



חבר הכנסת

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5. 25. 89.

To: Secretary of State, Mr. James Baker
From: Lt. General (Res.) Raphael Eitan, Member of Knesset.

Dear Sir,

I wish to refer to your recent speech in which you called upon Israel to "lay aside once and for all the unrealistic vision of Greater Israel".

Both components of this rather unfortunate statement - the reference to an "unrealistic vision" and to "Greater Israel" are worthy of attention.

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Mr. Secretary, ever since its inception, Zionism has been fired by visions considered "unrealistic" by others. This is neither vain chauvinistic pride nor ultra-nationalistic myth. It is a historical fact that has been recognized by foremost social scientists of our time. In his contribution to the Encyclopedia Britannica; Prof. William Fleming wrote of Zionism in the following terms:

A [political] cause to which people are loyal is often considered lost by those who do not share that loyalty; in the face of what seemed fearful odds... [the] Zionists never wavered in their loyalty to [their] cause which they ultimately [attained].

The founding fathers of Zionism, ravaged though they were by disease, scarcity, and physical assault, held steadfastly on to their "pathetically unrealistic" vision of Jewish national revival - despite the fact that they were but one tenth of the population. On the eve of the birth of the State of Israel, hopelessly outnumbered and faced by the threat of annihilation by seven regular Arab armies, with only an ill-equipped, ill-trained, inexperienced fledgling military organization at their disposal the Jews never wavered in their resolve to fulfill their dream of national independence - despite the demographic reality of two Arabs for every Jew. Why then, Mr. Secretary, today when there are two Jews to every Arab, when there is a modern infra-structure and well-equipped, well-trained experienced army at their disposal, is the vision you talk of "unrealistic". (By the way, in spite of the demographic prophets-of-doom this ratio of two Jews to one Arab has been roughly stable ever since 1967 - as shown by the official population figures of the Central Bureau of Statistics)

With all due respect, sir, let me remind you that the realism or (lack thereof) of a vision is not a function its evaluation by those who object to it, but of the commitment and determination of those who strive to realize it. The history of Zionism is the history of the fulfillment of unfulfillable visions. Indeed it was founded on the saying:

אם תרצו - אין זו אגדה

.....



As you deride the notion of Greater Israel" one can but conclude that you support the idea of "lesser israel". But Mr. Secretary, are you aware of the implications?

"lesser israel" means foregoing the highlands of Judea and Samaria which constitute the sole topographical barrier against any land assault from the eastern front, along the narrow dimension of the country, against the heavily populated area of the coastal plain. Control of these heights is essential to allow enough time for the mobilization of reserves (the majority of whom live the coastal plain), should any attack be mounted from the east.

Israel's survival in war is contingent on her ability to successfully mobilize and deploy its reserves in the front. Because to the tiny distances involved, loss of control of this topographical barrier would deprive her of the necessary time required for such mobilization and deployment. Thus, without the heights of Judea and Samaria, her only operational option would be massive pre-emption at minimum provocation - a sure recipe for war!!

Moreover, contrary to much of popular opinion; the strategic deterrent value of the highlands is increased rather than decreased by presence of sophisticated long range weaponry and missiles. For as there has always been a qualitative difference between bombarding an objective and taking it (see London, Hanoi etc.) the probability of a long range attack is increased if the probability of a subsequent swift and decisive victory on the ground is increased. Since only by taking the objective, can the attackers obviate the launching of a massive counter-offensive by the defenders. Thus, as Israeli control of the highlands diminishes the likelihood of a swift Arab victory on the ground it also ipso facto reduces the likelihood of a long range missile attack.

But even apart from the threat of long range sophisticated weaponry or large scale military assault, Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria embodies yet another peril. The highlands control - in terms of fire-power, electronic surveillance, and visual observation - the entire strategic infra-structure of the country: all the major airfields (military and civilian), the major ports, the national transport and communication system, the sweet water system, the principle power stations, and centres of government and administration. All these would be within range of cheap, readily available, highly mobile and easily concealed weapon systems making a mockery of any notion of effective demilitarization. Indeed one is compelled to concur with former Minister of Defence, Shimon Peres, who pointed out most succinctly that withdrawal from Judea and Samaria would generate circumstances under which there would be an almost "compulsive temptation to attack Israel from every direction."

Yet as dire as the military implications involved in withdrawal are, the non-military consequences are, if anything, even more ominous. Approximately 60% of Israel's water supply is contained in geological structures (aquifers) which serve as natural underground reservoirs.



These structures (Yarkon-Taninim and Coastal Aquifers), and the waters they store are affected, directly and indirectly, by civilian and ecological activity in Judea and Samaria - both as to the quantity and the quality of the water. Excessive pumping, or uncontrolled sewerage and waste disposal is liable to cause serious depletion, salination and pollution of the aquifers. Relinquishing the western slopes of the Judean and Samaritan hills would bring about a situation in which the fate of the national water supply is left to the tender mercies of whatever Arab authority would control the evacuated areas after withdrawal. It is important to note that critical dangers implicit in such a situation could arise even without there being any malicious intent on the part of the Arabs. They could result with equal severity from simple municipal mis-management, poor planning, lack of knowledge or awareness, or plain neglect. However, whatever the reasons may be Israel might easily find herself facing irreparable damage to the supply of one of her most vital strategic resources - a situation which would, in the most tangible way, endanger her continued survival. Then noble phrases regarding "the rights of other nations" will sound a little hollow and very irrelevant.

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Mr. Secretary the "Greater Israel" of which you talk is a curious misnomer, as the total area involved is barely 10,000 square miles or roughly 1/3 of the area of Jordan, 1/7 that of Syria, 1/16 of Iraq and 1/35 that of Egypt.

But even ignoring the issue of size, on what, sir, would you have "lesser israel" with her tantalizing slender waist (no more than ten times the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge) depend upon for her security? Agreements? Demilitarization? In this regard may I please offer you an additional quotation of Mr. Peres:

The idea of demilitarization seems very dubious since the principle problem is not merely reaching an agreement but ensuring its implementation in practice. For the number of agreements violated by the Arabs is no less than that honored by them"

Neither does the idea of "international guarantees" seem any less foreboding. Both Czechoslovakia and Austria relied on the international community for their security. Both were destroyed. And if "push came to shove", Mr. Secretary, what choice would the USA make if faced with the option of physically committing its forces and the risking global confrontation in order to safeguard Israel?

Sir, "lesser israel" is a policy option in which the cost of error is annihilation. It is an unacceptable and irresponsible risk to take.

I await your reaction with keen interest.

Yours Sincerely,



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