



Jerusalem 4:11; Toronto 4:40

Commentary...

Pedagogy of Hate

By Itamar Marcus and Barbara Crook

If you want to know what's really at the heart of the Palestinian conflict with Israel, don't ask politicians or diplomats. Go to Palestinian children.

Unlike the rest of the world, they've been paying close attention to what their leaders and educators have been teaching. And they are ready to practice what they've been taught.

For instance, children interviewed on PA TV last week state without reservation that Israel has no right to exist, and that the goal for which they're willing to sacrifice their lives is Israel's destruction.

"They [the Jews] came to take Palestine, that is, Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, Ramle. All these cities belong to Palestine," one youth explains in a December 25 broadcast, echoing years of standard Palestinian Authority indoctrination.

And because he is convinced that Israel has no right to exist: "We hope, hope, hope and I emphasize these things, that the Arab countries and the foreign countries – all the countries of the world – will support the Palestinians and will expel the Israelis.

"We must expel all Israelis from Palestine. Because Israel – there is nothing called 'Israel' in the world. The Israelis [came] from Holland, America, Iran."

The children are seen promising they will keep fighting, generation after generation, until they liberate Palestine.

Furthermore, they say they don't fear death in the struggle because it is shahada – death for Allah. "Even if all the Palestinian children, Palestinian youth, Palestinian women, and Palestinian men die, we will not surrender!"

None of this is surprising to anyone who has been paying attention to what does on in the PA educational system. Israel is erased from PA maps, schoolbooks and historians deny Israel's right to exist, and educators at all levels teach that Israel is a foreign colonial implant.

Despite PA claims to the contrary, its textbooks continue to delegitimize Israel and dismiss it as a foreign occupier: "Palestine faced the British occupation after the First World War in 1917, and the Israeli occupation in 1948."

Children are taught that all of Israel is part of Palestine. For example, "Among the famous rocks of southern Palestine are the rocks of Beersheba and the Negev..." About Palestine's water sources, children are taught: "The most important is the Sea of Galilee."

Such messages of delegitimization have been affirmed by Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei. He is on record as rejecting the idea of Israel as a Jewish state. "President Bush said that Israel is a Jewish state, which is a cause for our concern. This should not have been said," he told Al-Nahar and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida on June 15, 2003.

PA-affiliated historians appear on educational TV to reinforce this message. On December 28 Dr. Isam Sisalem reiterated what he has said on numerous broadcasts. Jews "have no history or connection to this land" and are nothing but a "cancer" planted by Britain to control the Middle East.

In the same educational broadcast last week, another historian resurrected The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the infamous anti-Semitic forgery, citing it as one of the foundations of the First Zionist Congress in 1897.

"The Zionist movement began at the Basel Congress to plan the exploitation of the powers' struggle, and the struggle of Europe over the Middle East," said Dr. Riad Al-Astal, a history lecturer at Al-Azhar University in Gaza.

Consequently, when we view children on PA TV who say they want to destroy Israel, to liberate Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa, Acre, and Ramle, and to expel the Jews, we are seeing children who are accurately regurgitating the sentiments inculcated and reinforced throughout PA society.

Indeed, years of anti-Israel indoctrination have been alarmingly effective in teaching Palestinian youth that the Jews have no link to Israel, that Israel has no right to exist and that the overriding goal of the next generation – even at the cost of their lives – should be to eliminate Israel.

The essence of the conflict is Israel's very right to exist – not the question of borders or refugees. Peace negotiations that do not address the PA's system of

ISRAEL NEWS

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indoctrination will be 101
short-term paper agreements doomed to failure.

Palestinian children have already figured this out. Perhaps the rest of us need to stay after school.

Marcus is founder and director of Palestinian Media Watch. Crook is PMW's North American representative. (Jerusalem Post Jan 4)

Not the Slightest Regret By Yoel Marcus

Eitan Ronel, a retired lieutenant colonel, returned his rank insignia to the chief of staff this week, along with a letter full of bitterness. "Human life has lost its worth and values we were raised on, such as purity of arms, have become a bad joke," he wrote (Haaretz, January 4).

Ronel's protest over the IDF's conduct in the territories is not the first and won't be the last. The reserve pilots, the Sayeret Matkal commandos and the 12th graders got there before him. Before them, there were the four Shin Bet chiefs and the former head of the Mossad. On top of that, we've got B'Tselem and Gush Shalom, plus the Beilins and the Sarids and the Burgs, who are big on peace with the Palestinians and feel their pain. We have committees of inquiry investigating how and why Palestinian women and children were killed in this or that operation. We have a High Court to which every Palestinian can appeal. We have a media that will not allow the least injustice or wrong to slip by. We have columnists whose hearts ache along with the Palestinians.

What I would like to know is why there is no one on the other side crying out against the Palestinian Authority's policy of hatred and bloodshed. Where is their B'Tselem? Where are the Palestinian refuseniks who object to the murder of women and children?

How come, when civilians are accidentally killed in one of our military operations, everyone clamors right away for an investigation, while their suicide bombers have no qualms about boarding a bus packed with children or entering a crowded restaurant and blowing themselves up, fully aware of who they are taking with them? Not only are they not denounced, but their families are treated with respect and showered with perks and pensions.

While we quarrel bitterly over ways to solve the conflict, the Palestinian government has only one way, and it begins and ends with violence. The Palestinians imbibe hatred of Israel with their mothers' milk. From childhood, they are taught that the Jews must die.

In their textbooks, it doesn't say, of course, that the ones who stole their rights were the Arab countries, who invaded the land earmarked for them in the UN partition plan when they attacked in 1948. It doesn't say that they were liberated from Arab occupation only in 1967 - by Israel. Actually, it's been easier for them to push for an independent state under Israeli control than it would ever have been under Jordanian-Egyptian rule.

Whenever a truly historical moment arises - the Oslo Accords, the Clinton-Barak initiative - that's when they go on a spree of suicide bombings in the heart of Israeli population centers. The Palestinians have crossed all the red lines. They have turned Israeli peaceniks into radicals, rousing them into angry rebellion against what is happening around them. But while we respond, while we torture ourselves, while we keep asking ourselves every second if we haven't gone overboard and maybe it's time to stop, the Palestinians have never shown the slightest regret over any attack, no matter how massive, no matter how cruel.

Instead of the Palestinian Authority keeping Hamas in check, it is Hamas that sets the tone. Even in times of grief and pain, the two peoples are poles apart. When we bury our dead, we weep quietly at the graveside. For them, every funeral becomes a raucous demonstration of hatred and incitement against Israel.

Israeli society is plunged in gritty debate. The government is being criticized for not doing enough to end the conflict. Before the intifadas, there were signs that coexistence was possible. Tens of thousands of Israelis flocked to the territories - to have their teeth fixed, to have their cars repaired, to do their food shopping. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians worked in Israel proper.

Today, the only contact is via the barrel of a gun, the army checkpoint, the helicopter gunship, the Qassam rocket and the explosive belt. The IDF reprisal attacks in the territories may be brutal, but there are also people

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who feel sorry for the Palestinians' bitter lot.

Here one finds anger mixed with compassion; there, one finds anger mixed with loathing. Below the surface in Israel, hopes for peace continue to rumble. For them, hatred is total and blinding. Here they are with President Bush's road map staring them in the face, giving them a state of their own. And yet they won't do the one thing that will open the gate for them: dismantle terrorist infrastructure. Abu Mazen was ousted and Abu Ala will follow the orders of Arafat, who knows no other way but terror.

It is not a fence that will change things but tearing down the wall of hatred that the Palestinians have built between the two peoples. (Ha'aretz Jan 6)

CBS's Simon Not Fenced in by Facts

By Andrea Levin

Veteran CBS correspondent Bob Simon's December 21, 2003 60 Minutes segment on the fence Israel is building to thwart terrorists displayed the same defects apparent in so many of his reports. It was manipulative and shaky on key factual assertions.

By conscious editorial choice, emphasis was given to critics of the fence, with three Palestinians and an Israeli detractor counterbalanced by two Israeli proponents of the project. Nowhere did Simon report the overwhelming Israeli public support for the barrier, as indicated in an October poll by the Tami Steinmetz Center that found 82% believe the fence will prevent or significantly reduce terrorism.

Instead, a former Israeli official opposed to the fence is featured both in the program teaser and in the segment itself declaring that giving "hope" to the Palestinians, rather than building a fence, is the key to security. For emphasis, Simon reiterates: "So giving the Palestinians hope is a more effective security measure than building a fence?"

Simon also repeats without caveat the nonsensical claim of the same Israeli that "there's less terrorism when Palestinians have more hope for a state of their own." The CBS luminary has himself reported from Israel since before Oslo, when large-scale terror attacks were rare, and after Oslo's ceding of land and authority and the offer of a state, when the mass killings exploded. But the correspondent known for tough jabs is silent.

Similarly false and deceptive are Simon's repeated references to the fence taking "Palestinian land," and to the problem of the fence deviating from the 1967 lines - as though the land is not, in fact, disputed, with its ultimate disposition to be negotiated in accordance with U.N. Resolution 242. That resolution did not, contrary to Simon's continuous sub-text, mandate ceding all West Bank territory. Indeed, its authors believed Israel could not possibly defend itself along those lines and assumed alterations would be required, and this view has been endorsed explicitly by American civilian and military leaders.

Simon's story does include two officials advocating the barrier as effective protection against terrorist incursions. A Knesset Member and a general who is chief of strategic planning for the Israeli army both argue the necessity of the fence. And the role of terrorism is included with footage of bombing scenes.

But in addition to the Israeli detractor, three Palestinian civilians present the personal face of dislocation and difficulty wrought by the new fence. One farmer says he can't reach his greenhouses, another speaks of being cut off from his olive orchards. (Simon omits mention of Israel's efforts to minimize losses to olive growers by replanting trees affected by the path of the fence, a policy that has led to moving some 60,000 trees.)

Most emotional is a Palestinian woman, an "author and architect," who weeps while describing the anguish she feels when she witnesses "older people" subjected to the "unbearable" humiliation of passing through checkpoints necessitated by the fence. Simon commiserates: "And you never get used to it."

No civilian Israeli victims of terror, whether the bereaved, the wounded or the fearful, are given the chance to tell viewers about not getting "used to" the "unbearable" feeling of vulnerability caused by knowing predators seek entry into Israel to kill and maim them.

Why, for instance, did Simon not interview stunned young Israeli students and parents at the Yokne'am school in northern Israel, which had only two weeks earlier been the would-be target of two Islamic Jihad terrorists. The killers' intention was to explode 22 pounds of explosives among as many students as possible. Captured by the Israeli military, the men said the nearby town of Bardaleh had been chosen to cross into Israel because the security fence did not extend there.

But just as Simon opts for the cliched setup of characters - the hard-nosed Israelis and suffering Palestinians - he takes a pass on reporting the truth about what fuels the bombers. The Palestinian architect insists the "wall will create more young people" without work and school "ready to do nasty things." Here as in other coverage, Simon is entirely mute regarding the

Palestinians' venomous incitement against Jews and Israelis, the extolling of suicide killers and calls for Israel's destruction in schools, media, mosques and rallies, in sports tournaments, posters and even via children's "martyr" necklaces and trading cards.

Indeed, while he has previously done entire stories on suicide bombers, he has never deviated from the charted story line, never focused on the role and

responsibility of Palestinian society in nurturing genocidal hatred whose stated aim is not the adjustment of West Bank lines one way or another, but the annihilation of Israel.

But to tell the truth about Palestinian incitement and Palestinian goals would require Simon to embrace journalistic standards he has eschewed for decades of reporting from Israel. His unwillingness to break that pattern is a "barrier" likely to remain in place.

The writer is Executive Director of CAMERA, Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America. (Jerusalem Post Jan 2)

Bibi as Economic Reformer By Daniel Doron

Three generations of Israeli statism is enough.

WHEN FORMER prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu took on the thankless job of finance minister last March, Israel was facing a grave economic crisis. In the sixth year of a deep recession, the country had seen its tax receipts plummet while welfare transfer payments kept growing, amounting to more than a third of the government's \$70 billion budget. The budget deficit had reached a perilous 5 percent of GNP. It was feared that the government might not be able to meet the payroll of a bloated public sector that employs every third worker in Israel, or keep paying generous benefits to the more than 10 percent of the workforce that is unemployed. To guard against inflation, the Bank of Israel kept interest rates so high (9.1 percent in real terms at their peak) that the economy was choking. There were murmurs Israel might slide into an Argentinian-style crisis or a deflation like Japan's.

The economic hard times have greatly aggravated social and political tensions. Many hardworking and intelligent Israeli workers earn less than \$1,200 a month, barely making ends meet. Near poverty even in the professional classes and extreme wealth among a few well-connected economic and political operators have created one of the worst income gaps in the world. Israel's fractious politics are made even worse by the intense competition among interest groups vying for government favor. In short, a lot is riding on the success or failure of the finance minister.

The wildest optimists would not have predicted that Netanyahu could reverse this downward economic trend, and in fairly short order. Yet the economy is growing again. Netanyahu has managed to make substantial cuts in two consecutive budgets and reduce the bloated public workforce and salaries (though not enough). He has even managed to reduce unemployment benefits that discouraged lower paid Israelis from working.

Netanyahu also launched a modest tax reform, bringing the top marginal rate below 50 percent of income. And he courageously took over the Histadrut-controlled pension funds that were going bankrupt as a result of the labor federation's mismanagement. But the Histadrut, cynically posing as the protector of workers' pensions (that the union itself has squandered), launched a well-financed campaign of massive demonstrations, strike threats, and a PR drive vilifying Netanyahu as the benefactor of the rich (because he cut taxes). The strikes, only some of which materialized, almost broke an already teetering Israeli economy.

Netanyahu's showdown with labor is an epic struggle. He wants to privatize the hugely wasteful public-sector monopolies, but that means taking on Israel's most powerful unions. Workers in the seaports and airports and in the electrical and water works--all government-owned monopolies--earn five times the average Israeli salary and have cushy work arrangements. Jaguar-driving union bosses enjoy fantastic perks for no-show jobs. They threatened to bring the economy to a halt to protect these privileges, counting on support from other public-sector workers, government employees, teachers, etc.

Their leader in this is the politically ambitious boss of the Histadrut, Amir Peretz, a member of the Knesset who heads his own political party. Together with the Labor opposition, Peretz's unions have done everything in their considerable power to thwart Netanyahu's reform plans. But Netanyahu garnered great public sympathy that made the strikers back down. He still faces the threat of general strikes that may halt the progress of his reforms.

Netanyahu has shown great political skill in putting his economic rescue plan through a skeptical and divided government and a fragmented Knesset. Only Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has given him strong backing in his fight with the Histadrut. His fellow government ministers had other political axes to grind, and altogether they would not mind very much to see Netanyahu fail. His trump card was, no doubt, the \$9 billion in American loan guarantees this summer that allowed the government of Israel to tap international markets for desperately needed funds, as they have nearly depleted local credit markets. The U.S. government astutely made the loan guarantees conditional on the enactment of basic economic reforms, tipping the political scales in favor of Netanyahu's bold moves.

Despite these manifest achievements, it is not a safe bet that Netanyahu will be able to break the monopolies that have dominated Israel's economy for decades. Some argue that Netanyahu should first have tackled the

private monopolies that add about 30 percent to the prices paid by Israeli consumers. This would have been of great benefit to lower paid workers and would have helped him to counter the union charges that he is catering to the rich.

Netanyahu's greatest challenge remains the overly concentrated and dysfunctional Israeli financial markets, which are reminiscent of Japan's in the way they misallocate capital and hinder growth. Israeli banks, led by the Ha'poalim and Le'umi duopoly, control over 80 percent of all savings and also issue stock that is bought and sold by funds owned by the banks in a stock exchange they control. It is a situation rife with conflict of interest--70 percent of credit has been allocated to one percent of borrowers--and arguably the chief cause of a decade of nongrowth in Israel.

Commenting on a new Finance Ministry initiative to distribute options to Israelis for the purchase of privatized bank shares, Guy Rolnik, Israel's sharpest financial writer, remarked that "very few crucial economic changes are easy. The structural reforms Israel needs generally hit at very powerful interest groups. It is [therefore] easier to lavish shares on the people than to slash the deficit to 4 percent of GDP . . . [or] grapple with the bank barons over their domination of the [economic] system, or to wrest the mutual funds from their grasp."

Netanyahu will be measured, Rolnik concludes, "by real economic parameters . . . of unemployment, which is not budging . . . and by the real pace of economic growth," which at 1.5 percent is still anemic.

In fairness, though, given the strong resistance by vested interests, an immediate attack on the monopolies may have been too much to hope for. But Netanyahu is smart enough to know that he will eventually have to take on the powerful banks and break up the private monopolies if he is to have any hope of seeing healthy growth rates on his watch. What's more, he understands that without such growth, his hope of again becoming prime minister will diminish.

The next few months will reveal whether Netanyahu has the power to push a comprehensive economic reform plan that finally undoes the damaging legacy of decades of Israeli socialism. To succeed in such an ambitious undertaking, he will need public support.

Many Israelis realize that economic reform and growth are not merely a matter of an improved standard of living. They are a matter of survival. Israel will not be able to keep its young at home and attract vital immigration unless its economy is vibrant. Nor will a laggard economy be able to finance Israel's rapidly rising security costs.

For this reason alone, Netanyahu deserves the backing of the U.S. government. But there are deeper reasons for Washington to support such a reform effort. Hope for peace with the Palestinians will diminish considerably unless a thriving Israeli economy can help the Palestinians rebuild their ruined economy and establish a civil society capable of living in peace. Few people noticed, but until the 1996 Oslo agreement there was an informal but very real "peace process" going on between Israelis and Palestinians, and it was rooted in economic development.

Given the choice between progress under Israeli occupation and being ruled by the terrorists and criminals known as "The Palestinian Authority," the verdict of most Palestinians was always in favor of a peaceful economic coexistence. Between the 1967 Six Day War and Oslo, Israel employed annually hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who had total freedom to move everywhere in Israel. In all these years there were only a handful of terrorist acts, mostly by Arafat's hirelings. Clearly, a silent majority of Palestinians were ready to live peacefully with Israel despite the occupation. It was only after Oslo, and the incessant brainwashing and incitement by the PLO Tunisian gang, that the mood among the Palestinians turned murderous.

But even after Oslo, when residents of East Jerusalem, mostly zealous Muslims and fervent nationalists, were given the choice between Israeli papers and PA citizenship, 99 percent chose Israeli papers--not because they became Zionists or learned to love Israeli occupation, but because they rationally chose the lesser evil. They realized that under Israeli occupation, however infuriating, they benefited from the rule of law, freedom of movement, and economic opportunities that more than quintupled their standard of living.

Trying to put the political horse before the economic cart, and years of political meddling by well-meaning and not-so-well-meaning parties have only aggravated the conflict. Perhaps it is time to return to the pre-Oslo model of a quiet but real peace process between ordinary people, a process based on real interests served by economic relationships rather than on radicalizing political fantasies. Helping Israel put its economic house in order could be just the peace plan Washington is looking for. It is surely worth a try.

The writer is president of the Israel Center for Social and Economic Progress, an independent pro-market policy think tank. (Weekly Standard Jan 12)

Tommy and Tamimi By Sarah Honig

During this week's budgetary tussle between the NRP and Shinui, Tommy Lapid, with characteristic supercilious scorn, railed against national-religious causes while staunchly demanding NIS 40 million more for the shallow sanctimonious affectation which parades in our milieu as culture. That's beyond the NIS 120m. addition he already secured.

"Without culture, what's the state for? What are we doing here?" he exclaimed.

Considering this largely headline-grabbing, out-to-shock "culture," his logical conclusion must be that Zionism's *raison d'être* is to promote pretentious hacks who trash the Jewish state and tarnish its image among the nations.

We're here to create art for provocation's sake, to paint victims as Nazis and Nazi torchbearers as victims. We're here to beat the IDF's breast for never-committed war crimes and convince a hostile world that they were committed. The Jewish state was apparently founded to produce movies and plays that portray Israelis as invading colonists who dispossessed indigenous inhabitants.

We're here to surrender every last Jewish sacred symbol, dress up ideological cynicism as art, use it to delegitimize Jewish nationalism, undermine Jewish claims to the only Jewish homeland and unwittingly give succor to the likes of Sheikh Taisir Tamimi, the PA's second-highest Muslim cleric.

He's the one who walked out on an interfaith dialogue with chief rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau and the pope in Jerusalem nearly four years ago, and who lately urges Arab states to attack Israel. The Cave of the Patriarchs, he recently declared, "is a pure mosque, which Jewish presence defiles. Jews have no right to pray there, much less claim any bond or connection to Hebron - an Arab city for 5,000 years All Palestine is holy Muslim soil. Jews are foreign interlopers."

Back in 1950 poet Natan Alterman penned a reply to a near-identical proclamation ("Palestine is an Arab country and always was. Foreigners have no part in it.") It was entitled *An Arab Land* and appeared on the Labor daily *Davar's* front page. I translated it a decade ago.

*A clear night. Treetops shiver,
Vibrating the view with an airy whisper.
From above, Arab evening stars
Sparkle over an Arab land.
The stars wink and flicker
And bestow their quivering glitter
Upon the tranquil city Al-Quds
In which once reigned King Daoud.
And from there they gaze and witness
The city of El Halil in the distance.
The city of Father Ibrahim's tomb,
Ibrahim who begat Is'hak.
And then the clever rays so fast
Rush the golden glow to cast
Where the waters of the river El Urdun flow,
Where Ya'acub once did go.
A clear night. With an airy wink
The stars legitimately blink
Over the mountains of an Arab land
Which Mussa from afar beheld.*

When Alterman wrote his tongue-in-cheek verse, he could realistically expect his ironies to be readily understood. His readers were assumed to have some notion about the Jewish history of this land and why they were in it. It's hardly so today. Most Israeli youngsters emerge from the secular school system with as much sense of belonging here as if Zionism's founding fathers had indeed opted for Uganda.

Arab fabrications, propagated by Lapid's purveyors of ennobling self-destruction, corrode residual Zionist ideals and are insidiously planted in impressionable psyches, persuading them that this was a pastoral paradise before Jews trespassed, disturbed the peace and imposed their occupation. There's seemingly no Arab contention our trendy radical cliques won't applaud.

Many of those for whom Alterman's sarcasm is still self-evident hail from national-religious quarters, still saying today what the Likud used to. This ethos is anathema to Lapid and the crass demoralization-mongers he seeks to subsidize despite their failure to win over the public and pay their way. A dyed-in-the-wool capitalist like Lapid should let the marketplace be their judge.

This isn't an incidental sideshow to our central existential drama. This is at the very core. It's about our sense of purpose and strength to struggle on. It's about endurance or capitulation.

None of this is played out backstage. The world is our audience. We embolden our enemies and teach them that terrorism succeeds. We tell the international community that our convictions are malleable. Before Oslo hardly anyone conceivably expected Israel to forsake any part of Jerusalem. This was unofficially conceded as a non-starter. Now outrageous Arab falsehoods are accepted as axiomatic, while we banish truth to cobwebbed recesses of the remotest attics of our collective consciousness.

Therefore, though non-observant myself, I'd rather see my tax money support national-religious education than postmodern know-nothings posturing as tortured intellectuals for whom the essence of enlightenment

is amplifying Tamimi's benighted message, abetting the unmitigated Arab casus belli he enunciates, subscribing to the underlying spirit of progressive Palestinian scholarship and perhaps even helping it prove that there never was a King Daoud. (Jerusalem Post Jan 5)

Will David Cohen Die Again? By David Wilder

Almost two months ago four ex-security chiefs made international headlines when they "chided Israel," in the words of a BBC article. "The men called for Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and dismantle Jewish settlements, or face "disaster." Included in the group were four ex-heads of the Israeli Shin-Bet security services, all of whom are extremely left wing.

A couple of days ago another ex-security chief, Ephraim Halevy, former head of the Mossad, repeated and expanded upon his opinions concerning the current political situation. In an article by Ari Shavit, published September 6, 2003 in Ha'aretz newspaper, Halevy says: "The road map is not a road map. It is a plan for an imposed settlement. It marks out a clear route that leads to an imposed settlement. I don't think an imposed settlement is good for Israel. It's not good for the Palestinians, either. History shows that every imposed settlement has been a temporary settlement. So I believe that our future here in the region has to be based on our learning one day to live with the Arabs and the Palestinians. I believe that is an attainable goal, but it can't be attained by means of some imposed Pax Americana. I don't think the Americans have an interest in this kind of Pax Americana, either. It will impose on the United States responsibility that it won't be able to come to terms with. In the Oslo Accords, Israel recognized the rights of the Palestinians and in return obtained their agreement not to advance their goals by force. Not to use terrorism. Throughout the entire process, the Palestinians recognized only our reality, whereas we recognized their rights. That was a mistake. The road map repeats that mistake. It demands that Israel give the Palestinians strategic assets and in return all Israel gets is a war against terrorism and another war against terrorism. That's not good enough. It's even dangerous. It is liable to lead us in the end into a situation in which we will find ourselves close to the 1967 borders without the Palestinians having recognized Israel's right of existence and without their having forgone the right of return."

A couple of days ago, speaking to foreign journalists, Halevy restated these thoughts, calling the roadmap's time line 'irrelevant,' and adding, "The road map... cannot be implemented. It can not be implemented. We know this, and the Palestinians know this, and the United States knows this."

HaLevy called on the Sharon government to reconsider uprooting of settlements because of 'their strategic importance.' He said, "Settlement uprooting should be reconsidered due to their present strategic importance, and not as they were yesterday or the day before. Strategic considerations are not inflexible. They change over years."

Included in the 'first list' of four 'illegal outposts' to be eradicated is "Hazon David," near Kiryat Arba. When a staff member from the American consulate called and asked me about the "Hazon David outpost" I didn't know what he was talking about. Only later did I discover that the tent-synagogue called Hazon David, just outside the west gate of Kiryat Arba, below the Givat HaAvot neighborhood, is classified as an 'illegal outpost.' According to the powers-that-be, this site is to be deleted from the face of the earth.

Last Saturday night several hundred people gathered at the synagogue, together with two Knesset members and Hebron-Kiryat Arba leaders. All the speakers said the 'right' things, basically reiterating what we all know. The protest was an important show of support against destruction of the synagogue.

In my opinion, however, the following letter, sent earlier this week to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, says it all:

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

With this letter, we turn to you, requesting from you a small sanctuary, a synagogue serving as a living memorial, dedicated at the site of the murder of our beloved son, David Cohen, HY"D, who was killed by wicked people, and is now defined as an 'outpost' due to be evacuated.

Two and a half years ago our son was murdered at the gates to Kiryat Arba. Since then, our world collapsed. Our world is not large but was filled by our son David, with tremendous love. His departure from our lives has left a void, empty of any content. During holidays, our pain increases sevenfold.

Small consolation and a new light entered our lives, knowing that at the site of our son's murder, at the gates of Kiryat Arba, a synagogue was established. This site gave us some comfort, where we were able to pour out our hearts and worship to the Creator of the world, about our son.

Using our scant resources, we purchased chairs and holy books for worshippers at the site, which newsmen and military officials see as a tattered tent. However, for us, the knowledge that every day and every Shabbat people are present there, studying and praying in memory of our dear son, granted us a new life. Our thoughts escorted this synagogue, which is, for us, a memorial to our son David, at the site of his killing.

Several days ago our wound was reopened and refuses to heal. We read in newspapers that the site of our son's memorial has been marked for destruction, G-d forbid, and that a military command ordering its removal has been signed. Believe us, Mr. Prime Minister, we feel as though our son has again been

sentenced to death, without being guilty of anything, and he can only be saved by a pardon.

We turn to you from the depths of our hearts, not out of consideration for the settlers, not due to political or security considerations. Rather only out of considerations of pain, of memory, of humanistic considerations, which no one excepting you could understand. We beseech you, leave our son's memorial! Leave the tent where it is. It looks tattered and worn-out, but even with its shreds and neglect is so special and worth so much to us.

Nothing will be able to replace this tent, established at the site of our son's murder, nothing will be able to compensate for the loss and the memorial. With hope that you will take this letter into consideration, Yaffa and Ya'akov Cohen, Jerusalem

So, that is the question: Will Ariel Sharon and Shaul Mufaz force David Cohen HY"D to die again? (The Jewish Community of Hebron Jan 7)

The Party Problem Jerusalem Post Editorial

Every now and then the fashionable thing is to heap scorn on party institutions and present them as corrupt and inherently dangerous to democracy. More than this indicates political malaise, it often betrays a basic lack of understanding of what the democratic system is and how it ought to function.

A case in point is the outcry against the Likud central committee, because disparate groups within it decided to take on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Education Minister Limor Livnat received kudos aplenty for generalizing and warning against the danger of "criminal elements" taking over the committee. She may be right about some groupings, but has unjustly also besmirched many others, such as Revisionist veterans, deeply committed to their ideology.

The basic premise must remain that members of political forums – in whichever party – not only have the right to take on their leader, but that it's their civic duty to be critical rather than follow blindly. That's what sets democratic parties apart from travesties in which assorted yes-men, hacks, and lackeys congregate.

Parties should have ideological agendas. They should respect their own platforms and oblige candidates they field to adhere to them. The platform shouldn't be taken lightly or taken for granted, especially following the recent much-ignored change in our electoral system, in which the prime minister is no longer directly elected and therefore serves by virtue of holding the top slot of a party ticket. Sharon was personally elected to his first term; not now. His party would be derelict in its duties if it neglected to make sure its principles and creed weren't dismissively tossed aside.

At the same time, in order to render its agenda more potent, respected, and difficult to dismiss, party forums must be as much on the up-and-up and beyond reproach as politics realistically allows. This applies to all parties. The huge unwieldy central committees, which both large parties tolerate by way of avoiding internal strife, make legitimate debate difficult and invite unwelcome intrusion from fair-weather functionaries, perk-claimers, political hitchhikers, and promoters of vested interests.

The primaries system, which favors the rich and already-famous, abetted the adulteration of political discourse. It encouraged the pursuit of overnight political careers and takeover attempts by groupings far from a given party's mainstream.

Nehama Ronen is a glaring example. She entered the political fray as an aide of erstwhile Tsomet leader Rafael Eitan. She in no way identified with his hawkish orientation, but was content to ride his coattails. Her next political stop was the nondescript Center Party. When Center gave up the political ghost, Ronen tried unsuccessfully to win a Likud Knesset seat via that party's primary, without again identifying with its ethos. Most recently, still nominally a Likudnik, she joined Yossi Beilin and others of the far left in their Geneva Accord. It's such overt political opportunism that gives politics and politicians a bad reputation.

It would perhaps be best if at least the larger and more democratic among the parties adopted more stringent criteria for their activists. These would limit both eligibility for the party list and membership in a leading party forum. Meaningful minimal requirements for several years of rank-and-file status before gaining access to the political center-stage would rid the parties of most opportunists, retired generals in quest of instant new glory, undesirables whom Livnat labeled "criminal elements," or infiltrators out to hijack an established party, as many suggest Moshe Feiglin seeks to do.

Greater selectivity and tighter controls would go a long way to cleaning up party acts and to producing central committees, political bureaus, and secretariats whose ideology will have to be taken more seriously and which will, as a result, wield greater clout. This is in the interest of Israeli democracy as a whole, not only of particular parties. Moreover, it is quite achievable. It is how it once used to be in Israeli politics, where the most important and weightiest of policy issues were vibrantly deliberated and decided upon in party forums. (Jerusalem Post Jan 7)