

Arab press views Netanyahu's 'bad Tripp'

by Joseph Brewda

Arab media have warned that the latest scandal targeting President Bill Clinton, may scuttle his efforts to put the Oslo peace accords back on track. The scandal broke three days before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Washington on Jan. 19, and hit with full force during his two-day visit. "This issue has attracted a lot of political and media attention," said Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa. "Therefore we hope it will not affect the peace process." Musa had previously warned that Netanyahu's visit, simultaneous with that of Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, who met Clinton separately, was the "last chance" to save the peace process.

Netanyahu certainly used the scandal to his advantage while in Washington. Most provocatively, he joined forces with Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and other Bush-linked televangelist charlatans, to organize anti-Arab and anti-Clinton hate rallies. The same evangelical crowd has been leading the assault to destroy the office of the Presidency, including in the latest scandal.

Predictably, as Arab media point out, Netanyahu refused to make any concessions in his discussions with Clinton (he offered only "peanuts," according to Arafat), and returned to Israel in triumph. On Jan. 26, he told his coalition supporters that the Oslo Accords do not stand in the way of building a new round of settlements in the Occupied Territories. According to reports circulating in all the Israeli press, there are plans afoot to build as many as 30,000 new housing units in the Occupied Territories, which, if carried out, would make Oslo a dead letter. This novel interpretation of the accords, coherent with all of Netanyahu's other antics, shows how Netanyahu could again bring the region to war.

What follows are selections from some Arab and Israeli newspaper commentary on the curious timing of the assault on the U.S. President.

Documentation

Al Quds al Arabi, London, Jan. 22: "Clinton's Sex Scandals and the Importance of Their Timing," is the title of the editorial of this London-based Palestinian newspaper:

"It may be no coincidence that President Bill Clinton's

sex scandals have surfaced in this way three days before his meeting with Benjamin Netanyahu, the Hebrew state's prime minister, which was aimed at persuading him to implement the Oslo agreements and withdraw from the West Bank's rural areas. Those who caused the scandals to surface and forced the U.S. President to testify, in the first instance of this kind in U.S. history, wanted to weaken him in front of his Israeli guest and to prevent him from exerting any pressure on him.

"Paula Jones, who brought charges of sexual harassment against the U.S. President when he was governor of Arkansas and who gave explicit details about the nature of this harassment, including the allegation that he unbuttoned his pants and asked her to perform an immoral act, is not acting alone and has the backing of a huge and very effective media, legal, and financial machine.

"What is remarkable is that some voices have started to emerge strongly in the media and in the U.S. legislative institutions demanding that President Clinton be expelled from the White House as being unfit, in their view, to lead the country's highest executive authority, and for actions incompatible with his status. The U.S. Constitution requires any demand to impeach the President to have the backing of two-thirds of the votes in Congress. This means that he will need to secure the vote of every Jew or every supporter of the Hebrew state in the battle to stay on, should matters reach this dangerous stage.

"What is happening with Clinton now is a repeat of similar events involving President Nixon, who did not complete his second term and left the White House in disgrace after the famous Watergate scandal. When Nixon was besieged with the evidence and the media campaigns proving his involvement in this scandal, he begged for every Jewish vote in Congress and airlifted \$1 billion worth of weapons to the Hebrew state to strengthen its resolve in confronting the Syrian-Egyptian victories during the 1973 war. The Arab peoples, and particularly those in Palestine, Iraq, Sudan, and Libya, and in the Arab states in general, will pay the price of Clinton's scandals in the form of further U.S. support for the Israeli aggression."

Al Akhbar, Cairo, Jan. 26: The Egyptian government daily, in its lead editorial, reports that the scandal "unmasks the Jewish lobby's strategy of immoral practices targeting U.S. chief executives, even the friendly ones, in order to intimidate others who would rebel against their set role. Clinton's cold shouldering of Netanyahu, might have triggered Clinton's present predicament. Netanyahu could have given the Jewish lobby the green light to expose Clinton's sexual scandals, and so preoccupy the government and people of the U.S.A., in following the serial through to the conclusion."

In a Jan. 27 editorial, it adds: "Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stands as the only party to gain from a paralyzed U.S. foreign policy machine; he has already made use

of the gloom prevailing in Washington, during his recent visit, to impose his old-fashioned views on the White House.”

Al Wafd, Cairo, Jan. 26: “What is most feared,” editorializes the daily, “is that a strike against Iraq could be the only way out of U.S. President Clinton’s predicament. Clinton has concluded consultations with White House aides, where the decision was taken that a strike against Iraq is necessary to bring Saddam Hussein to approve unrestricted Unscorm access to Iraqi Presidential palaces. However, the purpose of the strike does not in any way relate to Unscorm [but] to distract the American people’s attention from President Clinton’s sexual scandals.

“But can the Jewish lobby claim not to have arranged the plot, at a time when the Clinton administration was to confront the Israeli challenge, and corral maverick Prime Minister Netanyahu once more into the peace bin, and further bind him to implementing the provisions of the Oslo Accords, which stipulate the redeployment of Israeli forces by early March? Netanyahu, unwilling to honor the Oslo commitments, would not allow the U.S. President, in his capacity as the main sponsor, to prevent a collapse of the peace process. He has declared a political, moral war of attrition against President Clinton which would render him unable to object to Israeli provocative policies.”

Al Ahrām, Cairo, Jan. 26: “Under the light of the retreat from the Mideast peace process as one of the administration’s priorities, and Clinton’s preoccupation with other personal issues, such as the sex scandals which reveal the power of the U.S. Zionist lobby and its ability to stop Clinton from even thinking about putting pressure on Netanyahu, the possibility of Washington’s success in forcing Netanyahu to implement the peace accords is very weak, if not impossible,” reports the Egyptian government daily.

Al Ittihad, United Arab Emirates, Jan. 24: “It is not surprising to see this furious campaign against U.S. President Bill Clinton, which is charging him with the most vicious accusations. What is clear is that the targetting of Clinton today, which is a campaign attempting to remove him from his post at the White House, is a penal campaign targetting him personally due to his recent stance toward Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. We don’t want to defend the U.S. President, because he is better able to do so than we, but we wish to shed light on the immoral style followed by Zionist pressure groups in the United States, against anyone who opposes their views, even if it were the President of the United States himself.”

Al Ittihad, United Arab Emirates, Jan. 27: “There is more than one group encircling Clinton’s throat with a soft silken thread. But these threads are meant to strangle a U.S. President said to have presented new ideas to revive the Palestinian-

Israeli negotiations, including Israel’s pulling back from the West Bank, at a rate not accepted by the leader of Jewish Fascism; and was said to have opened a small window for a diplomatic solution in the Iraq crisis, which the leaders of Zionist pressure groups in the U.S. reject.”

Al Baath, Syria, Jan. 25: “The ‘grand issue’ is nothing but clear blackmail against President Clinton, in this critical period when the U.S. administration is expressing its anger, and concern, toward the Israeli practices against the peace process. While the American media are continuing their exaggeration around the alleged relationship to a White House intern, the people of the United States are feeling that the mass media have transgressed all borders.”

Al-Thawara, Syria, Jan. 25: “The issue of the sex scandals, which President Clinton is facing, is coming from the Zionist lobby, with the aim of blackmailing him, and preventing him from putting pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.”

Jerusalem Post, Israel, Jan. 25: In a tongue-in-cheek editorial, entitled “Nightmare in Washington,” the British-owned, Hollinger Corp. newspaper gloats: “The latest scandal rocking Washington is depressing on many counts — and not just because a U.S. President, who in many ways is one of the best we have seen for decades, could possibly be laid low by one of the oldest of human weaknesses. Just as worrisome as the accusations . . . is the spectacle of a nation wallowing in every salacious detail, as if nothing else in the world matters. . . . In the total media feeding frenzy over the sex scandal, an international crisis that could seriously affect millions of lives is unlikely to get a look-in.”

The Irish Times, Dublin, Jan. 26: “In Israeli right-wing circles, they are calling her a ‘modern-day Esther,’ a 1990s version of the Jewish heroine who, according to the Old Testament, became queen to the Persian King Ahasuerus, and used her royal access to thwart an evil courtier’s plan to massacre the Jews. In some Arab circles, what they’re calling her is unprintable. She is, of course, Monica Lewinsky — ‘saviour of Greater Israel’ or ‘enemy of the Palestinians,’ depending on where you sit.

“The Monica-as-Esther comparisons sprang up, appropriately enough, among worshippers in Jerusalem’s synagogues this past sabbath. Like Esther, the right-wing parallel runs, Monica allegedly slept with the head of state at a time when the people of Israel were in grave peril.

“And like Esther, her intervention has averted a danger — the likelihood of President Clinton embarking on a personal Middle East peace initiative, and forcing the Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, into undermining Israel’s security by giving up more West Bank land to the Palestinians.”