement until August 23 in the hope that an understanding could be reached with the PLO through intermediaries on a mutually acceptable alternative resolution. Such a resolution could get the PLO to implicitly accept Resolution 242 and Israel's right to exist but would include seemingly innocuous statements on the rights of the Palestinians. Finally, there is the "happenstance" meeting of U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young and PLO delegate Zehdi Labib Terzi at a cocktail party given by the U.N. Ambassador from Kuwait.

But as recently as this past weekend there was clear evidence that the PLO is adamant in its determination to hold out for an independent Palestinian state.

A PLO conference held in Syria on August 12, according to a spokesman, "decided to refuse any resolution that does not stipulate frankly on the need to establish an independent Palestinian state and make clear that the PLO is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and clearly state our right to return to Palestine and self-determination."

That statement should signal clearly to the U.S. Administration that there has been no change in PLO attitudes towards Israel and that the PLO aim is, as it has been from the beginning, the destruction of the state of Israel.

Why else would Arafat, in an interview published in the Washington Star of August 12, say that he could not accept Resolution 242?

It is important to differentiate between the PLO and the Palestinians who live on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The PLO has spelled out its implacable determination to control any independent Palestinian State by its intimidation and assassination of any moderate Arab politician who is not subservient to them. Just last month, Hasham Huzander, Imam of Gaza, a Palestinian Arab nationalist, no particular friend of Israel, who nevertheless believed in seeking out coexistence with Israel, was killed by the PLO.

What then can the United States do?

For the purposes of peace and American national interest, it is necessary that the United States help Israel and Egypt make changes which will not guarantee a PLO military state.

Peaceful change could take place if the autonomy plan which has been proposed by the Israeli government and is currently under discussion between Egypt and Israel were to be given a chance. Under this plan, the residents of the West Bank will create a council elected by universal suffrage. It will have direction of all affairs related to education, religion, transportation, housing, industry, agriculture, health, labor, welfare and the administration of justice. It will not have military forces; Israel will retain responsibility for security and public order.

That situation will be reviewed after five years. At that time, it is hoped that an indigenous leadership will have emerged from the ranks of the residents of the area which will have the strength to withstand the threats of the PLO, which operates from bases outside of the area.

Let's give peace a chance.

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