

Middle East. We British are in the position of a defeated army which has withdrawn from its positions leaving valuable hostages in the hands of the enemy.

THE EFFLUXION OF TIME (perhaps two or three generations)—but no conceivable process of instant diplomacy—may well lead to an accommodation between Israel and her Arab neighbours. Until that happens, nothing short of the defeat and destruction of Israel can remove the threat of Arab reprisals against Great Britain, undertaken as a psychological compensation for humiliations imposed by Israel, so long as Britain, in the matter of oil supplies, and in the present form of oil concessions, continues to be vulnerable to such reprisals. This continuing prospect of subordination to unpredictable Arab attitudes can only be removed, first by reducing the present extent of British reliance on Arab oil supplies, and secondly by a transformation of the existing anachronistic oil concessions.

In the long term, British vulnerability to Arab oil sanctions is probably greater now than it was 11 years ago, although in the short term, the development of super tankers has diminished the threat posed by the closing of the Suez Canal and the Syrian pipelines. Apart from other political difficulties about supplies from newly-discovered oilfields in Nigeria, it is now apparent that supplies from Libya and Algeria might well be included in a general Arab boycott. What is needed is a fuel policy, taking into account alternative sources of supply (*e.g.*, stepping up Persian oil which the Persians are only too anxious to do), and alternative fuels (*e.g.*, North Sea gas), directed specifically towards the object of “getting off the Arab hook,” on which we are so humiliatingly impaled, by reducing the present extent of our dependence on Arab oil.

The transformation of existing oil concessions (in which American, French and Dutch, as well as British, interests are involved) would have to take the form of a series of arrangements whereby present concessions would be surrendered to the host Governments, who would then be offered long-term contracts for the purchase of specified quantities of oil, loans on commercial terms for the development of oil resources, and, if required, European “know-how” and technical personnel on a contract basis. This process, combined with a reduction in the existing extent of dependence on Arab oil, would eliminate the present elements of blackmail on one side and colonialism on the other. And it would create the possibility, which does not now exist, of developing the Middle East oil business on ordinary commercial lines, as is done with primary products in other ex-colonial territories, where the “plantation”

system was abandoned in anticipation of (or concurrently with) the relinquishment of political control.

In this context, the abandonment or non-abandonment of existing British bases and “special positions” along the “thin red line” stretching from Aden to Kuwait is almost irrelevant. Staying there involves taking sides in Arab domestic disputes without the power either of influencing the outcome or of protecting British interests. Leaving will at all events expedite the process of accommodation to realities.

*John Marlowe*

## *The Kiss-and-Make-Up Delusion*

IT IS TIME we faced up to the fact that, at this moment of history, there is no way of reconciling Arab pride and self-respect with the existence of a separate Jewish State in the Middle East. This is as difficult for the Israelis as for the Westerners to accept. Israelis maintain rightly that there is physically room for everybody in an area which is certainly underpopulated. They are therefore, inclined to attribute Arab ill-will, war threats and terrorism to the machinations of reactionary politicians, to Soviet or Chinese Communist conspiracy, to Western oil interests or to the anti-Semitism of Ernie Bevin or the expansionism of Abdel Nasser.

All these factors have certainly contributed to the seething Middle Eastern unrest. Yet none of them is more than an accessory. The basic trouble is a deep scar inflicted on the Moslem consciousness by the emergence—at the heart-land of the Arab World—of a thriving, efficient, non-Moslem community, reaching Western levels of affluence in stark contrast to the poverty of the surrounding states.

Because Israel is Jewish and Western, not Moslem and under-developed, it sticks out like a beacon of light—or a sore thumb, depending on your preferences. And, as I can testify from a recent visit, the gap is growing greater all the time.

In a more civilised world, perhaps a few generations away, the Arabs and Jews could live together in a wider, secular Palestine, and there would be no need for a separate Israeli State. But the course of recent history makes this inconceivable in our lifetime. Israel has come into being in tragic circumstances, developing its own deep and religiously impregnated sense

of national identity. Israelis are mostly refugees and children of refugees from Christian or Moslem countries, where they were a persecuted or ostracised minority. They would certainly rather perish than accept a return to subject or minority status. That is why they are ready to compromise about frontiers, but not about recognition of their right to exist.

Arab nationalism, too, in its present phase of development, is inseparable from religion. All the Moslem countries, not just the Arab ones, invariably vote together at the UN. As the Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban, ruefully remarked, you could assemble the 40-odd votes for the notion that the world is flat.

THE ISRAELIS LIKE TO THINK that their three successive victories, of '49, '56 and '67, humbled only the professional soldiers on the other side. In fact, it was equally shaming to the vast mass of illiterate Arab peasantry, who desperately go on trying to believe either that the Arabs had won or that they had been a victim of some wicked Western conspiracy (partly true in 1956). Even after the third round, the truth of defeat is only beginning to seep in. The American-sponsored survey of the 1967 refugees in Jordan revealed that, although three-quarters of them would like to go back and live even under Israeli rule, they are also convinced that war is now the only honourable and effective course open to the Arab nations. They are giving their newly-born children names like Jihad, Harb, or Aida, which mean struggle, war, and "the one who is returning." Certainly the hatred is being deliberately fomented by the Arab rulers in the surrounding countries. In the period before the June war the fantasy and filth pouring out of the press, radio and television, had reached Nazi proportions.

The mendacity of Arab propaganda addressed to the Israelis over the Hebrew-speaking radio was so preposterous that it was treated as a joke. An exploiter of sick humour was afterwards profitably selling tape recordings of war-time Cairo broadcasts describing, between martial music, the bombing, burning, capture and destruction of Israel's main cities—none of which had been damaged at all. But it came as a shock to discover how much of all this had been believed. One educated and relatively well-disposed Arab was asked several weeks after the war by an Israel official how he thought Arab-Israeli relations might be improved. He suggested they should start by trading Nablus and Jenin for Tel Aviv—he really thought Tel Aviv was in Egyptian hands. He was hustled by car to Tel Aviv to see for himself.

But, whereas the Israelis had hoped the Arabs would turn against the people who had so mani-

festly misled them, they found, to their dismay, that the Arabs preferred a dream world that protected their pride to the reality that numbed it. The shame and revulsion was impervious to rational argument.

THE UNWILLINGNESS of the Arab communities in Palestine to tolerate a home for the Jews, let alone a Jewish National State, goes back to the earliest days of the British Mandate, and the struggle has continued uninterrupted ever since. Sir Dingle Foot, the former Solicitor General, told the House of Commons a few weeks ago that he regarded the National Home and the State of Israel as "one of the greatest and remarkable achievements in recorded history," but also said that "the gross, wicked and monstrous" injustice to the Arab refugees is "the underlying cause of the Arab/Israeli enmity in the Middle East." In fact, Arab enmity toward the arrival and installation of the Jews pre-dated the refugee problem by a quarter of a century. And the "underlying cause of the Arab/Israeli enmity" was precisely the creation of Israel, heralded by Sir Dingle as "this great and remarkable achievement." The subsequent Arab refusal even to meet the Israelis and discuss compensation and international resettlement was abundant

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evidence that the refugees were being used by the Arabs as an excuse to preserve a state of hostility, which they hoped would ultimately enable them to wipe out Israel.

Those who are unfamiliar with the generous humanitarianism of the Foot family might be inclined to attribute such a distortion of the truth to latent anti-Semitism. The Israelis almost certainly would. But, in fact, the contrary is true. The Foots (Dingle's brother, Lord Caradon, U.K. Delegate to the U.N., and Michael, leader of the left-wing faction of the Parliamentary Labour Party, think the same) only reflect the rational, enlightened, and entirely inapplicable ideas of the liberally-minded Left, who cannot intellectually take on board that one of the facts in international life is the Arabs' resentment about the existence of a Jewish State in the Middle East. They must, instead, cling to their belief that, given sweetness and compassion from the physically superior Westernised side, the "two wronged nations" could kiss and make up.

If this were true, the only problem would be to get the Arabs to forget their distress and get the Israelis to renounce their conquests. But if the Israelis are right in believing that they are still fighting for survival, then they would obviously be wrong to retreat from what are the strategically favourable lines without any safeguards against future attacks.

IT IS TRUE that Israelis do their own cause no good by being so intolerant of criticism and so ready to ascribe every unfavourable comment to anti-Semitic prejudice (though it could be argued that their recent history provides extenuating circumstances). To a Western secular visitor, there are aspects of their society which are certain to be unattractive: the grip of the synagogue (which seems to be increasing) deprives them, among other things, of that most elemental of home rights, the freedom to marry whom they please. Mixed marriages, like Saturday buses and trains, are forbidden.

The Israelis' treatment of the Arabs in Israel, of whom 250 of the brightest are cherished students of the Hebrew University, is a model of enlightenment, compared to the cruelty practiced towards the Jewish survivors in almost all Moslem countries. On the other hand, though the Arabs have an equal vote, the fact that

Israel is a Jewish nation rather than a secular state, means that religious minorities are necessarily outsiders.

In the occupied areas, Israel's treatment of the Arabs is surely better than what the Arabs would have done to the Jews, if the war had gone the other way. Indeed, I met no foreign observer during my month in East Jerusalem who, having lived among the Arabs, had the faintest doubt that there would have been wholesale massacre if the Arabs had occupied Israeli-inhabited areas.

As I can testify, the Israelis demolished about a dozen frontier villages (the homes of several thousands) during the fighting, and left the homeless to be succoured by the nearest Swedish Consul or by the monks of the nearby monastery. But at least they never took civilian life, except when fighting back terrorist activities or stopping clandestine arrivals and escapes. Given Israel's turbulent history, and the wide range of cultures and communities of which the present nation is composed, their record of civilised behaviour is high, though it is not perfect.

But, although criticism is justifiable on human and ethical grounds, it is absolutely over-optimistic to pretend that any supplementary compassion would help to reconcile the Arabs. For what they have against the Israelis is not that they are aggressive or oppressive, but that they are there.

If the humane, liberal delusion was just soft-headed, it could be left—"the cause that wit is in other men"—to such distinguished humorists as Malcolm Muggeridge or Michael Frayn. Unfortunately, it is not just comic, but also pernicious. By encouraging the Arabs to refuse to recognise Israel, and to go on pretending the defeat never happened, they only resuscitate the Arabs' now forlorn hope that the Jewish State may, after all, be destroyed.

It would be far wiser, and in the end, more humane to recognise that there is a new balance of power, and that the Arab leaders, perhaps at the cost of further internal disruptions, will ultimately have to recognise Israel as a permanent feature of the Middle East. They can claim support from the two super powers to prevent its territorial aggrandisement, but the Americans will never allow its destruction. They must learn that escapades like blocking the Straits of Tiran, or sinking an Israeli destroyer, may be fun and glory while they last, but will provoke intolerable retribution.

THE STATED AIM of British policy, reaffirmed many times over by Mr. George Brown in the House of Commons, is: "a settlement acceptable to both sides." Unfortunately there is no such thing. The only settlement "acceptable"

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to Arab pride would be the disappearance ("preferably painfully," many of them would say) of Israel: and *hara-kiri* hardly qualifies as a solution "acceptable" to the Jews.

Faced with this disagreeable truth, the would-be peacemakers are inclined to turn panicky and argue that if there cannot be instant peace there will be nuclear war. This is untrue, precisely because the two big powers are aware of the danger. The Russians have done many provocative things: they have never given away nuclear weapons.

Conceding that, in the present international situation, a settlement is excluded means accepting, for the time being, the twilight between war and peace, in which there will still be many disturbances but, one can reasonably hope, no major collisions.

The British-sponsored resolution, recently unanimously adopted by the Security Council, introduces no basic changes. The two sides—and their respective backers—began giving their contradictory interpretations even before the ink was dry. The Arab and Russian argument is that it means Israel's immediate and unconditional withdrawal from all the territories occupied during the June war. The Israelis stress that the word "all" is not employed and point to other paragraphs which would seem to vindicate their claim that there can be no frontier settlement without recognition. The fact is that if the motion had not been stuffed with ambiguities it would have run slap into a Western or Eastern veto. As it is, it opens the way towards the visit of a UN representative, Mr. Gunnar Jarring, who may at least help to preserve the truce. Clearly defined boundaries might later facilitate some frontier readjustment: even the reopening of the canal, if this can be made worth Egypt's while.

But the "just and lasting settlement" is still a long way off. It will have to await some very basic rethinking, which is now being damagingly delayed by well-meaning Arab sympathisers on the British side who concede that it would be "a humiliation" for the Arabs to talk to the Jews. None of the people who argue this way would be ready to see Britain intervene on the Arab side, redressing the balance of military power and helping them eliminate Israel. That is why they would be better advised to urge the Arabs to abandon any hope of obtaining the moral and material benefits of peace until they recognise that Israel has the right to live and to be treated as an integral part of the international community. There is no other way.

Nora Beloff

## Maalesh! Inshallah!

ANYONE WHO KNOWS the Arabs would immediately recognise these terms. To the non-Arab they cause uncertainty, frustration, often bewilderment. To the Arab they offer comfort, hope, relief in affliction. It is not difficult to translate these terms into English, but impossible to convey their exact meaning. *Maalesh!*—sorry! it doesn't matter! it'll be all right! A charming term, it stands for the immense tolerance the Arabs have, indicates also the submissiveness, the apathy and the negativism of the Arabs. *Inshallah!*—God willing—represents the fatalism, the wishful thinking, and the inability of the Arabs to face reality. It is understandable to have faith in God, but it is fatal not to be able to take responsibility. "We lost a war, *Maalesh! Inshallah*, we will win next time! . . ."

It is difficult to think of another people who have deceived themselves in the way we Arabs have. Fantasy, lying, wishful-thinking and false pride substitute for rational thinking in the Arab mind. We prefer to believe that basically nothing is wrong with our way of life, beliefs, or social values. We look to our ancient past for our glory and ignore a millennium of servitude, corruption and submission as if it did not have any impact on our values, social behaviour, and ideology. It is incredible how little is understood about Arab history. There is no comprehensive study of Arab History in Arabic. There are only translations of out-dated Western works or paraphrasings of these works without acknowledgement to the original authors. Students of Arab History are painfully aware of the absence of an adequate comprehensive study in any language.

Both Western and Arab intellectuals see the dynamic force of Islam as shaping early Arab history. Both agree on the immense Islamic heritage the Arabs passed on to humanity. But while most Western intellectuals argue that Islam is a spent force or is in need of a Reformation, Arabs refuse to recognise the weaknesses which have crept into their Islamic heritage. Confronted with the challenge of the West, Arabs thought that they had only to learn the "secret" of Western progress to catch up with the West and rid themselves of Western domination. We must only add Western technology to our cherished heritage and everything would straighten itself

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