

Event...

Monday, March 15, 7:00 PM

Moshe Feiglin, President and Chairman of Manhigut Yehudit, will be speaking at Shaarei Tefillah on "New Leadership for the Jewish State".

Quote of the Week...

"Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support the legitimate efforts of the State of Israel to protect its citizens from the deadly violence of homicide bombers. Sadly, the new International Court of Justice at The Hague is hosting a show trial against Israel, defending its construction of a security barrier which anti-Israeli militants ridiculously claim is a crime against humanity. For 50 years the tiny state of Israel has struggled to survive against a constant existential threat, including four attempted invasions. But these attacks have never deterred Israel from seeking a lasting peace with the Palestinian people, a peace which was ultimately rejected by Yasser Arafat at Camp David. Since then Israel has faced a new kind of invader: homicidal anti-Semitic maniacs who target innocent citizens for the sole crime of being Jews. Israel has responded by constructing a security fence designed to keep the murderers out. A similar fence around the Gaza Strip has been a successive defence barrier. Any responsible state would act in like fashion to protect its citizens from daily violence, and Canada should act like a responsible state by denouncing this abuse of the ICJ which we helped to found." - Canadian Member of Parliament Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Conservative Party) in the House of Commons on March 9.

Commentary...

The Battle Is Not over By Israel Harel

Although the president and chief of staff said important things, it was not the speeches that were the most touching moments Monday evening, when the residents of Yesha saluted the Israel Defense Forces at a special event at Jerusalem's conference center. It was 11-year-old Shaked, who expressed her deepest feelings when she said, "While you are watching over us we can play, dream, learn, dance and love. And when I sleep ... did I say sleep? I'll tell you a secret: Lately, I have not been really sleeping. I keep waking up and am a bit afraid. Yes, that has happened a lot lately. But then I have a secret weapon, a precious weapon that is right beside me day and night. You."

Then the audience, no doubt, after 42 months of terror, applied those true and innocent words to themselves and their families.

The other emotional moment was when the IDF orchestra played their opening piece, the march, "Zemer Haplugot" (Song of the Field Units), and were joined by the audience, which sang, in great solidarity, the lyrics of the song, which most of the players probably did not know. Thus, on the background of the plans to uproot settlements, which the singers view as surrender to terror, the words "for not in vain, my brother, have you plowed and built," took on real meaning.

Sixty-five years ago, at the height of the Arabs' great war of terror - the first one - against the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, Nathan Alterman wrote "Zemer Haplugot." Despite the vulnerability of the small Jewish settlements in the heart of the huge Arab majority, no one back then thought about halting the settlements, certainly not about a "unilateral disengagement."

Daniel Sambursky, who also felt that during times of war it was the artists' duty to raise the spirits of the people and not depress them, composed the music for "Zemer Haplugot" as a march, that would surely help the song to become a kind of anthem, even many years after it was written and composed.

Even though that event was not intended to be a current affairs discourse, the two main speakers, President Moshe Katsav and Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon, did not bury their heads in the sand. The army must not become involved in politics, said the president, and in the same breath added that we must accept the

ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

difficult decisions with love. He also said that religious soldiers must not be forced to participate in evacuation operations, for reasons of conscience.

True, the army must not be thrown into the political maelstrom. My advice to the president is to remind Prime Minister Sharon - who is about to involve the army in the deepest political dispute - of his opinions and his behavior, during the first settlement attempt at Hawara in 1974.

Back then - just a few months after the Yom Kippur War, when the soldiers, who saw him as a hero, were torn between their duty and their conscience - he called on soldiers to refuse an order. He also clashed with them physically. How is it possible, Mr. President, "to accept with love" the uprooting, if it comes: particularly when the decision is made in such an astonishing manner and in total contradiction to what Sharon the uprooter has said, believed and preached throughout the years.

Not only this, but on the background of what has lately been revealed regarding the quality of the prime minister's judgment in other areas, heavy doubt must also be cast on his "plan" for fleeing under fire - "disengagement" in media lingo. It is interesting that while the media are casting doubts on Sharon's integrity, motives, wisdom and judgment in almost every area, when it comes to uprooting Jews from their land, the media changes its tune and cooperates with Sharon.

There can be no exemption, Mr. President, for religious soldiers not to participate in every action involving secular soldiers. That statement is not in line with the officialdom that the president is supposed to represent. Indeed, the chief of staff cautioned against a situation in which every soldier would decide, as the refuseniks are demanding, which tasks are fitting.

The solution, then, as the president and many others have suggested, is not to give the army, secular and religious soldiers alike, political tasks. It is the duty of the general staff - whose chief believes that a red line must be drawn regarding what is forbidden and what is permitted for soldiers - to convince the decision makers that the participation of the army in the uprooting of settlements is a red line that must not be crossed.

"Zemer Haplugot," on the background of this never-ending war for survival, is a sad reality. Precisely because this war has been going on for years, we must be strengthened by it and not despair. "For not in vain, my brother, have you plowed and built/ This war is for our home and soul/ We will not go back and there is no other way/ There is no nation that will retreat from the foundations of its life / Field units, it is not over, not over, this battle!"

Since "Zemer Haplugot" was written there has been no change in the attitude of the Arabs toward the Jewish people's aspirations for sovereignty. The only change is the decline in the will of the Jews, partly due to the deterioration in their sense of their justness in establishing national sovereignty. The way out of this situation is therefore a return to the inevitable awareness that "the battle is not over." (Ha'aretz Mar 4)

The Wall By David Warren

Why are the Israelis building a wall between themselves and the inhabitants of the West Bank? This is a question that has now been brought before the International Court of Justice in the Hague. (Israel has rejected the court's jurisdiction.) The attempts of courts at many levels to determine political as opposed to legal questions is a sign of the times. The Israelis know all about it, for their own Supreme Court is the world's most active and interventionist.

Put simply: Israel is building a "security fence" (it will be a wall only in short sections) because it is the only realistic alternative to depopulating the West Bank. There are reasonable questions worth asking about the route of the wall, but it is unreasonable to oppose it "in principle" without offering a practical alternative.

Our liberal media repeat and repeat the lie that the wall is designed to separate the Palestinians "from their fields, schools and medical services" (I am quoting a standard phrase from Reuters). The truth is the opposite: that in almost every case the wall replaces a more intricate network of roadblocks and barriers which had this effect.

Readers of the mainstream press in the West are fairly well insulated from the reality of the continuing Intifadah. Coverage is given to major terrorist hits, such as those on Jerusalem's buses, but not to the mundane

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activities. The fact that about five of six suicide bombings are prevented by prior Israeli action is probably unknown to most newspaper readers. Few can appreciate that no suicide bombers have succeeded in launching attacks from Gaza -- around all of which the Israelis already put a security fence.

But to understand more fully, one must be exposed to the daily incitement to violence from the Palestinian Authority and its media.

After Sunday's murder of eight and maiming of 59 in Jerusalem -- the 110th successful suicide bombing since Yasser Arafat launched the current Intifadah in the summer of 2000, and this one performed by the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, affiliated with Arafat's Fatah party -- the perpetrator was immediately lionized as a "shaheed" (martyr) in all Palestinian official media. The Voice of Palestine described the act as merely "an explosive operation", reserving the term "barbaric" for the IDF demolition of the "martyr's house" (the standard Israeli response to suicide bombings, intended to erase the financial rewards the bomber's family will receive from Arab charities). It called on Palestinians to take the streets in protest against "racist Israeli threats". And this on a newscast which was preceded by a clip showing a small Palestinian child singing the phrase, "by stone or by knife I will attack the enemy" -- over and over for several minutes.

This incitement is constant. And it reflects a society that has been barbarized. While much may be said about the long history behind this degeneration, nothing can excuse it. Nothing can be achieved by negotiating with a government for which the Voice of Palestine speaks, and no "peace process" can be accepted until the incitement stops. The Israelis must act in self-defence, the most basic human right -- which in this case requires them to physically separate themselves from people who are trying to kill them.

Moreover, the practice of penning in the Palestinians must continue until the Palestinians themselves put an end to their terrorists. This is precisely what the Israelis had to do against the Irgun and Stern Gang in 1948 -- for the very condition of statehood is the consolidation of a single, disciplined military force.

Now oddly enough, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon -- whose own popularity is sinking, but who enjoys overwhelming public support for the wall -- has been moved to build it as part of an overall political feint to the left. It is part of an ambitious programme of retreat, including the disbandment of many Israeli settlements.

What the wall will not do, however, is offer protection against the increasing use of Kassam rockets, more than 200 of which were fired from Palestinian positions in the last year. The Israeli security service, Shin Bet, has become aware of attempts to upgrade the explosive force of these weapons, and arm them with chemical agents. Its director, Avi Dichter, briefed the Knesset on this yesterday.

If that starts happening, much more muscular measures will be required, including something like another Operation Defensive Shield, but larger. This will mean the wall, PLUS internal roadblocks, searches, fire fights, and demolitions. Unfortunate, but unavoidable. (Western Standard Mar 15)

With this article we take pleasure in noting the founding of Canada's new conservative newsmagazine by its Publisher, our good friend Ezra Levant. Readers are encouraged to subscribe at www.westernstandard.ca - Ed.

The Curse of Jihad By Mackubin Thomas Owens

Saul Singer's common sense antidote.

Most Americans don't really understand how ubiquitous and pervasive the threat of terrorism is in Israel. Israelis have lived under the specter of terrorism for years, but especially so since the outbreak of the "Oslo War" in the fall of 2000. They have come to terms with security measures that most Americans would find restrictive at best. For instance, an American cannot help but be struck by the sight of armed security guards everywhere in Jerusalem -- from the entrance of shopping malls to cafes and restaurants.

But many Americans have convinced themselves that the terrorism Israelis face on a day-to-day basis is somehow qualitatively different from that which struck the United States on 9/11. The latter is "global" terrorism while the former is "regional" or "local," stemming from the particular circumstances of the Palestinian problem, and, according to the conventional wisdom, pits Israeli security against Palestinian "rights." Indeed, this understanding seems to pervade U.S. policy toward Israel: The Bush administration, certainly the most pro-Israel one in a generation, still insists on a level of restraint by the Israelis when it comes to Palestinian terrorists that it would never agree to in its own dealings with al Qaeda.

In fact, 9/11 and terrorist attacks against Israel form a seamless garment, both being motivated by the same hatred. No one has done a better job of demonstrating this point than Saul Singer, the editor of the Jerusalem Post's editorial page and a columnist for the paper. Many of his columns and unsigned editorials have now been collected in >Confronting Jihad: Israel's Struggle and the World After 9/11. Americans who wish to understand the reality of Israel's war against terrorism and its connection to our own struggle should read this fine collection of essays.

The pieces that appear in Confronting Jihad cover the period from 1997 until the summer of 2003. The selections are outstanding examples of political commentary and the editorialist's art. Those who possess the ability to provide penetrating analysis in a thousand words or less are a rare breed indeed. Singer is one of them and his columns exemplify both common sense and moral clarity.

As Bill Kristol says in his forward to Confronting Jihad, Singer's "character, as well as his mind, are visible in these essays."

Singer was one of the first Israeli commentators to criticize the Oslo "peace process." To see how right he was and how wrong its advocates were, it helps to remember that when the Accords were signed in 1993, the Palestinian Intifada was exhausted and Yasser Arafat's power had reached its nadir. He was shunned by the Arab world owing to his support for Saddam Hussein in 1991 and was on the verge of being kicked out of Tunis. The world had not yet heard of suicide bombers.

Oslo rehabilitated Arafat, thereby sowing the seeds of its own destruction. The failure of Oslo should have become apparent to all when Arafat, first, rejected the best deal the Palestinian Arabs are ever likely to get -- the offer by former Prime Minister Barak of some 97 percent of the disputed territories in the West Bank and Gaza, and control of East Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital -- and secondly, relaunched the Intifada, now built around the suicide attacks that have rocked Israel for several years now. Why Americans and Israelis of all stripes continue to push the "peace process" as Jewish corpses continue to pile up is beyond me.

The central recurring theme of Confronting Jihad is that Israel and the United States are fighting the same war, and that it doesn't make sense for the latter to criticize the former when it takes steps to enhance its own security. Perspective is important. For instance, in response to four coordinated attacks that killed some 3,000 Americans, the U.S. has pursued terrorists, attacked them in their sanctuaries, and overthrown two regimes supported terror attacks against the West. So why does the U.S. insist that Israel show "restraint" in response to the more than 100 attacks over a three-year period that have killed nearly a thousand Israelis, proportionately the equivalent of 20,000 Americans?

As Singer observes, Israel's 9/11 began at Rosh Hashana in 2000, a full year before our own. Since then, Israel has been under a constant and pervasive threat of terrorism unlike any other the world has ever known. The Clinton administration sought to apply "evenhandedness" to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. Israel was admonished to refrain from the "excessive use of force" lest such a response feed the "cycle of violence." The way to achieve "peace" was to respect Palestinian "rights."

But Israeli restraint sent the message to Arafat that he could negotiate by means of terror, that Israel could be bled into withdrawing from territory. Since Arafat had already rejected Barak's deal, the message seemed clear to anyone but the ideologically blind: Arafat and the Palestinian Arabs did not seek a peaceful settlement with the State of Israel but rather, sought its extermination and the creation of a Judenrein Palestine.

Singer argues that 9/11 made it clear that "Israel and America are both on the receiving end of what is essentially the same jihad: an expansionist war by militant Islamists who cannot tolerate any form of non-Islamic power." President Bush seemed to recognize this state of affairs in the wake of 9/11. As he stated in his speech of 20 September, 2001, "We must unite in opposing all terrorists, not just some of them. There is no such thing as a good terrorist."

But in practice, the U.S. all too often continues to distinguish between the terrorism that it faces and that confronting Israel. For instance, senior U.S. envoys recently told the Sharon government that Washington would back a unilateral Israeli pullout from Gaza only if it could be ensured that former Gaza security chief Muhammad Dahlan would take charge of the area. Dahlan is a terrorist. Why is he treated as a "good terrorist"?

The same holds true with Israel's security fence. Administration officials have criticized the fence for creating potential hardship for Palestinians. While there are many good reasons to oppose the fence, it is a step necessitated by the failure of the Palestinian Authority to curb terrorist attacks against Israel.

Finally, there is the latest State Department Human Rights Report. This "balanced" report finds both Israel and the Palestinian Authority guilty of countless human-rights abuses. But its evenhandedness smacks of moral equivalency: It counts as an human-rights abuse every action Israel has taken to combat terrorism, thereby equating actions aimed at protecting Israeli citizens with terrorist acts executed to kill them.

Such steps fly in the face of common sense. As Singer notes, "September 11 should have destroyed the supposed dichotomy between local and global terror. Before September 11, one might have argued, however cynically, that 'local' terror would never spread, and would stay 'local' if the West did not oppose it too vigorously. Now it should be clear that if 'local' terror is a successful and quasi-legitimate way to address local grievances, there is nothing stopping the use of terror in the war for the ultimate grievance, that of Islamists against the West."

If the Bush administration does not see this, who will? John Kerry and the Democrats who still treat the problem of terrorism as an issue of law enforcement? The United Nations and the European Union? The International Court of Justice in The Hague, which is seriously considering a Palestinian challenge to Israel's security fence? "If Israel disappeared, the U.S. withdrew all its troops from the [Middle East], and all Arab regimes were replaced by Taliban clones, the [Islamists'] conflict with the West would not end -- it would just be getting rolling. The 'karffirs' [infidels] would be ripe for the plucking."

Singer's column for the Jerusalem Post is called "Interesting Times," as in the Chinese curse, may you live in interesting times. The times are indeed interesting when otherwise moral people cannot see the difference between terrorism and self-defense, and between regimes that threaten human rights and those that seek to protect and expand them. Times are interesting when people in the government of the United States see the steps that Israel takes to defend itself as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. The essays in Saul Singer's *Confronting Jihad* provide something of an antidote for interesting times, at least for those with a will to embrace common sense and a moral approach to international affairs. (National Review Mar 8)

The writer is an NRO contributing editor and a professor of strategy and force planning at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

Stateless in Jerusalem By Evelyn Gordon

The US State Department has long been the most anti-Israel organ of a generally pro-Israel American government, ever since the days when then secretary of state George Marshall fought a pitched battle to prevent the Jewish state from coming into existence.

Caroline Glick aptly described one manifestation of this attitude two weeks ago in her analysis of the department's annual human rights report, which personalized Palestinian intifada victims while leaving Israeli victims nameless and faceless.

Nowhere, however, is State's bias more evident than in its steadfast refusal to recognize Israel's capital city as part of the State of Israel. The extent of this refusal, as well as its discriminatory nature, is on full display in a lawsuit filed last year by two American immigrants to Israel who want their son's passport to list his birthplace as "Jerusalem, Israel" rather than merely "Jerusalem."

The baby was born in Sha'arei Zedek Hospital, in west Jerusalem – the part of the city that has been Israeli since 1948, and that everyone, even the Palestinians, agrees will remain Israeli under any final-status agreement. Moreover, Congress enacted an explicit law in 2003 stating that if an American citizen is born in Jerusalem, "the Secretary [of State] shall, upon the request of the citizen or the citizen's legal guardian, record the place of birth as Israel."

Nevertheless, the US embassy in Tel Aviv refused to register the baby's birthplace as Israel. His parents, Naomi and Ari Zivotofsky, therefore filed suit in an American court to get the registration changed.

In its response to the suit, filed on December 22, 2003, the State Department explained that it has been a cornerstone of American foreign policy since 1948 not to recognize any part of Jerusalem as Israeli unless the entire Arab world does so first – or in State lingo, "the consistent foreign policy of the United States is that the competing claims to Jerusalem are open questions to be resolved pursuant to 'Permanent Status Negotiations,' as part of a negotiated settlement in the Middle East."

Indeed, this refusal is so all-encompassing that the US consulate in Jerusalem – which is headquartered in west Jerusalem, with a branch in the eastern part of the city – is maintained as "an independent US mission whose members are not accredited to a foreign government" and "do not report to the US ambassador to Israel."

It is hard to imagine a greater insult to Israeli sovereignty than that – though here, Israel is equally at fault: What self-respecting country allows a foreign consulate in its capital city to refuse to be accredited to its government?

Were State's policy simply that it does not recognize the 1949 armistice line as the final border of the State of Israel, it might be hard to object – after all, neither does Israel. Even the most dovish Israelis want to retain parts of east Jerusalem and a few major settlements under any final-status agreement.

But State does consider everything on the other side of this line to be Palestinian: Current Secretary of State Colin Powell, for instance, has repeatedly said that Israel has no right to build its separation fence east of the Green Line because that is all Palestinian territory.

It is only on the Israeli side of the line, in west Jerusalem, that State views the armistice line as meaningless.

THE EXTENT of the bias is even more astonishing, however, when one considers State's claim, expounded in its response to the lawsuit, that nonrecognition of Israeli sovereignty over Jerusalem is so central to American policy that the 2003 law would constitute an unconstitutional infringement on the executive's right to set foreign policy unless the court reinterpreted the "shall" in the law to mean "may" – thereby allowing State to continue refusing to register people born in Jerusalem as born in Israel.

As the Zivotofskys' lawyers, Nathan and Alyza Lewin, point out in their response to State's brief (filed on February 4, 2004), nowhere else in the world does the US government view a mere line in a passport as an existential threat to US foreign policy.

For instance, they note, the US never recognized the Soviet Union's annexation of Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia – yet Americans born in these countries were allowed to list their birthplace as the USSR if they so chose.

And in cases of disputed territory – which Jerusalem, by State's own definition, is – the general rule laid down by State is that the birthplace should be listed in the passport as "shown on the application," meaning in accordance with the applicant's wishes. Only in Jerusalem does this rule not apply.

Even more incredible, however, is that State gives people born in Israel the right not to recognize the Jewish state's existence, even within the borders that

America does recognize.

The Lewins point out that not only are people born before 1948 allowed to list their birthplace as "Palestine" rather than "Israel" if they so choose, but even people born in Israel after 1948 – in Tel Aviv or Haifa, for example – are given the option of listing only their city of birth, with no country, "if the applicant objects to showing the country having present sovereignty," i.e. Israel.

Thus State is perfectly willing to subordinate American foreign policy to the individual's wishes if the goal is to deny Israeli sovereignty. Only if an individual wishes to affirm Israeli sovereignty does foreign policy suddenly become sacrosanct.

That, it seems, is State's idea of an "even-handed" approach to the conflict. (Jerusalem Post Mar 9)

Stop the Rot By Israel Harel

The signing of the Israel-Egypt peace treaty came to a halt a number of times because Israel insisted that the Sinai Peninsula be demilitarized and that U.S. forces be stationed between the Egyptian army, most of which was not to cross the Suez Canal, and the Israel Defense Forces. Egypt, which viewed these conditions as an insult and a blow to its sovereignty, refused. Only after heavy pressure from former U.S. president Jimmy Carter did Anwar Sadat agree to demilitarization.

Now Ariel Sharon comes along and, among the other foolish acts that his feverish brain constantly churns out, invites the Egyptian army back into Gaza.

Many of the Israelis who approve of withdrawal at any price are applauding. Once more, the illusion surfaces – as it did on the eve of the insertion of Arafat's 40,000 Trojan horses into the West Bank and Gaza – that someone will deal with terror, without the intervention of B'Tselem and the High Court of Justice and, of course, with no need for targeted killings.

The Egyptians, lovers of Zion that they are, will chase Qassam rockets, deal in our stead with Hamas, and absorb the blows of Hezbollah and al-Qaida, some of whose operatives have already infiltrated the Gaza Strip, and others who will arrive after Israel can no longer prevent them from doing so.

Not surprisingly, the objection of the Egyptians to a return to Gaza is a trick to elicit further courting. And when, in spite of what Gaza has been through in the last 37 years, they show an interest, Israel should start to worry – among other reasons, because it is certain Israel will pay a price; for example, the abolishment of the article in the peace treaty prohibiting the presence of Egyptian troops in the Sinai.

Egyptian troops, the IDF and the Shin Bet security service warn, will not prevent the firing of rockets at the Negev. On the other hand, they will prevent Israel from defending itself. Because if Israel enters Beit Hanun or carries out a targeted killing from the air, it will risk a clash with the Egyptian army and endanger the peace. And the blame will fall, as it always does, on Israel.

Israel is not the only one not to understand this step of Sharon's, like so many others recently. It raised eyebrows in the administration that Sharon so much wants to please: Washington, too, has grave doubts about Sharon's latest actions, expressed recently by Secretary of State Colin Powell, who called unilateral withdrawal a plan with more questions than answers.

When, in almost every area that Sharon touches – two clear examples being the Tennenbaum affair and his brutal, incomprehensible attack on the chief of staff – the earth shakes and the results could be fatal, it is time to separate the prime minister from his office.

The National Union and the National Religious Party must therefore leave the coalition – and not just for the sake of the settlements in the Katif Bloc or of preventing the Egyptian army from entering northern Sinai. No, the main responsibility of these parties is to save the people and the state from being punished by this complicated and bullying man. It is the primary responsibility of all the Zionist parties, but all the more so of these two. They must remove the keystone from this government and thus stop its peculiar moves.

This is certainly the job of that element of the Likud, in quality and quantity, that is quite substantial and is gazing yearningly at Sharon's illogical and pointless behavior. They must now call out: The emperor has no clothes. If they do so, there will be no need for elections and the government, under a different prime minister, will remain in their hands. (Ha'aretz Mar 10)

Poisoning the American Mind By Daniel Doron

My February 12th column ("NPR's anti-Israel bias") demonstrated how National Public Radio repeatedly promoted the Arab propaganda line by distorting or ignoring facts. This drew many responses. Most felt that a warning about NPR's success in defaming Israel, especially among inexperienced, idealistic university students, was long overdue.

But even more instructive, perhaps, were the few angry responses I received from avid NPR listeners who identify strongly with the station's message and are convinced that NPR's stance against Israel is justified.

One of these listeners suggested a comparison between Israel's occupation of the Arabs and Nazi oppression. And indeed it is easy to see how NPR listeners would jump to such a conclusion. NPR regularly presents Israelis as brutal oppressors, and Israel as a gratuitous and arbitrary occupying power. NPR does not explain how the conflict came about as a result of habitual violence by Arab leadership bent on Israel's destruction and how six million Israelis are still threatened by an Arab world with more than 100 million people in 22 militant dictatorships; how Israel is constantly battered by terrorism.

Israel is actually acting with great restraint. No other country would allow its citizens to be murdered and let the murderers operate openly and survive. But let's look at a sample letter and see what anti-Israeli frame of mind NPR promotes. A listener, Dr. Phil Brewer, writes:

Let's see, how many illegal Jewish settlements are there in Gaza and the West Bank? How many more illegal settlements and settlers are there than 10 years ago? Five years ago? One year ago? .? How many homes a month is the Israeli army demolishing this year?

Are you not ashamed to write about the "constantly repeated falsehood of Arab propagandists and their many media advocates that Israel is guilty of stealing Palestinian lands?"

The only falsehood I see is your denial of the reality of the situation.

Oh, I get it.

The Palestinians aren't really human beings. They don't have the right to anything. They've only been living on "your" land for several centuries. Now you're back, it's time for them to go.

Funny, another group of people was saying the same thing about 60 years ago. It's certainly better to be the oppressor than the oppressed. Or is it?

Okay, okay, maybe I misunderstood. Fine. Just tell me this: When someone goes to a farm that a family has owned for countless generations, bulldozes the house, the olive trees, the vineyard, makes the inhabitants leave, then builds a new house, a road, and a security perimeter for another family, just what is that called?

In my language it's called theft. What language do you speak?

Here is my response to Dr. Brewer:

I am not surprised that as a NPR listener you are probably not aware of certain facts. The Arab-Israeli conflict is not about territory or occupation, it is about racist jingoistic Arab dictators not wanting any Jews living in what they consider holy Muslim territory anywhere in the Middle East.

You have appointed yourself prosecutor, judge, and executioner, but this does not make your statement about the illegality of settlements truthful. I invite you to study the history of the Versailles peace conference, where a deal was struck whereby the Arabs received 99% of former Ottoman territories with the understanding that 1% will become a national Jewish home. The Arabs took the 99% and then reneged on the deal.

After Jordan was torn from what was to be a Jewish national home by the British in the 1920's, the Palestinians were offered a second independent state in 1948 and in 1999. Twice their leadership refused to accept a state, preferring to wage a war with the express aim of destroying "the Zionist entity" and throwing its Jewish inhabitants into the sea.

Palestinians waged a terror war against Israel, before Jordan lost the West Bank, which it forcibly annexed in 1948, and after the 1993 Oslo Accords freed most of them from Israeli occupation.

Hamas, as well as other Arab radicals, say openly that even if Israel withdrew to the 1967 lines, they would still continue to attack it until the whole land of Palestine was free of Jews. You make severe accusations about Israelis going to Arab farms, destroying them and taking them over. I hope you can cite one concrete instance where this has happened. But spare us the lies of Arab propagandists (remember the fabricated charges about the Jenin "massacre").

Just cite facts. Where did it happen and when?

The fact is that to this day, 93% of the land mass west of the Jordan is empty and government owned.

There is plenty of room for many more people there, Arabs and Jews. All Israeli settlements, which occupy less than three percent of "the West Bank," were constructed on such empty lands. They displaced few Arabs.

Could you tell me what is wrong with Israelis living in disputed areas of the West bank, while more than one million Arabs are living among the Jews in land that belongs to Israel? Only bigots cannot tolerate others among them.

I leave you to deal with your own conscience regarding the not so subtle allusion you made to what happened 60 years ago, trying to draw a really dastardly comparison between one of the most horrendous atrocities in history and the Palestinian predicament, mostly self-inflicted.

I invite you to consider the proposition that there is a better way to deal with the true tragedy of the Palestinian people than by supporting dictatorships, the terrorists and criminals who call themselves the Palestinian Authority, people who have inflicted infinitely more harm and suffering on the Palestinians than anyone else ever would or could, though this is apparently not reported by NPR.

(Jerusalem Post Mar 11)

The writer is president of The Israel Center for Social and Economic Progress, an independent pro-market policy think tank.

Misplaced Passion By Michael Freund

It turns out that Mel Gibson isn't the only one likely to make a bundle from his latest movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. The other big beneficiary, ironically enough, will almost surely be American Jewry's so-called defense organizations, for whom Gibson's film is, pardon the expression, a gift from heaven.

After all, this is quite a story, combining controversy, celebrity, and fears of anti-Semitism. Indeed, it is exactly the kind of scenario American Jewry's self-appointed leaders so desperately crave. It offers them an opportunity to demonstrate to their donor base just how essential a role they can play.

More tellingly, though, the furor over *The Passion* provides a classic example of how the narrow interests of mainstream Jewish organizations don't always match those of the Jews they claim to represent.

Consider, for example, that for months, even prior to *The Passion's* release, organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) were doing a better job of publicizing Gibson's movie than his own marketing experts could ever possibly have hoped to achieve.

By engaging in a prolonged, and ultimately fruitless, campaign against the film, groups such as the ADL provided it with reams of free publicity, creating a sense of suspense and buildup that is every Hollywood producer's dream come true.

Not surprisingly, just about anyone who read the papers or followed the news found his curiosity piqued by this impending clash between American Jewish leaders and movie star Mel Gibson.

Is it any wonder, then, that the film sold \$127 million worth of tickets in less than two weeks?

But here is where it gets interesting. Surely the people at the ADL were savvy enough to know that by raising a ruckus they would in effect be promoting a film they themselves considered anti-Semitic.

As London's *Sunday Telegraph* noted this week, "As the controversy rages, the money pours in." Moreover, they were surely aware that efforts by Christian groups to protest *The Last Temptation of Christ*, a previous film deemed offensive to Christians, had in fact backfired, drawing in large crowds of moviegoers curious to see what all the fuss was about.

So why, then, would they do it? Why engage in a counterintuitive, counterproductive campaign that was almost certain to fail?

Sadly, the answer is as simple as it is straightforward: What is good for the ADL is not necessarily good for the Jewish people. Because while *The Passion* was getting all that free publicity, so too was the ADL, sharing the limelight with Mel Gibson and co-starring along with him at your local neighborhood news outlet.

ADL leaders were giving interviews, being quoted by national news organizations, and raising the profile of their organization. And that, apparently, is far more important than the larger interests of the Jewish community.

But the story does not end there. It actually gets worse.

FIGHTING anti-Semitism, after all, is good business. According to its 2001 annual report, the ADL's total operating expenses were \$51,535,000. And that is just for one year alone.

Then there is the American Jewish Committee (AJC), which is currently running a "Centennial Campaign" that seeks to raise \$100 million by 2006. According to the campaign's promotional literature: "Since 1989, AJC's net assets have grown steadily to more than \$65 million."

And there are other American Jewish groups as well, such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center and the American Jewish Congress, all of whom claim to be in the forefront of the battle against anti-Semitism, and all of whom are vying for their part of the shrinking pie of Jewish philanthropy.

Pouncing on an issue such as a Mel Gibson flick, getting your name in the paper nearly every day, is one sure-fire way to attract more donors and outdo competing organizations. It may not actually help the Jewish people, but it sure does help the bottom line.

It is time for American Jewry to do a rethink and consider whether having several defense organizations is really worth the investment. This is not to say that combating anti-Semitism isn't important – just that with so much duplication of effort going on, with so many groups doing essentially the same thing, it is absurd to be wasting so much precious communal money.

Instead of pouring \$50 million into the ADL this year, what if American Jewry were to divert those funds to, say, creating a Hollywood film that promoted Judaism? How about a professional epic that told the heroic story of Purim or Hanukka, or the founding of the State of Israel and its struggle for survival? Imagine the impact it might have, at a time when American Jews are intermarrying at record rates and young Jews are leaving the fold? Rather than directing our passions at someone else's passion, we should be marshalling our resources and deploying them more effectively to keep the spark of Judaism alive.

Mel Gibson took his faith and put it on film for all the world to see. It's about time we as Jews did the same. (Jerusalem Post Mar 10)