

 Jerusalem 4:30; Toronto 5:07

Events...

Tuesday February 10, 7:30pm
Harav Mordechai Elon, Rosh

Yeshiva of Yeshivat HaKotel and Founder of Mibereshit, will give a shiur in Hebrew at B'nai Torah. For information on this most dynamic Israeli Torah personality see www.kerenyishai.org

Commentary...

Lady Killers By Mona Charen

Reem al-Riyashi was a normal-looking 22-year-old Palestinian woman. On Jan. 14, she strapped several pounds of explosives and nails to her body and approached an Israeli security checkpoint in the Gaza Strip. The Israelis usually forbid any Palestinian who sets off the metal detector from approaching further. But al-Riyashi, limping and weeping, pleaded with Gal Shapira, the commander of the watch. She explained she had recently undergone surgery and had a metal plate in her leg that set off the machine.

Shapira told her to wait while he called a female officer to conduct a search. That act of compassion cost him his life. When al-Riyashi was ushered into a private room, she detonated her body bomb killing herself and four Israelis (including Shapira) and wounding at least a dozen others, including several Palestinians.

Her funeral was a gala affair attended by thousands. She was hailed as a heroine and honored for a particular distinction: Reem al-Riyashi was the first Palestinian mother to commit murder-suicide for Allah. She left behind a 3-year-old and a 1-year-old. In her farewell videotaped message, al-Riyashi smiled as she proclaimed that she "always wanted to be the first woman to carry out a martyr attack, where parts of my body can fly all over. That is the only wish I can ask God for." Her act was sponsored jointly by Hamas and the Al Aqsa Martyr's Brigade, and her husband, a member of Hamas, drove her to the checkpoint.

In one way, however, al-Riyashi did not get her wish. She was not the first woman to commit such an act. That "honor" goes to Wafa Idris, who detonated herself on Jaffa Road in Jerusalem in January 2002, killing an elderly Israeli man and wounding many more. Her act was praised throughout the Arab world. Al-Quds Al-Arabi, a London-based Arabic language newspaper, hailed her for killing "in the heart of the occupied city." (Note well: The attack took place in West Jerusalem.) The Egyptian government daily Al-Ahram, is reported by the Middle East Media Research Institute (www.memri.org) as having praised "Her dreamy eyes and the mysterious smile on her lips, that competes with the famous smile some artist drew on the lips of Mona Lisa." A Jordanian Islamist wrote in the daily Al-Dustour, "Wafa carried her suitcase [of explosives] which is ... the most beautiful prize any woman can possibly win. Her spirit was raging, her heart filled with anger, and her mind unconvinced by the calls for peace and coexistence ..."

Americans have difficulty understanding how people can be driven to such lunacy. Liberals, in particular, are inclined to blame poverty for most of the hatred and violence in the world. During the Cold War, when communist movements were gaining ground in the Third World, liberals reflexively blamed poverty. They underestimated the power of ideas.

Al-Riyashi was not poor and, before her marriage, not particularly religious. She came from a prosperous family and lived comfortably with her husband and two children. There had been some sort of quarrel among her family before the attack, and rumors have circulated she was actually moved to murder-suicide because she had committed adultery. But these rumors must be placed alongside the undeniable trend in the region. Women are beginning to sign on for jihad in significant numbers, and radical Islamists are deciding that while women may not show their faces in public, they may explode their bodies in order to kill.

Women in other Muslim nations are also succumbing. In Pakistan, mothers of "martyrs" are popular speakers. In Chechnya, a women's group called Black Widows is responsible for more than 165 murders by suicide. In March, an Arabic newspaper in London reported al Qaeda is setting up training camps just for women jihadis.

News events are filtered through a press in the Islamic world that is just

ISRAEL NEWS

A collection of the week's news from Israel
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staggeringly false and propagandistic. Conflicts in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, Iraq and Israel are presented as evidence of a worldwide anti-Muslim conspiracy. The most vile and idiotic slanders against Jews and Americans are presented as fact. It is the ideas in men's minds -- mad or fantastic though they may be -- that move the world. And it is the battle of ideas that we must fight with every bit as much vigor as we do that on land, sea and air. (Washington Times Jan 26)

Prisoner Exchange Is Irresponsible By Barry Rubin

Unless there is some secret motive or provision to the projected prisoner deal, it may be one of the most irresponsible, misconceived decisions made by an Israeli government. One can only hope that the former is true, though it is hard to figure out what kind of justification there could be.

The trade is of an entire battalion of live terrorists -- more than 400 -- for one kidnapped Israeli and the bodies of three slain soldiers. For years, previous prisoner deals of this type have been judged retrospectively to be mistakes as many of those freed returned to terrorist activities.

Most notably, a massive prisoners' release in the 1970s is seen by many analysts as a factor sparking the beginning of the first intifada as this cadre returned to the West Bank and Gaza Strip to incite violence. Another, roughly similar, event was the permission given dozens of Hamas activists, deported to Lebanon, to return.

During their sojourn in Lebanon, some of them apparently received training in terror techniques from Hizbullah which they soon applied after coming back.

In this case, of course, prisoners are being sent back across Israel's borders at least. Yet what reason is there to believe that they would not immediately return to terrorism or at least use their experience to train replacements in how to kill Israelis more effectively? It is equally hard to see any political benefits to the deal. Certainly, Israel's generosity on the terms of the exchange will not soften Hizbullah's hostility: its short-term determination to wage a war on the border and its long-term goal of wiping out Israel. Nor will Lebanese authorities respond by restraining cross-border attacks.

If Syria and Iran gave a green light to the deal, it does not signal any softening either of their political lines. Indeed, that such an arrangement was arranged without including Ron Arad, the shot-down Israeli air-force navigator believed to be held prisoner in Iran's hands, only deepens the disgrace.

What message does this send to those about to commit terrorist acts? They need not worry about spending a life term in Israel's jails since they can look forward to an early release. Moreover, it gives an incentive to kidnap more Israelis as a certain way to get back imprisoned terrorists.

How would Israel have reacted if another country engaged in such an apparent surrender to terrorism, rewarding the kidnapping of civilians and the anti-humanitarian use of dead soldiers' bodies for political advantage? Certainly, the families of the returned kidnap victim -- whose own behavior leading to this event was murky to say the least -- and those grieving for their dead sons will be happy at this action. One can fully understand their attitude. But when one looks back at this event, say 10 years from now, how many more Israelis and others will have been murdered, wounded, or kidnapped at least partly through the actions of those released? And will there then be another such deal to let go those responsible for these and other such deeds who happen to be captured? (Jerusalem Post Jan 26)

Battle Cry Jerusalem Post Editorial

The deal with Hizbullah is done. Like other prisoner deals Israel has made that have been outside peace agreements, it is extremely problematic, satisfies almost no one, and may well be regretted down the road.

But now the important question is not just whether it is a defeat or victory for Hizbullah or for Israel. What matters now is whether the anomaly that is called Lebanon will be allowed to exist in its current configuration.

The United States, following the missile attack that killed Sgt.-Maj. Jan Rotzanski on the Lebanese border, laid the blame clearly on Lebanon's doorstep. US Ambassador Vincent Battle met with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri on Thursday, and told reporters afterwards, "We

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asked that this kind of provocative act stop." The Lebanese response was a flat no. Swinging back, Lebanese Foreign Minister Jean Obeid said: "Lebanon and the resistance are engaged in self-defense and are responding to Israel's daily aerial, naval, and territorial violations."

For Lebanon to try to wrap itself in the cloak of sovereignty is a bit rich. This is a country that not only remains occupied by tens of thousands of Syrian troops, but treats Hizbullah, a terrorist organization funded and directed by Damascus and Teheran, as a legitimate partner. Hizbullah, indeed, by negotiating with Israel over the prisoner swap, demonstrated that Lebanon is a mere spectator of its own foreign policy.

Lebanon cannot complain about violations to its sovereignty when it does not control its own territory, borders, or policies, and makes no pretense of trying to do so.

In his meeting in Beirut, Ambassador Battle reportedly told Lebanon that if it did not boot Hizbullah from its territory, it would be placed on the State Department's terrorist-supporting countries list. We can only hope that this is true and serious, because the status quo should not be allowed to continue.

The fact that Lebanon is not on the list of terrorist states now, seems to be out of sympathy for the lack of control over its fate. But this implies that Lebanon is an unwilling victim of other powers. However true this may be, Lebanon cannot have it all ways: it cannot ask to be treated as a sovereign country, avoid all responsibilities of sovereignty, and openly support Hizbullah's "resistance." There is no getting around the fact that Lebanon belongs on the state-terrorism list. To coddle Beirut is to play Damascus's game, because it turns a blind eye toward Syria's occupation.

Israel, unfortunately, is not blameless in this regard. Every time we retaliate against Hizbullah with a pinpoint response against that organization's bases, we help to divert responsibility away from the real culprits: Lebanon, Syria, and Iran.

Perhaps our restraint can be explained by a quiet arrangement with the US, whereby the Americans have agreed to more vigorously address the problem themselves. Even in this context, it would seem that excessive Israeli restraint could make America's job harder. If Lebanon, Syria, and Iran pay no price for their direct support for attacks against Israel, why shouldn't they continue them? The US has now clearly accused Lebanon of supporting Hizbullah, a terrorist organization. If Lebanon is supporting terrorism, it should be on the list of states that support terrorism – this is elemental. Perhaps this not-so-implicit US threat will lead Lebanon to act, but probably not.

Hizbullah is already threatening to commit more kidnappings. As usual, Hizbullah's declared interpretation of the prisoner swap deal is different from Israel's, making it likely that such differences will be used to justify future attacks.

It is bad enough that Israel has essentially left Hizbullah to initiate attacks at will. But if Hizbullah does attack again, its sponsors must also be made to pay. If the US and Israel both follow a policy of holding Hizbullah's sponsors fully accountable, chances are Lebanon, Syria, and Iran will dramatically reevaluate the utility of their current policies.

This sort of exercise in behavior modification is what the war against terrorism – more accurately, to defeat jihadist Islam – is all about. It shows that Israel's struggle for peace and security is not separate from America's.

Our enemies, such as Iran's mullahs, see us as Satans whose only difference is size. They are right that freedom and democracy anywhere threatens them; we should be more cognizant and less embarrassed about our common cause. (Jerusalem Post Jan 27)

As Edited by... 'The Herald Tribune' By Evelyn Gordon

Anyone puzzled by the vast difference between European and American attitudes toward Israel ought to spend some time comparing two newspapers: The New York Times and the Paris-based International Herald Tribune. That may seem like an odd statement, since the IHT is owned by the Times and most of its articles are Times reprints – or at least, so the reader would assume, as they are credited to the Times and appear under Times reporters' bylines.

But it turns out that IHT editors often "improve" the Times copy a bit. The adjustments are minor in terms of the amount of text changed, yet sufficient to give the reader a completely different understanding of events.

I discovered this only last month, having never before thought to compare an IHT article to its Times original. What sparked the discovery was a piece in the IHT's December 27-28 edition, entitled "Israeli tactics assure future bombings, Palestinians assert" and credited to the Times. The article's main thrust was that the Israel Defense Forces believes its two-pronged anti-terror campaign – construction of the separation fence and frequent raids aimed at arresting terrorists and destroying bomb-making facilities – has significantly reduced the number of successful attacks.

But the article also claimed that the December 25 bombing at the Geha Junction ended a three-month period that "seemed to be a sort of unofficial cease-fire. In that time, Palestinian radical groups carried out no suicide bombings."

This struck me as outrageous, since a cease-fire implies that no attacks were attempted – whereas, according to IDF statistics, there were no fewer than 22 attempted suicide bombings during that time, all foiled by Israel's security forces. But when I checked the article on the Times Web site in preparation for an angry letter to that paper, I discovered the following:

The Times never referred to this period as a cease-fire.

The Times explicitly mentioned that "numerous terror attempts" had been made during this period and were thwarted by Israel; that entire paragraph was cut from the IHT piece.

The Times did not say that Palestinians "carried out no suicide bombings," giving the false impression that they attempted none; it merely said, correctly, that no bombings took place.

Moreover, the Times article carried a very different – and far more accurate – headline: "Bombing after lull: Israel still believes the worst is over."

The result is that the average Times reader came away with the following impression: Israel's military activity produced three months in which no Israelis were killed, despite "numerous terror attempts." This activity is thus saving Israeli lives, and therefore potentially justifiable.

But the IHT reader received the opposite impression: Neither the fence nor the raids were justified, since there was an "unofficial cease-fire" and Palestinians were not committing attacks in any case. Moreover, since no attempts took place during this period, Israel's activity did not save a single life.

In short, rather than preventing bombings, Israel is, as the IHT headline asserts, "assuring future bombings" by persecuting the Palestinians for no reason.

THE IHT later published a letter from me on this subject, but again with crucial distortions. One sentence was cut altogether: "The version of the article that appeared in The New York Times did mention that 'numerous' attempted attacks were thwarted during this period and did not refer to it as a 'cease-fire.'"

Another sentence – "according to Israeli army statistics, Palestinians attempted to carry out 22 suicide bombings during this time" – was replaced by "according to one count, Palestinians attempted to carry out more than 20 suicide bombings during this time."

Thus the IHT cut both of the sources I cited for my assertion that attacks were attempted – the Times and the IDF – and substituted an unsourced "according to one count." That leaves the reader with the impression that I have no source – I cannot even say according to whose count – and my assertion is therefore not credible.

Since this episode, I have discovered that the IHT often subtly alters Times copy to make its readers dislike Israel more.

On January 2, for instance, the Times ran an article stating that in 1973, the Nixon administration considered invading three Arab countries "if the [oil] embargo, imposed by Arab nations in retaliation for America's support for Israel in the 1973 Middle East war, did not end." The IHT altered this to state that Nixon planned to invade "if tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors continued to escalate after the October 1973 Middle East War or if the oil embargo did not abate."

Moreover, the IHT erased the statement – repeated twice in the Times article – that the embargo was due to America's wartime support for Israel, substituting the statement that it was imposed "to try to pressure the United States and other Western countries to force Israel to withdraw from Arab land."

Thus the Times reader concludes that Nixon was angered by an Arab action, the embargo, which was retaliation for an American action – wartime support for an ally. Israel was clearly involved, but this was primarily an Arab-American dispute.

The IHT reader, in contrast, concludes that Nixon's main concern was not the Arab action, but "tensions between Israel and its Arab neighbors;" the embargo gets only second billing. Moreover, the embargo was aimed not at American policy, but at a mysterious Israeli seizure of Arab land whose background – the fact that it was captured in a defensive war – is never explained. In short, the entire crisis was Israel's fault.

Very few people know more about Israel than what they learn from the media. It is therefore not surprising that readers fed on a diet of such subtle distortions view Israel as the villain.

Unfortunately, in Europe the IHT's behavior is the norm rather than the exception. (Jerusalem Post Jan 27)

Opiate of the Arab World By Barry Rubin

The Arab-Israeli conflict, along with anti-Americanism, continues as the opiate of the Arab world, drugging entire societies into accepting intolerable conditions.

Recently, a Lebanese newspaper columnist told how he raised the issue of the mass murders uncovered in Iraq, only to be criticized for "whining."

What he should have been focusing on was the foreign threat to the Arabs. As for the killings, what was the big deal, since they happened in all-Arab states?

Consider three recent statements from totally different parts of the political spectrum.

The establishment: Ali Ukla Ursan, the Syrian regime's Stalinist-style intellectual bureaucrat, insists the answer to Saddam's overthrow is Arab unity in order to intimidate the US which, along with Israel, is responsible for all the world's evil.

The Islamists: The new head of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, often portrayed as a relatively moderate Islamist group, has called for a jihad against Israel and the US in Iraq to solve the Arab world's problems.

The Left: Walid Jumblatt, head of the Lebanese Socialist Progressive Party, has proclaimed Palestinian suicide bombers as the only hope for fixing the Arabs' terrible mess.

In interview after interview, average Arabs explain that they don't care how many Iraqis were killed or tortured by Saddam or how much money he stole.

It's all irrelevant because he supported the Palestinians and opposed the US.

Two years ago, an Egyptian intellectual, for many years one of the most genuinely moderate people in the Arab world, told a Western interviewer that the solution to terrorism was not merely repressing it, but also providing "measures that give hope."

Sid-Ahmed did not identify those measures as instituting democracy, providing civil liberties, raising living standards, generating millions of jobs, moderating the lessons in mosques or schools, building better housing, opening up stagnantly statist economies, instituting equality for women, sharing wealth more equitably, ending corruption, removing the selfish and incompetent elites from power, or any other of a hundred things needed in Arab countries for people to live better lives. Instead, his sole specific proposal was solving the Palestinian problem. After all, he told the interviewer: "Our president says 50 percent of the terrorism in the world is triggered by the Palestinian problem."

Did he believe that? The Egyptian was visibly embarrassed – he had just hinted that Osama bin Laden and the September 11 attacks had had nothing to do with that issue; and he was also aware that thousands of Muslims had died from terrorism in Egypt, Algeria and elsewhere.

Well, he said, solving the Palestinian problem would show something was being done.

IT'S LIKE the man who goes to a psychiatrist and tells him there is a bird sitting on his head. "I see your problem," the doctor says. Suddenly the bird pines up: "How do I get this man off my feet?"

In other words, the reality is the reversal of expectations. If Israel is the Arab world's obsession, it is because the man won't let the bird go. He is holding tightly onto its feet to stop it escaping.

This is why what really happened in the year 2000 – Israel's offer to give up the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Golan Heights, and most of east Jerusalem – must be wiped from people's minds, or prevented from entering them.

The issue is too useful to abandon. Regimes need it to justify their hold on power. The anti-democratic Islamist and leftist oppositions need it to justify their drive for power. The masses need it to give them a visible enemy they can denounce freely. The liberals need it to prove their patriotism.

On the public and verbal level the battle for Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim "rights" is an obvious duty. Israel is the most horrible country in the world, Zionism the most evil ideology of modern times.

Okay, say Western observers, we know it's exaggerated. But this must be the one thing that really upsets the Arab world, the prism through which everything else is seen. Not exactly. It is merely the oldest trick in the book of politics.

First, you mesmerize the people by persuading them you are their protector against a diabolical enemy. Then you pick their pockets and beat them up as they express their devotion and gratitude. Next you demand others compensate you for your alleged suffering at the hands of this supposed evil-doer.

But was "Jewish domination" the real grievance of the fascists in Germany and Europe, or was this just a good way to mobilize mass support by stoking murderous rage against someone else? Was the Soviet system really trying to help proletarians elsewhere, and was its ferocious repression caused by the "crimes" of Western liberal capitalism?

Were Latin American oligarchies rolling in wealth alongside impoverished peasants really motivated mainly by horror at the supposed evil intentions of any reformers they could portray as communists... and therefore the best way to get along with these systems and solve the problems of those societies was to exterminate the Jews, eliminate capitalism, and kill anyone who favored land reform or democracy?

Finally, if anyone points out that the emperor has no clothes – or, rather, is wearing extremely fine ones stolen from the citizenry – the critic can be dismissed. After all, it's just the line of the Zionist, reactionary, racist, Orientalist, conservative, American propagandist.

So shut up, and cheer your dictator.

The Middle East is being impoverished and brutalized by this con-game. And with one of its chief practitioners, Saddam Hussein, in jail, his colleagues abroad are redoubling their efforts to keep the system going. (Jerusalem Post Jan 27) *The writer is director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal and editor of Turkish Studies.*

Justice Sought For Jonathan Pollard By Ilana Freedman

In the final lines of our Pledge of Allegiance, America is described as a nation "with liberty and justice for all." Viewing life in America through the lens of history, we can see a heritage peppered with testimony that this grand view of life has not always worked. Justice has not always been done. Dredd Scott, for example, was returned to his "owner" by no less an authority than the Supreme Court, putting the full force of Constitutional law behind the concept that it was acceptable for one human being to own another.

The case of Jonathan Pollard may be another such case, although in a far different area of justice.

On the surface, the case seems simple. In 1985, Pollard, a civilian American Naval intelligence analyst, was accused of providing classified information to the

State of Israel, an ally of the United States. Pollard admitted his guilt and acknowledged that what he did was wrong. He pleaded guilty and received a life sentence of which he has already served nearly 18 years.

Case closed.

Or is it? Things are not always what they appear to be. A deeper look at this case should raise an alarm in those who cherish liberty and the system of government that promises "justice for all." Jonathan Pollard has not received justice.

Following his arrest in 1986, Pollard admitted his guilt and entered into a written plea bargain with the federal government. In this agreement, he gave up his Constitutional rights to remain silent and to "a speedy and public trial". He agreed to plead guilty to a single count of conspiracy to commit espionage and to cooperate fully with the government. In return for his guilty plea and full cooperation, the government agreed to advise the sentencing judge of Pollard's cooperation, and to refrain from asking the court to impose a life sentence. The records show that over the next 15 months, Pollard cooperated fully. The government, however, while receiving the benefits of the plea agreement, including the elimination of a public trial in a high-profile espionage case, violated its commitment by asking the court to impose a life sentence.

Then, on the day before sentencing, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, submitted a four-page Supplemental Declaration to the judge, in which he accused Pollard of treason, a crime for which Pollard had not been charged and which he had not committed. (A capital offense, treason is defined as "giving aid to an enemy of the United States.")

In a 2002 interview, Weinberger admitted that the Pollard case was "a very minor matter." But in 1987, he played a pivotal role in the outcome, and the damage he did was irreparable. Although Pollard had been charged only with "conspiracy to commit espionage," the government's case, supported by Weinberger's damning declaration, persuaded the judge to sentence Pollard to life in prison.

In May 2000, two New York attorneys, Eliot Lauer and Jacques Semmelman, acting on a pro-bono basis, took over Pollard's representation. The case then took on a new and bizarre dimension. Pollard's new attorneys sought access to five, formerly-accessible documents relating to the trial, which had been sealed since March 1987.

Although they went through a lengthy process to receive "Top Secret" clearance for the specific purpose of defending Pollard, they were nevertheless denied access to these critical documents.

One can only conjecture at the reason for this extraordinary secrecy. Perhaps an answer may be found in an understanding of the times.

A 1991 edition of the ABC News Nightline explored American involvement in the movement of arms, technology, money, and intelligence to Iraq during the early 80s. According to moderator Ted Koppel, "U.S. laws were violated, even as official U.S. policy was that no help should go to either side" in the ongoing war between Iran and Iraq. The Iraqis were building chemical and weapons factories with our assistance (the same factories that our Air Force would later bomb during the 1991 Gulf War), and Israel, our staunch ally since its founding in 1948, was a known target.

According to US-Israel agreements, satellite information on enemy build-ups should have been shared, but it was not. This was the type of intelligence that Jonathan Pollard passed on to Israel. It did not compromise our security, nor did it present a danger to any of our agents.

It did supply Israel with critical information about a threat to their national security, information Israel was entitled to under a 1983 Memorandum of Understanding with the United States. But, because the information was classified and the transfer was unauthorized, it also constituted espionage.

The release of information about our government's complicity in the build-up of Iraq's military machine at a time of a developing enmity between Iraq and the United States would have been, at the very least, a deep embarrassment to our government. Better to sacrifice one man than to risk a government scandal. Perhaps this explains why significant files regarding the Jonathan Pollard case are still sealed and why Jonathan Pollard continues to serve out a life sentence.

Shame rests on those who bore false witness, who broke good-faith agreements, and who condemned a man to a lifetime sentence that far exceeded the severity of his crime. His conviction was based on flawed testimony and prevented him from due process under the law to which every American citizen is entitled. It is time to revisit this case and to allow Jonathan Pollard the public trial he never had.

The writer is a specialist in counter-terrorism and a senior partner of the Gerard Group International. (Metrowest Daily News Jan 16)

Geneva Initiative - Not A Light at the End of the Tunnel

By Dr. Aaron Lerner

The Geneva Initiative provides the Palestinians with a platform for a nightmarish war of attrition and a strategic position that would goad the Arab world into a war against the Jewish State.

The Geneva Initiative would put most of Israel's population within striking distance of the weapons the Palestinians already have (and use). It would create a precarious patchwork quilt of authorities in Jerusalem. Under it, the Israel Air Force would be crippled, intercepting threats, at

best, literally over Israeli cities while fending off Palestinian anti-aircraft fire.

The Israeli creators of this Initiative maintain that these concerns are baseless since the Initiative provides for (temporary) supervision and the final say on disputes to resolution by third parties (United States, Russia, EU, UN, etc.).

But the track record of such third-party schemes provides strong evidence that they are anything but effective.

Third parties aren't altruists. They act first and foremost to serve their own interests. Monitors avert their eyes in the knowledge that citing Palestinian violations exposes their countries to charges of anti-Arab bias. Participants in "peace-keeping" forces are well aware that their countries may face substantial diplomatic and financial consequences in the Arab world if they "fight for the Jews" and move against Palestinian terrorists. This isn't speculation. This has been the consistent experience in the region for decades.

Consider the track record of even the United States, Israel's staunchest friend:

Back in 1970, when Egypt violated an American brokered and guaranteed deal by moving surface to air missile anti-aircraft missile batteries under the cover of the cease-fire up to the Suez Canal, American aerial photographs documented the violation the very day it happened. But instead of honoring its commitments to Israel to press for an Egyptian withdrawal, American officials stalled for time, feigning ignorance and insisting that Israel prove their charges against Egypt. The SAMs were still there and ready for action when Egypt crossed the Canal in the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

During the early Oslo years, the Government of the United States solemnly declared in its periodic reports to Congress that the Palestinians were in full compliance. Reporting the truth would have jeopardized funding for the Palestinian Authority, so the United States Government certified compliance knowing of the violations. When Israel presented reams of captured documents linking the PA to the financing and direction of terrorist operations, American officials did everything in their power to ignore the evidence and its ramifications because this interfered with America's agenda.

American monitors of the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty have studiously avoided addressing the smuggling tunnels operating for years from Egyptian Rafah tunnels to the Gaza Strip that have been the main source of supply of illegal weapons to the Palestinians.

Yossi Beilin and the retired Israeli brass supporting the Geneva Initiative are well aware of this history, but they don't believe it is relevant. That's because they are confident that the only thing standing between Israel and permanent peace is the Israeli occupation. Sure the Arabs may not be behaving themselves now - but Israel is still occupying the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Withdraw to the '67 lines and there will be peace, they tell us.

For Beilin and his Israeli colleagues, this document is just another device to facilitate Israeli withdrawal. If Israel could be convinced - or forced -- to withdraw without going through the Israeli democratic process that would be OK because it would yield permanent peace and, they believe, the ends justify the means. And that's why they have no compunction about developing and promoting the Initiative as if there was no democratically elected government responsible for Israel's foreign policy.

The fact is withdrawal to the '67 lines won't insure Israel peace because that's not what the Palestinians want. In their mosques, in their schools and on their airwaves the Arabs say what they want: Israel's destruction. Their leaders excuse to their people whatever arrangements they make with the Jews by citing the Hudaibiyah model, according to which one enters into a temporary treaty with an enemy until the enemy can be defeated.

Even if the Arabs agreed to a peace treaty with Israel in good faith, this would not assure peace with an Israel inside indefensible borders. Leaders don't send their nations off to war only because of genuine irreconcilable gripes against their neighbors. Wars can also be waged to serve domestic and other interests. Who knows who will be ruling Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt in five years. The last thing a prudent Israel should do is turn itself into an easy target.

There are alternatives to what this document proposes. Regional-level autonomy, for example, would afford the opportunity for the Palestinian population to exercise a form of self-rule without forfeiting Israel's security. The "withdrawal for peace" believers don't like this solution, but a realistic Israeli public (and a Palestinian public justifying it as their Hudaibiyah) may very well accept it. (IMRA / Moment Magazine Feb 2004)

The writer is the Director of IMRA.

Politically Incorrect Historian By Jonathan Tobin

Benny Morris' transformation highlights chilling truths about the conflict

If war is the "continuation of politics ... by other means," as German strategist Karl von Clausewitz famously wrote, then it must be said with equal certainty that the study of history in our day has become another form of warfare. No conflict better exemplifies this maxim than that between Arabs and Israelis. For the last 55 years and more, Zionist and anti-Zionist historians have waged war in the pages of their books.

Pro-Israel writers look to the past to justify by legal, historic and moral grounds the rebirth of Jewish sovereignty over the ancient homeland of the Jewish people.

At the same time, Arab writers as well as an international brigade of Jew-haters have done their best to depict the creation of the State of Israel as a crime.

But the genre of historical writing that has done the most damage to Israel's image has not been the hatred-filled screeds coming out of the dubious academic institutions of Cairo and Damascus. It has been the work of Jews who have come

to doubt the justice of Israel's cause that has emboldened its enemies the most. In the last 20 years, the rise of a new group of Israeli historians, known as "revisionists," has engendered a bitter debate about Israel's origins and policies.

No person is as closely identified with this term as Benny Morris, a one-time journalist, prolific author and currently a professor of history at B en-Gurion University. In a number of works on the origin of the Palestinian refugee issue and Israel's War of Independence, Morris has earned a reputation as someone with little patience for the stained-glass version of the Zionist narrative. His research attempted to debunk the notion that all Arab refugees fled the territory that would become the Jewish state on their own, and that the conduct of Israel's soldiers and leaders was spotless.

Morris' work was greeted with dismay by many friends of Israel, who rightly worried that his version of history portrays the Jewish state as being born in sin. The author reinforced his image as an icon of the Israeli left with his own anti-establishment behavior. In the late 1980s, Morris was briefly jailed when he refused to do his Israeli army reserve duty in the territories because he opposed Israel's presence there.

But ever since the Palestinian Authority rejected Israel's peace offer at the July 2000 Camp David summit and answered it with a terrorist war of attrition, Morris has begun to make statements that have lost him his fans on the left.

The culmination of this process came when the Israeli daily Ha'aretz published a lengthy interview with the writer on Jan. 9. In it, Morris told journalist Ari Shavit - himself a highly partisan star of the Israeli left - that while his work uncovering Israeli wrongdoing would continue, he was no longer a supporter of peace efforts with the Palestinians.

Indeed, Morris shocked Shavit by asserting that Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion - whom Morris has roundly criticized as responsible for some of the suffering of Palestinian Arabs - probably made a mistake by not completely expelling all of them from the West Bank during the fighting in 1948 and 1949. "A society that aims to kill you forces you to destroy it," Morris said. Even more significantly, Morris pointed that all of the bad deeds which he is prepared to blame on Israelis do not amount to much when compared to the atrocities carried out elsewhere, as well as to the attempts of the Arabs to destroy Israel.

"When you take into account that there was a bloody civil war here and that we lost 1 percent of the population, you find that we [Israel] behaved very well," Morris told a dumfounded Shavit.

Morris is, of course, right. While we can debate some of the conclusions he draws from his research - and historians such as the redoubtable Efraim Karsh have placed many of them in doubt - the notion of the 1948 Israelis as morally perfect was always absurd. Wars are not moral events. Terrible things are sometimes done even in the name of righteous causes.

Much as Americans were once raised on such tame historical fare as Parson Weems' life of George Washington that portrayed the first president as a secular saint, Jews were fed much of the same about Israel's founders. But just as it does not undermine the legitimacy of the American republic to learn that Washington wasn't perfect, it won't kill us to learn the same about Ben-Gurion. Even more importantly, Morris' statements highlight the fact that Israel's democratic leaders did not act in a vacuum. They were locked in a war of survival that they'd tried to avoid via compromise against a foe whose purpose was the annihilation of the Jewish population.

Unlike many of his revisionist colleagues, Morris' hard look at Israelis of the past has not blinded him to the crimes of the Arabs during Israel's wars or to their current intentions. And that last point is what has so infuriated Morris' old friends. He is very clear in saying that Arafat has rejected peace with Israel on any terms.

"They want it all," Morris said. "Lod and Acre and Jaffa."

As for the Oslo process, Morris is now as cynical about it as he is about the War of Independence: "Oslo was a deception. Arafat did not change for the worse. Arafat simply defrauded us. ... He wants to send us back to Europe, to the sea we came from. ... They can't tolerate the existence of a Jewish state."

Concerning the Palestinians themselves, whatever wrongs they may have suffered, Morris doesn't sugarcoat their motives likening their widespread support for terror and the destruction of Israel to the actions of a "serial killer." "Zionism was not a mistake. The desire to establish a Jewish state here was a legitimate one, a positive one. But given the character of Islam and given the character of the Arab nation, it was a mistake to think it would be possible to establish a tranquil state here," Morris noted.

Unfortunately, the trouble with being so clear-eyed about both the past and present is that it can leave you with little hope for the future. Morris sees no chance for peace in our generation against a foe he doesn't hesitate to describe as "barbaric." Israel and the West have no choice, he says, but to fight back in a clash of civilizations. Israelis have no alternative, Morris said, but "to be vigilant, to defend the country as far as is possible. ... In the end, what will decide their readiness to accept us will be force alone."

The same chilling conclusion applies to America's struggle against Islamic terror. If the study of history can teach us anything, it must be to be honest with ourselves. From the sound of it, ex-peacenik Benny Morris has learned his lesson. (Jewish World Review Jan 26)

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