

Congress Votes for Mideast Holy War

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Every sane person tracking the ongoing Mideast crisis knows that seven years of peace negotiations virtually went up in smoke during Camp David summit meeting in July, when President Bill Clinton blundered, by placing the issue of the status of the Temple Mount holy sites in Old Jerusalem on the negotiating table. The President compounded his blunder days after the summit ended, by attacking Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, accusing him of having ruined the summit with his intransigence.

The far more accurate and honest account of the Camp David blow-up, in fact, came from Arafat himself, who advised the President that, to have signed the U.S.-Israeli formulated plan for Jerusalem and the holy sites would have been to have signed his own death warrant. Arafat had no authority to speak, on his own, for the entire Islamic and Arab world—particularly on such an historic and sensitive issue as the status of Jerusalem.

As the result of the President's blunders—which he himself has reportedly acknowledged, and is now trying to reverse, albeit, to date, unsuccessfully—the entire Mideast and Persian Gulf region stands on the edge of a new holy war, that could even lead to a thermonuclear World War III.

As *EIR* documented in last week's cover story ("Temple Mount Fanatics Foment a New Thirty Years War"), the events in Israel and Palestine over the past two months reflect a growing sense of insane, flight-forward panic, on the part of leading oligarchical circles, particularly in London, who see their global financial system on the brink of evaporation. In their desperation, they have unleashed irrational, violent forces, on the ground in the Middle East, who are devoted to blowing up the world, by instigating a religious war over the Jerusalem holy sites. Those fundamentalist forces, on both the Jewish and Islamic side, have long been part of the dirty-tricks capability, assembled by the British oligarchy over the past 140 years, for use precisely under such conditions as the present.

As Lyndon LaRouche emphasizes in this week's *EIR* (see *National* lead story), only a powerful intervention on the part of the President of the United States, to expose the danger of irrationalist religious war, and to put the peace process back on a proper track, informed by the policies of Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, and the tradition of the Treaty of Westphalia and the German republican Moses Mendelssohn,

can stop war at this late date. Concretely, no just peace can be achieved without immediate action to reverse the poverty in which the vast majority of Palestinians live, and by launching regionwide large-scale development projects—in the interests of all inhabitants of the region.

Congressional Perfidy

It is in this context that one must view the Oct. 25 actions by the majority of members of the U.S. House of Representatives, as an outright endorsement of a Thirty Years' War. In a vote of 365-30, the House endorsed a resolution, condemning the Palestinians *alone* for the violence in the Mideast. The resolution was introduced by International Relations Committee Chairman Ben Gilman (R-N.Y.), a well-known figure in the right-wing Zionist lobby, who was also among the leading Congressional persecutors of President Clinton. House Concurrent Resolution 426 also had the firm support of Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), the ranking Member on the Committee, of House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), and House Majority Leader Dick Armey.

The resolution stated, in part:

"Whereas the Palestinian Authority, with the assistance of Israel and the international community, created a strong police force, almost twice the number allowed under the Oslo Accords, specifically to maintain public order. . . .

"Whereas the Government of Israel made clear to the world its commitment to peace at Camp David, where it expressed its readiness to take wide-ranging and painful steps in order to bring an end to the conflict, but these proposals were rejected by Chairman Arafat. . . .

"Whereas even in the face of the desecration of Joseph's Tomb, a Jewish holy site in the West Bank, the Government of Israel has made it clear that it will withdraw forces from Palestinian areas if the Palestinian Authority maintains order in those areas; and

"Whereas the Palestinian leadership not only did too little for far too long to control the violence, but in fact encouraged it: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the Congress—

"1. expresses its solidarity with the state and people of Israel at this time of crisis;

"2. condemns the Palestinian leadership for encouraging the violence and doing so little for so long to stop it, resulting in the senseless loss of life;

"3. calls upon the Palestinian leadership to refrain from any exhortations to public incitement, urges the Palestinian leadership to vigorously use its security forces to act immediately to stop all violence, to show respect for all holy sites, and to settle all grievances through negotiations. . . .

"5. urges the current Administration to use its veto power at the United Nations Security Council to ensure that the Security Council does not again adopt unbalanced resolutions addressing the uncontrolled violence in the areas controlled by the Palestinian Authority."

In motivating the resolution, Gilman was even more provocative. He said, "Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 426. The past several weeks have seen the situation in the Middle East spiral almost out of control. The underlying cause is that PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat is attempting to dictate Israeli concessions at the negotiating table through the unbridled use of violence; but this Congress, together with our friends in Israel and elsewhere, must join in saying no to that sort of violence."

Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), a close ally of mega-speculator and drug legalizer George Soros, added more fuel to the fire, saying, "At the outset, Mr. Speaker, let me express on behalf of all of us in this body our regret at the tragic deaths which have resulted from the violence that broke out in the Middle East. As a grandfather of 17, I particularly regret the death of children, although I recognize that there was a reckless and cynical exploitation of children by the Palestinian leadership. Children have no place in such violent demonstrations, and their reckless exploitation I think stands self-condemned. . . .

"In 1993, at Oslo, the principle of reconciliation was that the Palestinian leadership renounce violence as a means of achieving their political aims. In the last few weeks it has become obvious that Arafat and his group are unwilling to live up to this commitment.

"At Camp David, the government of Israel made sweeping proposals that moved the two sides closer than they have ever been in reaching a historic agreement and reconciliation. Instead of making a counterproposal to this most important move, Arafat has encouraged, promoted, and abetted violence and refused to engage in further negotiations."

A Small But Vocal Opposition

The 30 members of the House who voted against the resolution was dominated by members of the Congressional Black Caucus, but some other leading figures, including House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.) and John Dingell (D-Mich.), and even some unlikely Republicans, including Dana Rohrabacher (Calif.), joined the minority.

The most eloquent attack against the vicious war provocation came from Rep. Nick Rayhall (D-W.V.), a 12-term Congressman:

"Mr. Speaker," he declared, "I rise in strong opposition to H. Con. Res. 426 concerning the violence in the Middle East. If this body wishes to pass a resolution of support for Israel, then let us do it honestly, straightforwardly; not this way. Not through a resolution that is rife with bias and prejudice against the Palestinian people.

"This resolution could have a lasting adverse impact upon our goal of peace in the Middle East. We are talking about peace between two peoples here, not between political factions in Israel and Palestine; factions that never want peace in the first place. Regrettably, the language of this resolution is not balanced. It is not a straightforward vote of solidarity

in support for Israel. If it were, I would not be standing here today. In sum, by passing this resolution, we abandon our role as an honest broker and take a step that undermines negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Our words and our actions do bear consequences. In the past, we have passed resolutions in this body that do not reflect our greater interest and evenhandedness, and, as a result, people have suffered."

'We Should Be Encouraging Peace'

Representative Rahall continued: "We should be standing here today, Mr. Speaker, urging both parties instead to return to the negotiating table and help them find their way back on a path toward peace. Instead, we have a resolution before us that is an indictment of the Palestinian people's desire for peace; and, indeed, it is an indictment of the Israeli people's desire for peace as well. This resolution condemns one side, and it inflames passions to do the opposite of continuing the peace process.

"The true heirs to peace in the region, the peoples of Israel and Palestine, want the killing to stop. I know there is a deep despair, if you will, among Palestinians that they will never be able to live as a free and independent people. There is a feeling of frustration among the Palestinians that their lives mean less than Israeli lives. I know that the people of Israel have their legitimate concerns about the security of their borders. . . .

"This resolution is about bashing the Palestinians, as though they have not lost more than 130 lives in the conflict, as though innocent Palestinian fathers and sons have not been gunned down as they walked home, innocent of the conflict around them. We cannot ignore the fact that an American Red Cross worker was gunned down when he tried to intervene to save the child and his father.

"There is a line in this resolution that says perceived provocation should be subject only to negotiation, not violence. That line, of course, refers to the fact that Ariel Sharon deliberately timed his visit to the Nobel Sanctuary, accompanied by more than 1,000 Israeli security units. Sharon made his trip because he wanted to create strife among Palestinians, because creating strife among Palestinians would help him and those who follow him get rid of Prime Minister [Ehud] Barak's efforts toward peace, putting the Likud back in power in Israel."

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