

Westphalia Principle: From Madrid to Oslo

by Harley Schlanger

The original Madrid peace conference, which convened Oct. 30, 1991, under U.S. direction, adjourned with little apparent progress in December of that year. It had been undermined by the intransigent behavior of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who made it clear, both in his defiant opening statement, and in his continuing effort to move more Jewish settlers into the occupied territories, that he had no intention of reaching an agreement with any of the participants at the conference.

The impetus for the conference grew out of the worsening situation between Israel and the Palestinians, resulting from the Intifada, the revolt of Palestinian youth, which began in December 1987, against the unyielding occupation of territory by Israel. Shamir responded to the Intifada by imposing curfews, mass arrests, punitive economic measures, deportations, beatings, and assassinations. Simultaneously, he and his Housing Minister, Ariel Sharon, were engaging in a massive expansion of Jewish settlements. Sharon was particularly zealous, proclaiming that the new settlements would be “irreversible facts on the ground,” which would minimize the potential for the establishment in the future of a Palestinian state on the West Bank.

When President George H.W. Bush, through his Secretary of State James Baker III, threatened to withhold \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees to Israel, Shamir agreed to scale back the construction of settlements, and to engage in a dialogue. Though Shamir continued to build new settlements, he reluctantly agreed to Israeli participation in a peace conference in Madrid.

Shamir Flops in Madrid

Shamir, who was a devoted follower of Vladimir Jabotinsky, the Hitler-admiring founder of the “Revisionist” movement in Zionism, and a leading member of the terrorist Stern Gang in the 1940s, remained true to Jabotinsky’s belief in a “Greater Israel,” in which Palestinians, if allowed at all, must accept a role of complete subservience. Though he agreed to the participation of Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon in Madrid, he insisted that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of Yasser Arafat be excluded, and that the Palestinians instead be represented as part of the Jordanian delegation.

The PLO accepted this, as it marked its first opportunity

to be included, by Israel, in a dialogue. The Palestinian representative, Dr. Haidar Abdel Shafi, in his opening statement, offered an eloquent, powerful contrast to the obviously infuriated Shamir. Reflecting the principle of the Peace of Westphalia, Dr. Shafi said, “In the name of the Palestinian people, we wish to directly address the Israeli people, with whom we have had a prolonged exchange of pain: Let us share hope instead. We are willing to live side by side on the land and the promise of the future. Sharing, however, requires two partners willing to share as equals. Mutuality and reciprocity must replace domination and hostility for genuine reconciliation and coexistence. . . . Your security and ours are mutually dependent, as intertwined as the fears and nightmares of our children.”

These words did not move Shamir, and the Madrid phase of this process disintegrated, to be replaced by bilateral talks in Washington—which also yielded no progress. Shortly after this failure, Shamir’s coalition government collapsed, leading to new elections, which occurred June 23, 1992.

The outcome was a decisive defeat for Shamir and his Jabotinskyite rejection of honest negotiations with the Palestinians. That he had no intention of changing his rejectionist ways was clear in comments he made, two days before the election, to his old terrorist comrades at a memorial meeting of members of the Stern Gang. Shamir, a proponent of continual conflict, told them, “We still need the truth today, the truth of the power of war, or at least we need to accept that war is inescapable, because without this, the life of the individual has no purpose and the nation has no chance of survival.”

After the election, the defeated Shamir admitted that he would have “carried on autonomy talks for ten years and meanwhile we would have reached half a million people in Judea and Samara,” i.e., Jewish settlers living in the occupied territories, Sharon’s “facts on the ground.”

Rabin, Beilin, and Oslo

The newly elected government was headed by the old war horse of the Labor Party, Yitzhak Rabin, who had patched up long-standing wounds from past battles with Shimon Peres, to present a unified front. Rabin ran on a scaled-down platform, which emphasized three points: agreement on Palestinian self-government within six months to a year; allow residents of East Jerusalem, who had been excluded from Madrid, to participate in the Palestinian negotiation teams; and a freeze in building settlements.

He won with what counts, in Israeli politics, as a virtual landslide: Labor’s seats in the Knesset increased from 39 to 44, while Shamir’s Likud representation dropped from 40 to 32.

Rabin first attempted to revive the Madrid process, identifying the difference between his approach and that of his predecessor. “We inherited the framework of the Madrid conference. . . . But there is one significant change: the previous



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What's needed now is the leadership of "those with the courage to change axioms," as former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin advocated, to try to bring about peace through cooperative development.

government created the tools, but it never intended to use them in order to advance peace."

However, when the sixth round of bilateral talks in Washington bogged down in August 1992, Rabin recognized that a change in thinking was needed. First, in December 1992, he repealed a law introduced by Shamir which proscribed contact between Israeli citizens and the PLO, thus allowing direct negotiations.

Secondly, in January 1993, he authorized secret talks in Oslo, between representatives of Israel—overseen by Yossi Beilin and directed by Uri Savir—with representatives of the PLO, headed by Ahmad Qurei (Abu Ala), a banker who worked directly with the current President of the Palestinian Authority, Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas).

The Declaration of Principles, which was hammered out by these teams, was first presented to the Israeli Cabinet on Aug. 30, 1993. This included two parts: a political agreement, centered on Palestinian recognition of Israel's right to exist, and Israel's acceptance of a Palestinian state (this included many thorny issues, such as Palestinian right-of-return and the status of Jerusalem, which were postponed to future negotiations); and a wide-ranging series of economic protocols, which included cooperation in water, power, agriculture, sci-

ence, and technology. Savir noted later that he was "surprised by the degree of Palestinian interest in economic ties with Israel. They saw such cooperation not just as beneficial to their economy but as a bridge to regional development."

The Courage To Change Axioms

The historic nature of the Oslo Accord was identified by historian Avi Shlaim in his insightful book, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*. Prior to Oslo, he writes, both "national movements, Jewish and Palestinian, denied the other the right to self-determination in Palestine. Their history was one of mutual denial and mutual rejection. Now mutual denial made way for mutual recognition, however grudging."

This change was clearly seen in the evolution of Rabin. Once a staunch opponent of Palestinian statehood, he had served as the Defense Minister in a coalition government headed by Shamir, with the task of crushing the Intifada. This experience soon convinced him that there was no alternative but to make peace with Arafat and the PLO.

His wife, Leah, wrote of this change. "The Intifada made it wholly clear to Yitzhak that Israel could not govern another people." By 1989, he "was gradually moving toward advocating Palestinian autonomy and self-determination."

When Rabin came under fierce attack from opponents such as Benjamin Netanyahu, who denounced him for considering Arafat to be a "partner in peace," he responded with biting irony, saying "You make peace with your enemies, not with your friends."

This Westphalian principle was again on display on the White House lawn, when the Oslo Accord was signed on Sept. 13, 1993. With U.S. President Clinton looking on, Rabin shook the hand of his old enemy Arafat, and declared, "We who have come from a land where parents bury their children, we who have fought against you, the Palestinians, we say to you today in a loud and clear voice: Enough of blood and tears, enough!"

Later that night, at a reception in the White House, he proposed a toast to "those with the courage to change axioms."

That Rabin had demonstrated that courage was reflected in the moving tribute to him delivered by President Clinton as a eulogy, at his funeral, after he had been gunned down by a Jewish extremist: "Your Prime Minister," Clinton said, "was a martyr for peace, but he was a victim of hate. Surely, we must learn from his martyrdom that if people cannot let go of the hatred for their enemies, they risk sowing the seeds of hatred among themselves."

The LaRouche Factor in Oslo

Lyndon LaRouche's endorsement of Yossi Beilin's recent call for a second "Madrid Conference" is especially appropriate, given the role played by LaRouche in shaping the discussion process which led to the Oslo Accord. LaRouche worked tirelessly for decades, insisting that peace in the region were possible only through cooperative economic devel-

opment, which would explicitly reflect a change in axioms.

In August 1977, the influential newsletter *Israel and Palestine*, published by Maxim Ghilan, ran an article by LaRouche entitled “A Future for the Middle East.” LaRouche wrote, “Poor Palestinian Arabs squatting in misery along Israel’s borders are not the solution. What is wanted is sovereign nations undergoing effective internal economic development. If Israel, Lebanon, and a Palestinian Arab state, have the same objective policies and basic interests, that is, the mobilization of their populations through an inspiring process of economic development, then we have the basis for a durable agreement, and not otherwise.”

He continued: “Economic development as the objective basis for the solution of the Middle East crisis will succeed, to the extent this solution is seen as the forward march of humanity, as a self-conscious effort to eradicate backwardness and irrationalism, through making sensuous and real the environment of technological and scientific progress. Hence, ignore those babblers who profess to be practical politicians. Their failures have discredited them fully.”

In a memo prepared by LaRouche for release on May 23, 1986, in response to a call by then-Prime Minister Shimon Peres for a “New Marshall Plan,” LaRouche outlined the economic development plan, which he calls the “Oasis Plan,” which was incorporated into the economic annexes of the Oslo Accord. After presenting detailed plans for joint infrastructure development, which will lead to improved living standards, through improved productivity, both for Israel and her neighboring sovereign states, LaRouche identified the deeper philosophical approach he employed, one which is coherent with his—and Beilin’s—insistence on the adoption of the principle of Westphalia today.

LaRouche wrote: “In the relations between Arab and Jew in the Middle East, we discern two opposing cultural movements among each. On the one side, there is the heritage of the Arab Renaissance; on the other side, the Sufism which destroyed that Renaissance from within. Post-Hitler Judaism is of two general views: the one bases itself, optimistically, on 2,000 years of Jewish survival under the diaspora; the other takes Hitler’s holocaust, pessimistically, as its point of departure.

“The cultural basis for peace between Arab and Jew, is the coherence of the impulses of the Arab Renaissance to the principles of 2,000 years of Jewish survival in Europe. The function of regional economic development, is to unleash a cultural renaissance among both Arabs and Jews of the region, to establish the movement for stability within each nation, and to foster among the nations a common view of the dignity of the individual, such that the life of the person of each nation is sacred to all nations.

“Economic development by itself, will not suffice to bring the desired renaissance into existence; but that renaissance can not be effected without a basis in vigorous economic development.”