

ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
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Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

They must state clearly and frequently the unacceptability of Islamist venom. Only then will today's fraudulent "shocked" reaction finally become sincere. (Jerusalem Post Mar 30)
The writer is director of the Middle East Forum.

Commentary...

What Islamic Schools Are Teaching By Daniel Pipes

"Shocked" is how Aisha Sherazi, principal of the Abraar Islamic school in Ottawa, described the reaction of the school's administration and board on learning last week that two of its teachers had incited hatred of Jews. And "shocked" was how Mumtaz Akhtar, president of the Muslim-Community Council of Ottawa-Gatineau, described his own reaction to the front-page news about the Abraar school.

But they may have been the only two persons on the planet to be shocked to learn that teachers at an Islamic school are promoting anti-Semitism or other aspects of the Islamist agenda. The fact is, inquiries into Islamic schools repeatedly discover just such a radical Islamic outlook. Some examples:

New York City: An investigation by the New York Daily News in 2003 found that books used in the city's Muslim schools "are rife with inaccuracies, sweeping condemnations of Jews and Christians, and triumphalist declarations of Islam's supremacy."

Los Angeles: The Omar Ibn Khattab Foundation donated 300 copies of the Koran (titled The Meaning of the Holy Quran) to the city school district in 2001 that had to be pulled from school libraries within months because of its anti-Semitic commentaries. One footnote reads: "The Jews in their arrogance claimed that all wisdom and all knowledge of Allah was enclosed in their hearts... Their claim was not only arrogance but blasphemy."

Ajax, Ontario, 50 kilometers east of Toronto: The Institute of Islamic Learning is a Canadian emulation of the extremist Deobandi madrassas of Pakistan. It focuses exclusively on religious topics, has students memorize the Koran, demands total segregation from the Canadian milieu, and requires complete gender separation. Former students complained about the school's cult-like devotion to its head, Abdul Majid Khan, and complained that it "twisted religion and used it to its own benefit."

Then there are four leading Islamic schools in the Washington, D.C. area: The Muslim Community School in Potomac, Maryland, imbues in its students a sense of alienation from their own country. Seventh-grader Miriam told a Washington Post reporter in 2001, "Being American is just being born in this country." Eighth-grader Ibrahim announced that "Being an American means nothing to me."

A textbook used at the Islamic Saudi Academy of Alexandria, Virginia, in 2004, authored and published by the Saudi Ministry of Education, teaches first-graders that "all religions, other than Islam, are false, including that of the Jews [and] Christians." An ISA class valedictorian, Ahmed Omar Abu Ali, was recently indicted for plotting to assassinate President Bush.

The US government revoked the visas in 2004 of 16 people affiliated with the Institute for Islamic and Arabic Sciences in America, of Fairfax, Virginia. In the words of the Washington Post, The Graduate School of Islamic Social Sciences of Ashburn, Virginia, referred to as a "purported" educational institution in an affidavit justifying a raid on the school, had its financial records seized in 2002 on suspicions of links to terrorism.

Nor are schools the exception among Islamic institutions in North America. A recent study by Freedom House found a parallel problem of venomous anti-Jewish and anti-Christian materials in US mosques. The most prominent American Muslim organizations, especially the Council on American-Islamic Relations, spew anti-Semitism and host a neo-Nazi. The same applies in Canada, where the head of the Canadian Islamic Congress, Mohamed Elmasry, publicly endorsed the murder of all Israelis over the age of 18.

So long as Muslim leaders simply declare themselves, in the spirit of Capt. Renault in the movie Casablanca "shocked, shocked" whenever news of Islamist supremacism leaks out, this cancer will continue unabated. The Islamic schools, the mosques, and other Muslim organizations like CAIR and CIC will continue their cat-and-mouse game so long as it works.

Only when outside pressure is brought to bear on them by politicians, journalists, researchers, moderate Muslims and others will it cease to work.

The Kurtzer Flap

Jerusalem Post Editorial

The US committed to support Israel on settlement blocs, right? Not so fast, according to a questionable report in Yediot Aharonot of remarks attributed to US Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer, which seemed to call into question commitments made by President George W. Bush to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in April.

The reality seems more complex. There is no reason to believe that Kurtzer, a careful diplomat, contradicted existing presidential understandings. Since the Yediot report, both Kurtzer and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have strongly reaffirmed Bush's April 14 letter. Yet confusion remains, and it arises from the Bush letter itself.

Here's what the letter from Bush to Sharon said: "As part of a final peace settlement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders... In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final-status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949..."

The other "commitment" the US letter ostensibly made is even more tentatively worded: "It seems clear that an agreed, just, fair and realistic framework for a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final-status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel" (emphasis added).

What is striking about both of these statements is that the US was careful not to take a firm position on what it emphasizes are final-status issues.

In other words, the US is saying to Israel and the Palestinians, it is up to you to negotiate on borders and refugees, but if anyone asks us, we will probably back Israel on not returning completely to the 1967 lines and on not settling Palestinians in Israel.

One might say to this, what does one expect from the US? Once an issue is deemed a matter for final-status negotiations, how can the US take a position on the outcome? This is, after all, the purpose of negotiations.

Why should the US change its tune now?

There are, as it happens, a few good reasons. The first is that Sharon's disengagement plan has, from when it was first described in December 2003, been a package deal: Israel unilaterally withdraws from some areas that it does not expect to retain in any final-status agreement, while consolidating control over other areas that it must retain under any conceivable peace accord.

The international community should understand that there is no free lunch, even when it comes to unilateral concessions. If Israel is to make a very real, wrenching and painful down payment on a final-status arrangement, it needs a parallel diplomatic down payment now, setting lines it will not be pressed to cross when final-status talks come.

If anyone should understand this, it is the Bush administration. After all, if Israel cannot show a tangible diplomatic reward for disengagement, then disengagement can only be perceived as a reward for four years of terrorist attacks. Is it in the American interest, let alone Israel's, to fuel such a perception, much less such a reality?

The problem of denying Israel any concrete diplomatic benefit from disengagement exists on both the border and refugee issues, but more acutely on the latter. Borders are, obviously, an extremely important matter, but no Israeli government would even propose lines that contradict a two-state solution with ample Palestinian contiguity.

There is no such certainty on the refugee issue. Indeed, the Palestinian side not only would, but does, take a position that fundamentally contradicts the two-state solution: It claims a "right" for Palestinians to move to Israel, in direct conflict with Israeli sovereignty and, ultimately, its right to exist.

Israel, obviously, could not go to a final-status negotiating table denying the Palestinians right to a state. Yet the Palestinians are openly doing just that to Israel when they claim a "right" to move to Jaffa, Acre and elsewhere in Israel.

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President Bush should do more than hint that it "seems" that Palestinians have no right to move to Israel; the sooner the US starts saying so clearly and unabashedly, the sooner Palestinians will start abandoning such unacceptable positions themselves. (Jerusalem Post Mar 28)

Ulysses S. Sharon By Shmuley Boteach

Let us say for a moment that we who oppose the withdrawal from Gaza are belatedly and grudgingly accept the calculus of disengagement. Imagine for a moment that Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is right.

Eight thousand Jews living in the midst of 1.3 million Palestinians have no future. The military commitment of protecting the settlers is just too expensive and the potential loss of life too costly. It's time to pull out. It's painful, but logical. There are other places in Israel for the settlers to live and these brave pioneers dare not allow themselves to become obstacles to peace.

There is only one problem with this seemingly unassailable reasoning. Taken to its logical conclusion, it becomes an argument against the very existence of the State of Israel.

What future does a country of five million Jews really have in a region of 500 million Arabs? The military cost of settling those Jews in Israel has been astronomical, and the human cost incalculable. And the Jews who have settled in Israel indeed have other places to live. Whereas once there may have been a need for a Jewish homeland, today Jews live in peace and prosperity in dozens of countries from America to Australia. Why should Jews aggravate the Arabs and serve as obstacles to peace by insisting on cultivating a land that the Arabs claim has been theirs for generations and which the Jews only conquered through war?

The Arabs have long made the same argument. The Middle East was a peaceful region until the Jews grabbed Arab land. Every Jew in the Middle East, therefore, is an obstacle to peace.

But unlike many Israelis who today shun the Gaza settlers, we Diaspora Jews have always been proud of these pioneers who are prepared to make the sacrifices in material comfort and security that we American Jews are too selfish to make.

So why has Sharon staked his government and reputation on dismantling the Gaza communities? It is the misfortune of the Israeli people to have a former general in the twilight of his career who, like so many warriors who preceded him, wishes to end his days as a peacemaker. When I hosted Sharon at Oxford University in 1992, I remember the hundreds of students with placards calling him a murderer for Sabra and Shatilla. Don't think Sharon has forgotten these things. This is his last chance to prove he was a man of peace all along.

The stinging accusations of butchery in the civil war leveled against Ulysses Grant led him, in his run for president in 1868, to campaign under the slogan "Let us have peace." The deliberately moderate policies that Grant embraced in the reconstruction of the South backfired and led to the rise of the Ku Klux Klan which murdered blacks and violently denied them their rights. Although Grant approved the punitive Force Acts of 1870 and 1871 to curb the violence and was authorized to declare martial law, he did so only once, in South Carolina. He was adamant that his new reputation as peacemaker supersede his former reputation of combatant. The direct and tragic result was that blacks would not enjoy full equality in the South until nearly 100 years later.

Near the end of his life Douglas MacArthur suggested that America and other great powers adopt laws that would forever ban all war. One can only imagine the catastrophic consequences to world freedom if the United States had denied itself the right to defend liberty around the globe with such self-imposed restraint. In the same vein, MacArthur's five-star colleague, general Dwight Eisenhower famously warned, at the end of his presidency, against the hegemony of the military-industrial complex.

Of course, Israel has the example of the great victor of the Six Day War, Yitzhak Rabin, transforming himself from conqueror into peacemaker with the Oslo Accords, which shall forever be remembered as one of the most calamitous miscalculations of any government in the history of the world.

The error of all these great men was not to understand that war and weapons are righteous and just when used to protect human liberty and life. Abolishment of war cannot precede the abolishment of evil. Hence, the ancient biblical prophecy of swords being beaten into plowshares is concurrent with the wolf lying down with the lamb, a metaphor for the menacing claws of tyrants and terrorists being permanently expunged.

Yet, Sharon insists on retreating from the enemy before any tangible sign of disarmament.

King David was not allowed to build God's temple because he was a man of war. It was left for his son Solomon, who would enjoy peace. Ariel Sharon's tragic miscalculation is to confuse the two roles. While one's enemies are still armed with evil intent, one must forever remain a David. Of the two men, it is the legacy of the father that is greater than the son. The Messiah is called the son of David rather than Solomon, not because war is greater than peace, but because a just war that defeats evil leads to the sprouting of peace.

The writer is an American radio host. (Jerusalem Post Mar 27)

An Opportunity Squandered By Michael Freund

He has stared down Israel's most implacable foes, stormed tenacious enemy strongholds and commanded some of the country's most audacious military maneuvers.

But when it comes to consulting with the Israeli public, Ariel Sharon is suddenly running scared.

While Monday's vote in the Knesset rejecting a bill for a national referendum may have been an important victory for the Prime Minister, it was in fact a dreadful blow to the cause of Israel's national unity.

It is hard to recall a situation as politically volatile or socially precarious as the current ideological divide gripping the country. After months of bitter rancor and debate, after all the heated arguments on television and in the media, Israeli society finds itself on the cusp of an excruciatingly painful and wrenching act: the expulsion of thousands of innocent civilians from their homes.

This isn't just another political issue, such as privatization of government firms, tuition hikes at national universities or the public sector's level of fiscal responsibility. It is something that goes to the very core of Israel's being, impacting upon its identity as a Jewish and Zionist state.

And that is why, as problematic and imperfect as referendums might be, the Prime Minister's opposition to holding one is so unfortunate. It would have been costly and no doubt inconvenient, but there is no question that a national referendum would have served to calm the agitation and still the troubled waters that are rising all around us.

I'm not talking about the childish and inane graffiti one sees scrawled on buildings or placards, or even the pungent slogans that are occasionally heard on the radio. The venom being hurled is reaching new lows, fueling the danger of an ongoing and deepening split within the nation.

Take, for example, veteran Israeli journalist Yaron London, who wrote last week in *Yediot Aharonot*: "the kippa is no longer an innocent head covering, but a warning sign, presumably because it identifies the wearer as a potential danger."

A Jew wearing a traditional head-covering out of respect for his Maker or as a symbol of national pride or religious commitment is now viewed as a "potential danger" by one of Israel's more prominent commentators? Had the same sentence appeared in a French, a Russian or an American newspaper, it would have been labeled anti-Semitic, and rightly so.

But London didn't stop there. "What would I do," he asked rhetorically, "if I saw a group of young kippa-wearers, tzitzit flying, grouped together at the side of the freeway on a day when right-wing leaders have promised to bring the country to a standstill?"

Take a look at what his answer was: "If my grandson were in the car with me, I'd turn around and find an alternate way home. If I'm alone, I'll prepare to trade blows."

"Prepare to trade blows"? Is this what Israel's civic debate has deteriorated to? Sadly, the answer appears to be yes.

The hot-headed rhetoric is taking on an increasingly menacing tone, and it should be of concern to us all.

Worse yet, because of the manner in which the Gaza withdrawal plan has been pushed forward, huge portions of the public feel disenfranchised and ignored, as though they and their opinions have not been taken into account at all.

Many are left to wonder: if the Prime Minister is so sure that the country backs his plan, then why is he afraid to put it to the test of public opinion? And if a majority actually opposes the withdrawal, then how legitimate would it be?

These questions and concerns could have been laid to rest. They could so easily have been swept aside, one way or the other, by giving the people a voice through a national referendum.

The growing split within the country could have been forestalled because the outcome of the balloting would necessarily have resulted in the bulk of the Israeli public accepting whatever the majority would have decided.

But this precious opportunity, like so many before it, has now been wasted. Instead, we face the possibility of a withdrawal that will leave an open wound on the Israeli psyche, one that will fester and rankle for decades to come.

The originators of modern democratic thought foresaw the perils inherent in such an approach. Take out your De Tocqueville or your Federalist papers, and see the extent to which the great political theorists of democracy sought to tackle the tricky questions raised by the necessity to balance differing and competing lines of thought in a free society.

They bent over backwards to caution against trampling on the feelings and interests of various sectors, noting that to do so would inevitably lead to a tear in the very fabric of the social order. For a country as diverse as Israel, that challenge is even more pronounced, making it all the more regrettable that the government is unwilling to give the people a say.

Deep down, I think that Prime Minister Sharon knows this, but he is so insistent on moving ahead with the disengagement, that he does not wish to

risk an embarrassing defeat at the polls.

In doing so, however, he has chosen to take an even more perilous gamble, the results of which could divide the nation as never before. Let's just hope that does not come to pass. (Jerusalem Post Mar 30)

The writer served as an aide in the Prime Minister's Office to former premier Binyamin Netanyahu.

How Not to Repeat Oslo's Mistake By Isi Leibler

Assuming the painful unilateral disengagement proceeds as scheduled, it is vital that a strategy for the day after be precisely formulated now. Oslo was flawed because the day after was based on a false premise – that unilateral concessions would induce Palestinian accommodation.

It is those expectations that sealed the disaster. Unless our leaders learn from that mistake, Israel is headed for another debacle.

Even now, prior to the implementation of disengagement, Israel has been making unilateral concessions without any commitment by the Palestinians that they have permanently turned their backs on terror.

Mahmoud Abbas differs from Yasser Arafat in many ways. He speaks quietly, seems rational, dresses like a gentleman and certainly projects a better image. But when he "arrests" those who carry out terror attacks while simultaneously praising "martyrs" and invites Hamas and the other killers to join his government, we are entitled to regard his "arrests" as mere rituals to placate Western leaders rather than a genuine attempt to curtail terror.

In a disarmingly frank manner Abbas even admonishes his constituents that it "harms the Palestinian cause" at a time when the PA is utilizing diplomacy to obtain concessions. But he assiduously avoids describing as morally repugnant the ghouls who blow themselves up in order to murder innocent civilians.

We should also be under no illusion that the present lull is necessarily a prelude to the end of terror. Only the dismantling of the terror infrastructure can assure that. Otherwise the "calming" will simply enable the terrorists (who were utterly desperate for a respite from the IDF) to regroup and renew attacks with refreshed vigor at a time of their choosing.

Our concerns are heightened by the continued incitement by the PA-controlled media, and in mosques, schools and even kindergartens. An official PA newspaper, for example, described the most recent Tel Aviv suicide bomber as a "shaheed" engaged in "a heroic martyrdom operation."

HENCE IT is surely time for us to announce to the international community that we have reached the end of our tether and will neither extend further concessions nor agree to participate in final status negotiations unless the Palestinian Authority dismantles the terror infrastructure and arrests terrorists under its jurisdiction; stops the cult of death and the incitement at mosques, schools, and in the media; removes the "right of return" from the negotiating table; commits not to alter the status quo on the Temple Mount.

These prerequisites reflect a broad Israeli consensus and represent red lines that no future Israeli government would concede. And if we now try to postpone facing up to such hard issues as boundaries, settlements and Jerusalem – we will simply be recycling a more dangerous version of the Oslo debacle.

Certain corollaries to this strategy should be self-evident.

After the urgent completion of the security fence, we must warn the Palestinians that if Kassam rockets continue to be launched against our civilian centers we will no longer sit with folded arms as our children are blown to pieces on our streets. Instead, we will behave like any responsible nation and, after serving Palestinian communities with notice to evacuate, destroy the areas from which the rockets were launched. We should maintain this course of action until the Palestinians recognize that the price they are paying in property damage obliges them to rein in the terrorists.

No additional Palestinian prisoners will be prematurely released until the terror machine is dismantled.

For the foreseeable future, the IDF must remain on the Philadelphi route. It is mind-boggling that the government could contemplate mortgaging Israeli security to Egyptian good will, after both the IDF and the Shin Bet had urged them against doing so.

We should announce that if the terrorists resume their activities, the IDF will automatically resume operations to eliminate those orchestrating the attacks.

At the same time we should stress our willingness to cooperate – including helping to usher in a new era of prosperity – with Mahmoud Abbas or any other designated Palestinian leader who proves a genuine partner for peace. We should reiterate again and again that we have no desire to rule over Palestinians. But until such time as our minimal security demands are met, we are determined to separate ourselves and leave the Palestinians to their own devices.

Over the past four years as a nation under duress, the people of Israel have displayed great tenacity and courage. Today, as we stand again at the crossroads, we should stress that we are not promoting a tough line. On the contrary, we are adopting a rational policy designed to achieve peace.

But we must adamantly refuse to ever again gamble our children's lives on

an agreement which provides the Palestinians with the option of reverting to terror whenever diplomacy fails to achieve their objectives.

The writer, a resident of Jerusalem, is a former chairman of the governing board of the World Jewish Congress. (Jerusalem Post Mar 30)

Sharon and the Bush Doctrine By Caroline Glick

Last June, during a NATO summit in Istanbul, US President George W. Bush blamed the dictatorial rulers of the Arab world and their supporters for the culture of extremism that engenders terrorism and hatred of the West.

Bush said, "In the last 60 years, many in the West have added to this [state of affairs] by excusing tyranny in the region, hoping to purchase stability at the price of liberty. But it did not serve the people of the Middle East to betray their hope of freedom and it has not made Western nations more secure to ignore the cycle of dictatorship and extremism."

The fact that, in the midst of a reelection campaign in which he was being pilloried for alienating Europe and Turkey by invading Iraq, Bush stood in front of his erstwhile NATO allies and essentially told them they were advancing the cause of terror, speaks volumes for the president's seriousness in pursuing his strategy of victory through the democratization of the Arab world.

The European reactions to Bush's speech were highly suggestive. French President Jacques Chirac sent his new foreign minister, Michel Barnier, to pay his first visit to PLO chieftain Yasser Arafat and spend the night in his Ramallah compound. British Prime Minister Tony Blair stood next to Bush at a news conference and conflated Bush's Greater Middle East Initiative of spreading democracy regionally with establishing a Palestinian state.

The question of how Palestinian statehood fits into the Bush Doctrine of democratization has always been a nagging one. The president's central premise is that the endemic wars and terrorism in the region are the consequence of repressive regimes that prefer their people be raised on a diet of extremism and hatred under tyrannical governments than be educated in moderation and modernity under free governments. Rejection of Israel's right to exist by the Arabs who need Israel (and America) as their external enemy in order to justify the failure of their own leaders to advance their peoples is, by the reasoning of the Bush Doctrine, the central cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the other hand, the idea that there must be a "two-state solution" in which a Palestinian state – empty of Jews at its inception – is created in Judea, Samaria, Gaza and Jerusalem comes in response to a completely different set of operating assumptions. These assumptions are not American, but European. According to them, the cause of wars and Arab terrorism is not Arab tyranny and religious extremism but a lack of Palestinian sovereignty. The Arab conflict with Israel, according to this view, will be resolved when a "viable and contiguous Palestinian state" is founded in a Jew-free Judea, Samaria, Gaza and Jerusalem.

Today the Bush Administration, together with the Sharon-Peres government, is pushing the view that Sharon's withdrawal and expulsion plan for Gaza and northern Samaria is aligned with the Bush Doctrine. Among the Palestinians and the Israelis, however, it is becoming increasingly clear with each passing day that not only is there no connection between the two, but that there is a glaring contradiction.

This week, MK Azmi Bishara's Web site, www.Arabs1948.com, published an interview with Hamas spokesman Ahmed al-Bahar in which he discussed the significance of Sharon's plan. Bahar claimed, "The painful and qualitative blows which the Palestinian resistance dealt to the Jews and their soldiers over the past four and a half years led to the decision to withdraw from the Gaza Strip."

"All indications show that since its establishment, Israel has never been in such a state of retreat and weakness as it is today, following more than four years of the intifada," he continued. "Hamas's heroic attacks exposed the weakness and volatility of the impotent Zionist security establishment. The withdrawal marks the end of the Zionist dream and is a sign of the moral and psychological decline of the Jewish state. We believe that the resistance is the only way to pressure the Jews."

There can be no clearer exposition of the Palestinian view that Israel's plan to hand over strategic assets to its enemy in the midst of war and receive nothing in return is a victory for terror than Bahar's statement.

From the political developments of the past couple of weeks inside of Israel it is clear that the overwhelming majority of Israelis also view Sharon's plan as a victory for terrorism. So it is that without exception, the entire left wing of the political spectrum, with the support of the anti-Zionist Arab MKs and the post-Zionist Yahad faction, supports Sharon's plan.

And almost without exception, every member of the right wing of the Israeli political spectrum – which does not include Sharon loyalists like Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni – either opposes Sharon's plan or demands that a national referendum on the plan be held before any withdrawal of forces or expulsion of Israeli citizens is carried out in Gaza and northern Samaria.

It took a while for the significance of Sharon's plan to become clarified for Israelis. As recently as last month, many voices on the Left were still questioning whether Sharon had something up his sleeve that they didn't know about. Yet as time passed, and Sharon became increasingly shrill in his defense of his policies – while demonizing and firing anyone who voiced opposition to or doubt about the wisdom of his plans – its significance sunk in for everyone. As a result, today it is well nigh impossible to find an Israeli or a Palestinian who will argue that Sharon's withdrawal plan can in any way be linked to, or made to agree with, the Bush Doctrine.

Given the total disconnect between the Bush Doctrine, which places the onus for change on the Arabs by calling for their democratization and eschewal of terrorism, and the Sharon plan, which makes no demands whatsoever on the Palestinians, it was interesting to see an attempt to conflate the two undertaken by as remarkable an intellectual and as heroic a figure as Norman Podhoretz.

In the April issue of Commentary magazine, Podhoretz, who has been a towering intellectual model for me throughout my career, argues that there is a way to view the Sharon plan as part of the Bush Doctrine. He claims that after Israel removes the Jewish communities from Gaza and northern Samaria, the Palestinians will be held to the Bush Doctrine's policy of democratization – and that Israel won't be forced to make any additional concessions until the Palestinians reform. He argues that if the Palestinians continue to attack Israel after the IDF evacuates the Jewish communities and withdraws from the areas, Israel will be free to take any action it deems necessary to secure itself. He claims that because of Bush's commitment to the Bush Doctrine, the Arab world will now be forced to enact reforms that will transform the Palestinians' operating environment in a manner that will force them to give up terror.

While it is possible to debate the merits of each of the points he made in favor of the plan, what is most interesting about Podhoretz's analysis of Sharon's plan is the point he does not address. Podhoretz never discusses what Israel is actually accomplishing – for itself – by going forward with Sharon's withdrawal and expulsion plan. Again, as is now clear to all Israelis and Palestinians, the reason it is impossible to discuss what Israel is actually gaining from Sharon's plan is because Israel is gaining nothing from it.

MK Uzi Landau, who leads Sharon's opposition in Likud, flew to the US last week to speak to American Jewish audiences. He spoke mainly to local groups, as he explains that the main Jewish organizations – the United Jewish Communities and AIPAC – have refused to allow any opponents of Sharon's plan to address their audiences. This, he says, is the result of pressure on the groups by Sharon's office. "What I found every time that I spoke," Landau relates, "is that the American Jews had absolutely no knowledge of the problems with Sharon's plan. No one has ever discussed them. No one has ever been afforded the opportunity to discuss what will happen the day after Israeli forces pull out of Gaza. No one has ever been able to talk to them about the financial and security and political costs of the plan. No one has ever been allowed to discuss with them the ecological consequences of the plan."

Given the fact that in Israel it took time before the significance of Sharon's plan was fully understood, it makes sense that in the US it could take a bit longer for the strategic logic – or irrationality – of Sharon's plan to become clear.

When the Rabin-Peres government announced the Oslo process 12 years ago, giving the PLO land, legitimacy and arms in exchange for intangible promises of peace, American supporters of Israel – both Jewish and non-Jewish – were quick to declare either their support for or opposition to Oslo. The vast majority supported it. Once they had publicly declared their support for the policy, even when it literally began blowing up in Israel's face, they refused to countenance that they were wrong to have done so.

The fact that the current policy of expulsion and retreat is being enacted by Sharon – the great general and right-wing tactician – is a source of confusion for many who are looking for a catch that will explain and justify his adoption of a radical, left-wing plan. Hopefully, once the supporters of Israel – who, like Podhoretz, were brave enough to ignore the conformist pressures and oppose Oslo – come to accept the fact that Sharon's policy involves many risks but provides no opportunities, they will not hesitate to disavow it. And again, hopefully, at that point they will demand that the US policy toward the Palestinians be brought into line with the Bush Doctrine.

(Jerusalem Post Mar 25)

Dancing with Abbas By Uri Dan

By handing over security control of Palestinian cities to Mahmoud Abbas, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has placed him on the horns of a dilemma. Not only has relatively quiet Jericho been transferred, but also Tulkarm, which has served as a jumping-off point for horrendous terrorist attacks.

Everyone remembers the battles waged in Jenin by the IDF in April 2002, but the suicide bomber who massacred 30 Jews on Seder night in Netanyahu's Park Hotel in March 2002 was given his explosive belt and his briefing in Tulkarm.

In 2003 another terrorist, who had unsuccessfully attempted to use cyanide

in that same attack, was captured in Tulkarm. And only last December the Hamas commander who dispatched the suicide bomber to the Park Hotel was also arrested in Tulkarm.

Only a month ago a terrorist set out from a nearby village and murdered five Israelis at the entrance to the Stage nightclub in Tel Aviv. In fact the IDF had to wage a series of complex operations in Tulkarm to wipe out most of the terrorist infrastructures of Hamas, Islamic Jihad and the Aksa Martyrs Brigades.

It's now Abbas's turn to prove that Tulkarm, which is also capable of threatening Highway 6, will not become a base for renewed attacks against Israel.

The average Israeli may well ask himself why Sharon is continuing to hand over control of Palestinian cities when Abbas has still taken no serious steps to dismantle the terrorist organizations in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip.

The reason is that Abbas gave an undertaking in Sharm e-Sheikh last month that he had achieved a cease-fire agreement with the terrorist organizations. In Arabic, he used the words "wakf itlak nar." – loosely translated as "opening fire is forbidden." However, these words were totally absent from the agreement reached by the Palestinian terrorist factions in Cairo last week. Abbas, backed by the head of the Egyptian Intelligence Services, General Omar Suleiman, did in fact announce that Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other terrorist leaders had made a commitment to maintain quiet, but here they used a different Arabic expression, "tahdiah," meaning quiet. Nowhere was the original expression, "wakf itlak nar," used, nor even "hudna," a cease-fire undertaken by Muslims when fighting a non-Muslim enemy.

As Jews we must continue to think in Hebrew when the Palestinians attempt to confuse us with their Arabic vocabulary. At first they threatened us with a Jihad – a holy war. They then promised a hudna, which exploded in a Jerusalem bus bombing in the summer of 2003.

Abbas then appeared on the scene and first promised a hudna, and later in Sharm e-Sheikh a "wakf itlak nar."

And what came of this? "Tahdiah," quiet.

According to its real meaning this expression permits the Palestinian organizations to perpetrate a terrorist attack from time to time, just as in the Yasser Arafat era, from the first years after the Oslo Accord until he started an all-out war on September 29, 2000.

Moreover, according to last week's Cairo decision, this "quiet" is conditional on further Israeli concessions and the meeting of Palestinian demands, first and foremost "the return of the Palestinian refugees to their property and homes."

Only the deaf Israeli media and blind Israeli politicians ignore the deceitful document presented in Cairo as a "cease-fire agreement."

However, Sharon likes to repeat that as far as he's concerned agreements with the Palestinians are worthless. He will judge Abbas and his gang only by their deeds. When Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told Sharon in Sharm e-Sheikh that Abbas was still weak and must be strengthened, Sharon replied: "It makes no difference if he's weak or strong, he must meet his commitments and combat the terrorist organizations according to the road map."

It is therefore not surprising that Sharon prefers deeds to a glossary of Arabic terms. Even though he has taken no serious steps against the terrorist factions, Abbas maintains he is capable of enforcing security in the Gaza Strip, and Judea and Samaria.

Let him prove this here and now, not just by solemn declarations in Ramallah and Cairo. After all, it is obvious that if Abbas can't control matters, he will soon become a lame duck and a hostage of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Just to be on the safe side the Shin Bet and IDF are carefully monitoring what is happening after the withdrawal from the cities.

There's no point in wasting time on sophisticated analyses. Two trains are on their way: one will test if Abbas can halt the terrorism. The other is the cruel separation planned by Sharon from the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

Are these two trains running on parallel lines, or are they on a collision course?

Based on past experience and Abbas's impotence, there's no chance that the "tahdiah" will hold up. The Palestinians will have to invent another deceitful expression when the recent Cairo agreement turns into a scrap of paper. (Jerusalem Post Mar 25)
