

Arab Delusions by Alfred Friendly

Peace Is Remote, as Realities Are Ignored

JERUSALEM—A favorite story in Western mining camps had to do with the time that Heaven barred admission to

any more prospectors, since those already there were tearing the place apart by digging up the golden streets.

A newly arrived prospector bargained his way through the Pearly Gates, however, by promising to rid Paradise of all the rest in 24 hours.

Well before the time expired the prospectors began to leave, each with his picks and placer pans loaded on his burrow. At the end of the line came the newest one.

"Congratulations," said St. Peter, "but how did you do it?"

"Easy," the prospector replied, "I spread the rumor that there was a platinum strike in Hell."

"Brilliant — but why are you leaving too?"

"Well," said the prospector, "there just might be something to it."

FROM THE Israeli viewpoint, being deluded by one's own lies and suffering the consequences appears pervasive phenomenon in the Arab world. As long as it persists, constructive steps toward a real peace in the area seem remote.

These delusions were cultivated over a long period. They will not be quickly expunged. Evidence of them is abundant throughout the Arab territories that Israel now occupies.

At the school of a now-deserted U. N. Relief and Works Agency refugee camp in Jericho, the wall maps and geography books portray the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as stretching from Iraq to the Mediterranean Coast. Israel does not exist. King Hussein's sway, according to the maps, extends to Haifa, Tel Aviv and the Egyptian frontier.

At that frontier in the Gaza Strip, a small boy last week approached an Israeli soldier, a Moroccan, who spoke Arabic.

"Do you have any Jews?" the lad inquired.

That the occupying soldiers were Israeli and that they had conquered was apparent to him. But obviously they were not Jews, because he knew from cartoons that Jews were old men in black, with beards, side curls and hooked noses.

AT A HIGHER level, the perpetrators of the delusions seem steeped in self-deception. The fire-eaters, which is to say the Algerians, Syrians and Iraqis, appear seriously to be programming, for a year or so hence, a guerrilla warfare campaign against Israel. This is an impossibility from Syria and Egypt, where the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights and Sinai Peninsula block access to the civilian population. If it were undertaken at all, the campaign would have to go through Jordan, where the Israeli reaction is obvious. The Israeli army can take Amman in three hours.

About that, King Hussein does not entertain illusions, but such realism does not seem to mark his thinking on border issues. To be sure, he is known to have renounced any future joint action with President Nasser of Egypt and is reported to believe that he must act alone in any moves toward a settlement with Israel.

But the only formula he has been willing to hint at, publicly or in private intimations to third parties, calls for Israel first to make concessions to him—to return Jerusalem and the West Bank and withdraw its troops—as a condition for any talks.

His stand suggests a misconception about who won the war, and a failure to appreciate that he lost a larger portion of a nation in a shorter time than anyone else since World War II. Israel had not expected Jordan to go to war before Hussein's pact with Nasser and

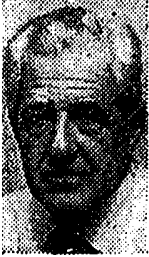
would not have taken Jordanian territory had Hussein's pact with Nasser and Salem.

DOUBTLESS ISRAEL is not exempt from self-deception, inasmuch as the fault seems universal to the human race. But for the moment, it clings solidly to what it sees as essential realities:

- It will make peace only with its enemies, in direct negotiations, and not with third parties or in return for international guarantees and assurances.

- It will not withdraw its troops without such settlements. It will not place its neck back in the noose that Nasser knotted in the three weeks before the war.

Israel's delusion may be the idea that the Arab states will ever negotiate with it. But it is prepared to wait in that expectation.



Friendly