

Editorial Eye

Palestinians Need Their Own State

Perhaps the most significant news on the international front since September 1978 has been the attempt to establish harmony between Egypt and Israel, climaxing in President Carter's peace mission to the Middle East. Nevertheless, tensions in this area continue with grave repercussions on many fronts. Let us look at a few symptoms of trouble.

The revolution in Iran has not only diminished the flow of oil to the industrialized nations by about three million barrels a day; it has also undermined the military strength of the USA in that volatile area. Rumors are intensifying that the USA is building a strike force to protect its oil supplies.

Israel itself is violating the spirit of the peace treaties with Egypt by its Cabinet-level decision to build a new Jewish settlement at Elon Moreh on the occupied West Bank. This settlement is to be located in part on privately owned Arab land. This does not seem to bother Premier Menachem Begin in the least; he argues that all of the territory that belonged to the "land of Israel" in Old Testament times rightfully belongs to the state of Israel today. And he draws the dangerous conclusion that the autonomy promised to the Palestinians should apply only to the people but not the land in which they live.

Canada has added to the tensions when Joe Clark, in the campaign which led to his election as Prime Minister on May 22, promised in some of the heavily Jewish ridings of north Toronto, that his government would move Canada's embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. This plan was quickly shelved when the Arab countries threatened to take action against Canadian economic interests.

Jerusalem of course cannot function as Israel's capital since it is at the heart of the very rift that divides the region geographically, culturally and spiritually. All of this was driven home once more with the explosion of a terrorist bomb in Tel Aviv's central bus station and Israel's immediate retaliation by bombing five Palestinian strongholds in southern Lebanon on Sunday, June 24.

The most recent complication was the June 26 decision of the OPEC cartel to further increase the price of oil. This decision occurred after the "driest oil weekend" ever in the USA. It lent special significance to the summit meeting of the leaders of the seven most industrialized nations meeting in Tokyo during the last week of June.

Clearly, stability in the Middle East is essential to world harmony. Why is it so hard to achieve? From an economic point of view it is by now pretty clear — hopefully even to Americans — that the dependence of the industrialized nations on Middle East oil will have to be reduced drastically.

But the central issue is not economic; it is political. This is the case in Iran which understandably reacted against the intrusion of Western "modernization" into an Islamic civilization. But it is particularly the case with the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. To be sure, it is too late now to argue that the 1948 establishment of an Israeli state in the midst of the Arab world was a geopolitical mistake. But it is not too late to argue that political independence for the Palestinians is an indispensable condition for stability in the Middle East. And by "political independence" I do not mean geographic or personal autonomy on the part of the Palestinians within a state governed by Israel. It means minimally that the Palestinians must have the opportunity to shape their own political affairs in an independent state, possibly in federal codetermination with non-Palestinian peoples but not subject to conditions imposed by non-Palestinian peoples.

Independence for the Palestinians requires *political space*. This is hard to come by in the crowded Middle East, filled with people divided on

nearly every basic human issue. In order to protect the little space Palestinians today occupy, Israeli settlements on lands occupied by them since the 1973 war should be dismantled, not only in the Sinai Desert but also on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Further, continued substantial immigration of Jews into Israel from abroad — including Russia — should be discouraged. Both Ottawa and Washington should rethink their Middle East policies on these two immediate issues. But that rethinking should take place within the much larger premise that the Palestinians have a right to a political home not subject to Israeli control.

Only if that premise becomes the basis for our Middle East policies can we expect to move toward stability — and justice — in that strife-torn area.

BZ

Can South Africa Rise With Vorster's Fall?

For almost a whole year now the South African government has been plagued by what has become known as the Information Scandal. One of its departments, the (former) Information Department, misappropriated funds and engaged in other corrupt practices to provide artificial support for the heavily beleaguered position of the National Party and its ideology. The ideology comes down to this: for the sake of the preservation of Christianity and civilization in Southern Africa it is necessary that the Afrikaner Volk continue to exist in all its purity. Exposure from especially the opposition press together with revelations made by members of the judiciary led to the discovery and investigation of the