



Jerusalem 6:25 Toronto 7:39

ISRAEL NEWS

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

Dear Readers:

Some of you received a flyer inserted in Israel news over the last couple of weeks requesting contributions for Maot Chittim - financial assistance for Passover - for those families expelled from Gush Katif who find themselves in need of assistance.

Your response was generous, and greatly appreciated by the recipients, who will now be better able to celebrate the holiday, as the funds were transferred last week and in the hands of the families in time for their holiday preparations.

On behalf of our friends in Israel, our best wishes to all of you for a Chag Kasher V'Sameach, a happy and healthy Passover. - Ed.

Commentary...

Passover in the Holy Land By Naomi Ragen

You know that Passover is coming when the Arab workers in the supermarket start cleaning up the crumbs from the bread aisle, and marking the shelves "Hametz." You can see the special matzo lining the shelves: Organic whole wheat, wheat bran, egg, chocolate-covered.

People take this holiday very seriously here in Israel. Everyone is buying gifts for their Seder evening hosts. Or they are stocking up on food for the groups that will descend on them to be hosted.

And although forty rockets were fired from Gaza (gee, that unilateral pull-out was such a brilliant move, saving so many lives...) people don't seem worried, or even vaguely concerned, except of course, if you were one of the workers in that mattress factory in Ashkelon which took a direct hit, sending at least one person to the hospital. As our friends in Reuters wrote: 'The makeshift rockets fall harmlessly into Israel.' Thanks, Reuters for putting all our fears into perspective! I hope one of your reporters doesn't happen to be standing in a spot where that amateurish little bomb falls, because despite the lack of professionalism, he might actually find himself unprofessionally beheaded! But hey, that's unlikely. Reuters doesn't usually send its reporters to places where they are likely to actually witness any news first-hand. They have their "sources" in "Palestine" call them on their cell-phones. I say this all allegedly, of course. Don't believe me if you don't want to.

This morning I heard the sound of jets roar overhead --a sure sign that the nation is in defensive-mode. I read that air strikes had targeted terrorists returning from "training camp for freedom fighters" in Gaza, with their "Everything you need to know about firing missiles at civilians" manual. A few were killed, along with the child or children of a "freedom fighter" who brought along the tots to participate in the fun and games. What a lovely parent! My son got a week off from the army, and now he has to go back. He doesn't know if they'll let him out for the Seder. Given the security situation, and the fact that his unit will no doubt be on full-alert, I doubt it. I'll miss him. He's still my baby, whatever his commanding officer thinks. I guess I'll have to ask the Four Questions, as I'll be the youngest.

I have a few more than four to ask, though. As I was cleaning for Passover, I came across an unopened envelope that I guess I set aside until after the elections. It was from the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (jcpa@netvision.net.il). It was called: Defensible Borders, A Fundamental Necessity for Israeli Security." Only in Israel would one need to actually research such an obvious statement. In it, I learned a few things I didn't know. A Kassam II rocket has a range of 6-7 kilometers. A katyusha has a range of 22 kilometers. This means, that if Ehud Olmert and his merry band of losers have their way, and Israel pulls back to the '67 borders, rockets from Hebron

will be able to hit ת"ס Beersheba and Kiryat Gat; rockets from Bethlehem will be able to hit Jerusalem; rockets from Bodrus will be in range of Ben Gurion Airport. Rockets from Rantis can hit Tel Aviv. Rockets from Kalkilya can hit Kfar Saba; Rockets from Tulkarem can hit Netanya; Rockets from Jenin can hit Afula and Nazareth. By the way, there are .04 kilometers separating Jerusalem from Bethlehem, and .07 kilometers

separating Kalkilya (home of the Hamas terrorist who blew up the Park Hotel in Netanya during Seder night) from Kfar Saba.

As General John Foss, former commander of the 82nd airborne division of the U.S. Armed Forces once said: "As a military man I have to say that the '67 borders are not defensible in the long term. The State of Israel absolutely cannot exist within these borders."

But who cares? Israel's leaders are on their merry way, led by people who wrote books like: The New Middle East, just before the entire world was engulfed by the primitive barbarism of the old Middle East. They were just re-elected by the Israeli public to serve yet another term in office after their brilliant success in their last term.

And the average person, like me, who isn't an idiot, who packs off her son in his uniform knowing all that I know, and having no way to influence events except to type away and publish the facts, alerting those few who actually give a damn what is really going on here, how do we go on?

We go on because we remember who we are, and the precarious state of our people and our nation that has survived and triumphed so many times over innumerable odds in the past. We go on because we remember that in the blink of an eye, we can have salvation come our way, not through the normal channels, because if that were true, we'd have been extinct a few thousand years ago. We go on, because we need to make a Seder this Wednesday night, and our sons and daughters and grandchildren will be joining us. And if we're lucky, our soldier sons as well. We will drink our wine, and dip our herbs in the salty water of tears, remembering how we called out to our God in Egypt and how He brought down the plagues on the houses of our enemies, and brought us to the Promised Land. And even though we went through the desert kicking and screaming--we didn't like the food (we want meat, not manna! Oh, those watermelons we ate in Egypt!), building a Golden Calf, and challenging our wonderful leader, Moses, still God kept His promise. Whilly, nilly, He brought us home.

And when I say: Next Year in Jerusalem, unlike most Jews in the world, I will know that I am already there, and that it is a dream come true. I hope that your "Next Year in Jerusalem" will also be a dream that comes true, and that next year we will truly be free of fear, and want, and stupidity.

God Bless you all, and a happy holiday. (NaomiRagen.com Apr 9)

The Jordanian Option By Caroline Glick

IAF helicopters attacked Palestinian terror training camps in Gaza on Saturday and Sunday in an attempt to thwart the Palestinians' rapidly intensifying Kassam rocket offensive on southern Israel. The targeted camps are new blots on the blighted Gazan landscape. They were established shortly after Israel expelled 8,000 of its citizens from their homes in Gush Katif and razed their communities ahead of the IDF retreat from Gaza last summer. The camps were established on the ruins of the communities of Slav and Neve Dekalim.

The Palestinian rocket offensive on southern Israel and the establishment of terror training camps on the ruins of Israeli settlements are incontrovertible proof that the Israeli strategy of "disengagement" has failed utterly and completely. During the 38 years of Israel's presence in Gaza, even when things were at their worst, the area never constituted much more than an irritant to Israel's national security.

Now, with Hamas in charge and al-Qaida, Iran, Hizbullah, PA militias, Islamic Jihad and Fatah terror-crime mobs running rampant, Gaza has become more than an irritant. Today, Gaza has become a base for global jihad and a source for constant and intensifying destabilization throughout the

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region. The current rocket offensive from Gaza - for which Israel has yet to come up with any effective response short of invasion - has placed some of Israel's most sensitive national infrastructures in under constant attack. The daily shelling of the communities around Gaza imperils the economic viability of southern Israel.

Whereas one of the basic rationales given for the "disengagement" was that Israeli presence in Gaza was the main source of friction between Palestinians and Israelis, what is now clear is that Israel's presence in Gaza was a source of stability.

Speaking to Newsweek over the weekend, Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert set out his plans for the future. Olmert declared his intention to push forward with his "convergence" plan in Judea and Samaria. He will forcibly expel tens of thousands of Israelis from their communities and vastly curtail Israel's military control of the areas. And he expects America to support him by financing the resettlement of some 80,000 Israeli refugees and recognizing Israel's self-declared borders. That is, he desires American support for an Israeli implementation of the Gaza expulsions and retreat on a mass scale in the strategically vital areas of Judea and Samaria.

TODAY, THERE are two paradigms for contending with the Palestinian conflict with Israel. The first one is to negotiate a peace treaty with the Palestinians in which they will get land and sovereignty in exchange for promising to live at peace with Israel. In a word, this paradigm is the paradigm of appeasement.

The second paradigm involves an Israeli retreat from Judea and Samaria and parts of Jerusalem in exchange for nothing whatsoever from the Palestinians. That is, the second paradigm is the paradigm of surrender.

The appeasement paradigm failed at the Camp David summit in July 2000 when the Palestinians refused to accept an Israeli offer of almost everything they say they demand - Gaza, Judea and Samaria and east Jerusalem including Judaism's most sacred site, the Temple Mount. Rather than accept the deal which would entail recognizing Israel's right to exist in rump borders, the Palestinians went to war.

Rather than accept the appeasement paradigm's failure, the Israeli Left together with the Arab League, the EU and the US government attempted to artificially resuscitate it. Through a series of reports - Mitchell, Tenet, Zinni and then eventually the road map - the international community and the Israeli Left have maintained the fiction that appeasement is still an option. This is why, even today, when Olmert has moved to the surrender paradigm, he still pays lip service to appeasement by stating that he is willing to negotiate with Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas even though Hamas is running the show.

Yet lip service aside, Olmert and his cohorts are fully committed to the surrender paradigm and they are gunning for the Bush administration to dump appeasement and join their bandwagon. As Olmert put it to Newsweek, "I understand that if [the retreat and expulsion plan from Judea and Samaria] will be accepted as a contribution to a Middle East with less violence and terror, we will be able to reach an understanding with the American government about some measures of support that can be essential for the success of this move."

Unfortunately for the Bush administration, as the Gaza model shows, backing Olmert's plan will mean that the US will be giving its support to a strategy that has no chance whatsoever of making a "contribution to a Middle East with less violence and terror." To the contrary, Olmert's surrender paradigm has made a contribution to violence and terror.

So what is the Bush administration to do? Its current paradigm of appeasement has no chance of succeeding and Olmert's paradigm of surrender is also a recipe for failure.

LUCKILY, appeasement and surrender are not the only options available for stabilizing the Middle East and diminishing levels of violence and terror. In the current issue of the Middle East Quarterly, Dan Diker and Pinchas Inbari outline a paradigm that has a better chance of success than either appeasement or surrender.

Their article, "Re-energizing a West Bank-Jordan Alliance" notes that Israel and Jordan today share a cardinal interest in ensuring that Judea and Samaria do not follow the Gaza model. As they demonstrate, there is reason to believe that from this convergence of interests, a strategy can emerge that will be capable of succeeding where appeasement and surrender fail.

The Jordanian regime is today subject to two sources of turbulence that have the potential to destroy it. First there is Iraq. Iraq's political and military instability wreaks havoc on Jordan which is economically dependent on its eastern neighbor. Jordanian terrorist and al-Qaida commander in Iraq with Abu Musab Zarkawi has targeted the Hashemite regime. Al-Qaida has cells throughout Jordan. Al-Qaida operatives attacked Eilat with Katyushas from Akaba on August 19 and they targeted Amman itself in the hotel bombings last November.

Al-Qaida's spread from Iraq to Jordan is now, in the wake of Israel's retreat from Gaza being followed by its spread to Gaza and Judea and Samaria. As Jordanian diplomats explained to Diker and Inbari last September, Jordan is deeply opposed to Olmert's proposed Israeli withdrawal from Judea and Samaria. In their view, such a retreat would cause a spread of Gazan and Iraqi style chaos to Judea and Samaria. Such chaos could easily endanger the Hashemite regime.

UNTIL 1988, Arabs in Judea and Samaria were Jordanian citizens. Fearing that the Palestinian uprising which began that year would destabilize his kingdom, the late King Hussein renounced Jordan's claims to sovereignty over the areas. Yet Jordan has remained actively engaged in the areas. Some 70 percent of Jordanians define themselves as Palestinians and most Jordanians have family in Judea and Samaria. Trade between the two banks of the Jordan is intense. King Abdullah's wife Rania is a Palestinian. In naming their son Hussein the crown prince of Jordan, Abdullah has effectively transformed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan into the Hashemite-Palestinian Kingdom of Jordan-Palestine.

Inbari and Diker believe that the Jordanian regime may be willing today to entertain a strategy of federating or confederating with Judea and Samaria. The advantage of such a policy for the Palestinians is that as citizens of overwhelmingly Palestinian Jordan, they would no longer be stateless. The advantage for Israel and Jordan would be that the threat that the PA's chronic instability poses to both states' security would be remedied by the presence of two sovereigns - at peace with one another, with have decades of military cooperation behind them, and a shared interest in destroying all vestiges of Islamist terror cells in the area - in charge.

Although they do not discuss the issue of Israeli communities in Judea and Samaria in their article, there is little reason to think that a confederative or federative arrangement that would place Jordan in charge of the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria would necessitate any limitation on the right of Israel to remain responsible for the Israelis who live in the areas. Clear and straightforward arrangements regarding citizenship and security responsibilities for both the Palestinians and the Israelis can be reached with little more than a handshake given the depth of both Israel and Jordan's shared interests.

ONE OF the main reasons that the notion of Palestinian statehood - upon which the appeasement and surrender paradigms are based - is acceptable to Israelis is because it is believed that if the Palestinians are given sovereignty they will begin to behave like a responsible member of the community of states. Sadly, events of the past 13 years have proven repeatedly that the conferring of the accoutrements of statehood - including sovereignty in Gaza -- exacerbates Palestinian support for jihad and instability.

With Hamas in charge of the PA and global jihadist terror groups backed by Iran on the march in Gaza and Judea and Samaria, further empowerment of the Palestinians will endanger the survivability of Jordan and Israel. But as Inbari and Diker show, other options exist. If the Americans wish to support an Israeli policy that will, as Olmert says make "a contribution to a Middle East with less violence and terror," they should suggest that he consider switching his paradigm to one that has a chance of achieving that goal. (Jerusalem Post Apr 10)

The Rise of the Islamist Axis By Caroline Glick

On Monday, Russia's Novaya Gazeta newspaper reported that part of Ukraine's Soviet-era nuclear arsenal may well have found its way to Iran. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Ukrainians agreed to transfer the Soviet nuclear arsenal that remained in Ukraine after its independence to Russia. According to Novaya Gazeta, some 250 nuclear warheads never made it to Russia and are thought to have been sent to Iran instead. The report further noted that the warheads will remain operational until 2010.

Responding to the report, Gen. Yuri Baluyevsky, Russia's deputy defense minister and the chief of General Staff, said, "Russia's General Staff has no information about whether Ukraine has given 250 nuclear warheads to Iran or not."

It is impossible to assess the accuracy of the report. The Ukrainian government has dismissed its allegations. Russia may well have invented the story to shift media attention away from the growing awareness that Russian support for Teheran, Damascus and Hamas effectively places it in the enemy camp in the US-led war against global jihad.

But whether this particular report is true or false, there is no doubt that the danger to Israel and the rest of the Western world emanating from Iran and its allies is growing by the day. In recent testimony before the US Congress, John Negroponte, director of National Intelligence, said that the danger that Teheran "will acquire a nuclear weapon and the ability to integrate it with ballistic missiles that Iran already possesses" is a cause "for

immediate concern."

Also this week, as the Web site Regimechangeiran noted, the American Foreign Policy Council published a report quoting Western intelligence sources as asserting that Iran is in the process of assembling intermediate range ballistic missiles with a range of 4,500 km. The extended range will enable Iran to hit almost all of Western Europe with nuclear warheads. The sources further maintained that Iran is already in possession of at least one nuclear bomb.

EVEN IF both Negroponte's testimony and the council's report are perceived by some as alarmist, this week Iran itself continued to make every effort to convince the world that assessments like these are grossly understated. Iran conducted an enormous naval exercise called "Great Prophet" in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Almost every day of the exercise Iranian forces demonstrated new radar-evading ballistic missile systems. While Western defense establishments have had tepid responses to Iran's show of force, the regime built on its provocations Wednesday when the supreme commander of its Revolutionary Guards, Maj.-Gen. Yahya Rahim Safavi, issued a thinly veiled threat to close the Straits of Hormuz - the narrow waterway through which 40 percent of the world's oil passes.

Iran's recent financial maneuverings also indicate general preparations for global war. The Swiss newspaper Der Bund reported the Iranian regime recently withdrew \$31 billion of its gold reserves and foreign exchange from European financial institutions. Additionally, this week Iran renewed its gasoline rationing for the general public.

While President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's poisonous and apocalyptic rhetoric has caused the Western world to step away from him, Teheran is far from isolated. To the contrary, today it perceives itself and is perceived by others as the leader of a regional Islamist axis.

In February Canada's Globe and Mail published a report in which Hussein Hajj Hassan, a Hizbullah member of the Lebanese parliament, declared that on January 20 the Islamist axis was formally cemented in Damascus. The parley which brought about the entente was led by Ahmadinejad and attended by axis members Syrian President Bashar Assad, Hizbullah chief Hassan Nasrallah, Hamas chief Khaled Mashaal, Islamic Jihad chief Ramadan Abdullah Shalah and the commanders of PLO breakaway front groups. Iraqi Shi'ite terror chief Muqtada al-Sadr also pledged his allegiance to the axis. The jihad summit took place five days before the Palestinian elections and on the same day a suicide bomb exploded in Tel Aviv.

Damascus's response to the establishment of the axis and to Hamas's electoral victory has been dramatic and disturbing. It has harshly curbed all liberal political opposition to the Ba'athist regime. Voices of such dissent were empowered by the firm international position taken against Syria during the UN investigation of the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri last year. Today many opponents of the regime are in prison. At the same time, Assad's Alewite minority regime, that has been radically secular since its establishment in the 1960s, is beginning to open up to Islamist forces.

Michael Slackman, the New York Times correspondent in Damascus, reported the change in the general atmosphere on Wednesday. He explained that current situation reflects "at least in part a growing sense of confidence because of shifts in the Middle East in recent months, especially the Hamas victory in Palestinian elections, political paralysis in Lebanon and the intense difficulties facing the United States in trying to stabilize Iraq and stymie Iran's drive toward nuclear power." So in a nutshell, members of the Islamic axis believe that they are on the march and that America and Israel are on the retreat.

Although not present at the January jihad powwow in Damascus, al-Qaida is intimately engaged in this Iran-led Islamist alliance. Britain's Sunday Mirror reported that today al-Qaida forces operate within Iran's Revolutionary Guards units in Iraq. Both the IDF and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas admitted last month that al-Qaida units are operating in Gaza. Also last month, Israel announced the arrest of two Palestinians from Judea and Samaria who were planning to carry out attacks on Israel for al-Qaida. Lebanon's government has also acknowledged a growing al-Qaida presence in largely Palestinian enclaves. Al-Qaida has carried out attacks against both Jordan and Israel from Jordan and against both Israel and Egypt from its entrenched bases in the Sinai. Its commander in Iraq, Iranian ally Abu Musab Zarqawi, has made it clear that al-Qaida has now made attacking Israel one of its top priorities.

This week, the Daily Telegraph reported that Iranian Revolutionary Guard forces now control Hizbullah's posts along the border with northern Israel and are developing an advanced intelligence gathering network for spying on Israel. As senior IDF commander told the paper that Hizbullah posts built and fortified by the Iranians just meters away from the international border are "now Iran's frontline with Israel. The Iranians are using Hizbullah to spy on us so that they can collect information for future attacks. And there is very little

we can do about it."

No doubt in an attempt to do something about it, this week Northern Command conducted an enormous exercise which, according to the IDF Spokesman's Office, tested "deployment of regular and reserve forces to the front, establishment of bridgeheads, airlift of forces and supplies from the rear to the front, deployment of forces on various missions, the operation of logistic centers in the field and the provision of varied operational responses to the activities of terrorist organizations on the Lebanese front." By prominently posting a detailed report of the exercise on its official Web site, the IDF was clearly attempting to signal Iran that Israel is prepared for whatever awaits us.

Unfortunately - with all due respect to the IDF - our enemies, who know that the IDF is wholly subordinate to the political leadership, no longer take its signals seriously. From Gaza to Teheran our enemies are acutely aware of the weakness of our political leadership and its unwillingness to contend with them. Today, the policy of the government is to take no account of any events occurring beyond our indefensible pre-Six Day War boundaries and to defame anyone who suggests they bear examination.

FOR MORE than two years, the Israeli government and media have told the public that no matter how our enemies threaten us, they can do us no harm because America is protecting us. Protected by America, Israelis are told that we have no reason to fear the consequences of IDF retreats and the transfer of vacated lands to Hamas.

Sadly, this promise is largely untrue. The Bush administration today is bogged down in a swamp of strategic paralysis and political distress that prevent it from designing clear policies regarding the war against global jihad.

American policy towards the Palestinians is case in point: One day the Bush administration announces that it is cutting its ties with the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and the next day it demands that Israel keep the borders with Gaza open and promises to find a way to give direct aid to the Palestinians that somehow will not strengthen Hamas.

As to Syria, the stubborn stance the administration maintained towards Damascus during the months of Detlev Mehli's investigation of Hariri's murder has been replaced by no stance. Aside from finger pointing at Damascus, Washington offers no plan for ending Syrian support for terrorists in Lebanon, the PA and Iraq.

On Wednesday, The Wall Street Journal noted that during her weekend pit stop in Baghdad, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice came down publicly against Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari's bid to maintain his position in the next government. Rice and her British counterpart, Jack Straw, announced their governments' support for Finance Minister Adel Adul Mahdi, who serves as the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, which is known to have strong relations with Teheran.

Rice's heavy-handed interference with Iraq's democratic processes goes hand in hand with the administration's decision to open direct negotiations with Iran for the first time since the Khomeini revolution in 1979. On Saturday, direct US-Iranian negotiations on the stabilization of Iraq are scheduled to begin. And as if the Bush administration's decision to legitimize Iran's destabilizing position as a power broker in Iraq weren't enough, on Tuesday German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier met with Rice in Washington and urged her to open a direct dialogue with Iran on its nuclear weapons program.

All of these recent developments demonstrate that the members of the Iran-led Islamist axis are actively pursuing and indeed progressing in their quest to encircle Israel and entrap the US. This they accomplish - both separately and together - while Israel and the US insist on doing everything they can to prevent any possibility of effectively meeting the rising threats. There is no doubt that the political leadership of at least one of these states has to snap out of its policy fog immediately. Our enemies have no consideration for our desire to ignore them. (Jerusalem Post Apr 6)

Denial of Adversity By Sarah Honig

Marie Colvin focused in the Sunday Times five days ago on what Israel's proponents of further retreat (a.k.a "disengagement," now updated euphemistically to "convergence") studiously and deliberately obfuscate - the bottom-line consequence of gratuitous territorial gifts to mortal foes.

Colvin - never renowned for her love of Zion, covered conflicts in Kosovo, East Timor, Chechnya and Sri Lanka, where she lost an eye - ventured a tad beyond the reinstated Green Line to visit what became of Morag, one of the spirited settlements laid to waste by Sharon, Olmert et al.

"Four green flags of the extremist Palestinian party Hamas were flying last week at the gate of a military training camp built on the ruins of Morag," she opened. "Inside the camp, recruits from the Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades,

the military wing of Hamas, ran mock attacks over dunes covered in dry grass. One of them stopped to launch a rocket-propelled grenade."

Colvin stresses that "the base is no makeshift encampment. A telecommunication tower rises from a dune; loudspeakers broadcast from masts... the stones from the old homes have been painted white and used to make guardhouses. Even the settlement's gate has been cannibalized; now it swings open to Toyota pick-up trucks bringing more armed men in uniform."

A senior al-Qassam honcho explained to Colvin that his outfit's deadly designs vis-a-vis Israel haven't changed one iota since Hamas's ascent to power. However, if the word of an unnamed hotshot doesn't suffice, we can climb higher in the Hamas hierarchy to hear likewise.

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Mahmoud a-Zahar expounded last week, in an interview with China's Xinhua news agency, on his "dreams of hanging a huge map of the world on the wall of my Gaza home which does not show Israel on it."

His is the "dream to have our independent state on all Palestine... This dream will become real one day. I am certain of this because there is no place for the state of Israel in this land."

Lest anyone belittle this as an isolated slip, a-Zahar underscored and elaborated his comments in Lebanon's al-Mustakbal. The most the Hamas regime can offer Israel, according a-Zahar, is a "temporary cessation of hostilities," in which "the Zionist entity would be countenanced temporarily but gradually be pushed into narrower confines. Borders can only be provisional," because "there's no place on earth for the state of Israel."

COLVIN MIGHT not have realized how in sync her interlocutor was with his bosses, but she obviously didn't misinterpret the mood in what became of Morag. After what she saw and heard, Colvin reckons that "Israelis contemplating the evacuation of West bank settlements will shiver at the discovery that al-Qassam fighters now live and train on the ruins of a place that was home to 37 Jewish families."

That, however, is where she gets it all wrong. Reasonable folks would indeed be shaken to the core and rebuff those who uprooted the most dedicated of their compatriots in order to facilitate genocidal preparations against the entire national aggregate.

But Colvin misjudged us. Israelis, alas, are neither reasonable nor even normal. It's not that our nonchalance is born of extraordinary courage in the face of adversity. Instead it's the product of denial of adversity. We pretend we have nothing to worry about except for child subsidies and old-age pensions.

Our media aids and abets our escapist penchants. Colvin's report received no resonance in the country that surrendered Morag to cold-blooded mass-murderers. A-Zahar's latest pronouncements didn't feature in our public discourse. We don't listen to the likes of him, especially when he spitefully spits his truth in our face. We systematically eschew painful reality.

That's why in the recent elections we did just what Hamas kingpin Khaled Mashaal exhorted us to do: "vote for parties that favor retreat and not for right-wing parties which oppose retreat. Israelis who want to avoid a prolonged conflict should vote for retreat now," he advised.

True, we didn't award the retreat-advocates an unequivocal landslide, but with adroit parliamentary machinations they can amass a razor-thin majority to expel 100,000 Israelis from Judea and Samaria.

That in turn would bolster Mashaal's conviction that Israel will destroy itself. "Israel hasn't got the stamina to withstand a protracted struggle," he asserted in a Lebanese TV interview. "Arabs have the tenacity needed for the long haul. The Arabs will never be broken, nor yield to Israeli and American terms. Ultimately it'll be Arabs who impose their terms on the enemy... We have spiritual and material resources and we will prevail."

How does Mashaal know he's right? Disengagement, he asserts, proves his contentions. "Were Israel strong, it wouldn't withdraw. But Israel is in deep crisis. It cannot defeat the Palestinians or break their spirit."

This is the morale-boosting message Israel sent its neighbors when it ceded strategic assets to still-viable enemies. Unbeaten armies don't give up vital holdings, especially in an unconcluded war. That's how conventional logic operates. Even Mashaal's logic. You can't fault him for not figuring us out

You can't fault Colvin either. Her assumptions about what should send shivers down our spines are based on the norm. Israelis, though, are an anomaly. This is why so many among us could go to the polls and ignore the inimical candor of the recipients of our largesse who vow to annihilate us.

Far from shivering about preparations to expedite Israel's obliteration, half its citizens exude glee at the prospect of creating more Morags for Hamas's future fortification.

No one else like us in the world. (Jerusalem Post Apr 6)

From the Blogs...

Ignatieff's Empire By Martin Kramer

This three year-old blog by Martin Kramer reveals the Middle East policies of a top candidate for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Michael Ignatieff has a meandering piece in today's New York Times Magazine on American empire. In it, he tells us that "leaving the Palestinians to face Israeli tanks and helicopter gunships is a virtual guarantee of unending Islamic wrath against the United States." The exit from the present situation is a "United Nations transitional administration [for the Palestinians], with U.N.-mandated peacekeepers to provide security for Israelis and Palestinians." Without this, victory in Iraq won't staunch the hemorrhaging of U.S. prestige in the Middle East. These ideas have been bouncing around for some time. Now they get the endorsement of a noted journalist and Harvard professor, in the most prominent spot in the print media.

I admit I have a hard time taking Ignatieff seriously on the Middle East, in part because of an article he published back in April in the London Guardian entitled "Why Bush Must Send in His Troops." Before you decide that Ignatieff is a sure guide to things Middle Eastern, read it.

You'll find that it includes, in one form or another, every trendy calumny against Israel. There is the infamous South African analogy: Palestinian self-rule was really "a Bantustan, one of those pseudo-states created in the dying years of apartheid to keep the African population under control." The Palestinian Authority had "failed because Israel never allowed it to become a state." Reading through this piece, you would never know that there were Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Camp David--because they're never mentioned. Perhaps Ignatieff didn't want to get into the debate over what happened or didn't happen in those talks, in which an Israeli leader proposed the creation of a Palestinian state on virtually all the lands occupied in 1967. But that would only have complicated things for Ignatieff's inevitably Solomonic verdict: "Both sides have an equal share of blame."

As for as the Palestinian half of the blame, Ignatieff quickly shifts some of that to Israel's shoulders, too. Israel kept the Palestinian Authority too weak. "Had Israel realized that its own security depended on assisting in the establishment of a viable and, if necessary, ruthless Palestinian Authority it might now be secure." In particular, Israel did not allow the PA "enough military and police capability."

Not enough? Did Ignatieff have a clue about what was going on in the PA? The PA (even according to David Hirst in the Guardian) had forty to fifty thousand persons in its security services--ten to twenty thousand more than the number agreed upon in Oslo II. As one observer put it, "the PA has become the most heavily policed territory in the world, with an officer-to-resident ratio of 1:50; the U.S. ratio for police officers and sheriff's deputies, in contrast, is 1:400." So what, in Ignatieff's view, would have been "enough military and police capability"? (And why military?)

In fact, the problem was never one of capability. It was one of will. The PA decided to wage war with the weapons it had been given to keep peace. Some think that had there been fewer "security services" and guns, there might not have been an intifada at all.

But the absolute low point of this article is Ignatieff's invocation of the "sacrifice of the young people on both sides in a mutually reinforcing death cult." It's an insufferable case of false symmetry, especially coming as it did in the midst of the worst suicide bombings. Even if you believe Israelis and Palestinians are locked in a "cycle of violence," you're showing yourself ignorant if you compare the suicidal "death cult" rampant among Palestinians to the stoic resolve of Israelis.

"The Americans now face a historic choice," pronounced Ignatieff back in April. "For 50 years, they have played the double game of both guaranteeing Israel's security and serving as honest broker in the region. This game can't go on." This is the greatest of all the calumnies--not just against Israel, but against generations of U.S. policymakers. A "double game"? It's been an immensely successful strategy, which won the Cold War in the Middle East and produced the Israeli-Egyptian peace. This "double game" has prevented a general conflagration for thirty years. And it must go on, because the moment America's commitment to Israel seems diminished in Arab eyes, the region is destined to spiral into war, just as it did in 1967 and 1973.

None of the nonsense Ignatieff published in the Guardian would have gotten past an editor at the Times, but all of it is implicit in today's new piece. 9/11 has turned everyone into a Middle East expert for fifteen minutes. That's about as long as it will take you to get through the lead article of today's Magazine. Time's up. (MartinKramer.org Jan 5, 2003)