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ISRAEL NEWS
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Commentary...

A Wall of Faith Around Gaza
By Michael Freund

These are difficult times for opponents of Ariel Sharon's Gaza withdrawal. Politically, Sharon has succeeded in dodging the various obstacles that stood in his path. Diplomatically, his proposal has received the "blessing" of President George W. Bush and much of the rest of the world.

Domestically, the media stand solidly behind him. Israel's courts are almost certain not to intervene, and local pundits and opinion-makers are backing him enthusiastically. Indeed, at this point it seems there is little standing in the way of Sharon's plan to expel Gaza's Jews from their homes.

Little, that is, except for faith.

Recently, a couple I know decided to move to Gush Katif. Determined to stand in solidarity with the thousands of Jews living under threat of expulsion, they left behind a comfortable villa, friendly neighbors and familiar surroundings, and moved into a tiny caravan, together with their numerous, and rather boisterous, children. The father is a respected physician, and he will continue to treat his patients by commuting to and from his clinic in Jerusalem. The mother has thrown herself into the campaign against withdrawal, speaking out, raising funds and dedicating her time to protecting her family's new home.

Why did you do it? I asked. What prompted you to move?

"We couldn't. We just couldn't sit back and watch," he replied. "The pullout would endanger Israel, and we need to show the world that this land is ours."

But what will you do, I said, if soldiers come to remove you from your home. How will you deal with such a situation?

"If they want to remove me, then I'll chain myself to the bed," he said, adding, "They'll have to drag me out, but no matter what, I won't use violence."

How naive, you might think. What could these people possibly hope to accomplish? The jig is up, the game is over. Perhaps they should just throw up their hands and accept defeat.

Sorry, but that is just not the Jewish way. If it was, then Israel would have closed up shop and called it quits a long time ago.

All is not lost. This game is far from over. Those who love the land of Israel and cherish it can prevent the retreat from taking place.

The first step is to reach out and help those people, like my friend the doctor, who are willing to move to Gush Katif. Over 1,000 Israelis have already done so in the past few months, and many more are reportedly in the process.

To meet the demand, long-time activist Datya Yitzhaki launched the Minhelet Kela, a Hebrew acronym for the Gaza Absorption Authority, which has been busy refurbishing homes, thereby enabling dozens of families to make the move and help strengthen Gush Katif. There are numerous empty structures of all sorts throughout the area, many of which can easily be converted into living space. Yitzhaki and her colleagues note that this would enable Gush Katif to absorb thousands of additional residents in the coming months, giving it a big numerical, as well as emotional, boost.

The second, and equally critical, step in blocking the withdrawal is to create a "Wall of Faith" around Gush Katif prior to the date of the planned expulsion. If tens of thousands form a passive human chain around the area, one bound together by resolve and faith, they can prevent the demolition from taking place.

In effect, it all boils down to simple arithmetic: bring as many people as possible, making it hopelessly impractical to remove them.

There are sure to be untold thousands of Israelis who will take part in this undertaking, but I think it is essential to reach out to friends and supporters abroad as well, such as US Christians, and to encourage them to come and take part in protecting Gush Katif.

The presence of large numbers of Christians standing arm in arm with Israeli Jews in defense of God's Holy Land would send a potent message that is sure to echo through the corridors of power in Jerusalem and Washington.

In Hebrew, Gaza is referred to as "Aza," which means "strength" or "might" perhaps suggesting that only if we muster within ourselves the determination to stand up for what we believe in, can we possibly merit to succeed. Now, more than ever, this is a struggle for the integrity and the future of the Land that was given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Anyone who believes in the Bible, and in God's eternal promise to His people Israel, cannot and must not remain silent. (Jerusalem Post Apr 27)

Please Don't Call it Terrorism

By Daniel Pipes

Shortly after Yusra Azzami, 20, strolled with her fiance' and her sister on the beach in Gaza last week, vigilantes from Hamas formed suspicions that she was engaged in "immoral behavior." They followed her, shot her dead as she sat in her fiance's car, dragged her corpse out and mutilated it savagely with clubs and iron bars. This atrocity follows on Hamas having murdered over 400 Israelis going about their daily

business since 2000. Unsurprisingly, the American and other governments consider Hamas a terrorist organization.

But how do they deal with such an organization? Two very different approaches exist, and President George W. Bush has articulated them both. In June 2003 he stated that "the free world, those who love freedom and peace, must deal harshly with Hamas" and specified that "Hamas must be dismantled." Last month, however, he offered Hizbullah a chance to prove it's not a terrorist organization and redeem itself "by laying down arms and not threatening peace."

This alarming second view builds on an outlook with growing support within the US government. Many diplomats and intelligence officials believe, for example, that engaging the Muslim Brethren in Egypt (in the Washington Post's description) "offers an opportunity for political engagement that could help isolate violent jihadists." And Arabic-language news sources report that American officials in Egypt recently met with Muslim Brethren leaders.

To forward this wrong-headed idea, an organization called the Conflicts Forum was founded in December 2004. It has the immodest goal of not just changing policy toward radical Islamic terrorist groups, but changing how Westerners see radical Islam itself. Conflicts Forum wants to challenge "the prevailing Western orthodoxy that perceives Islamism as an ideology that is hostile to the agenda for global democracy and good governance."

Conflicts Forum has several advantages, starting with the fact that what it terms the "prevailing Western orthodoxy" is - as noted above - quite soft. The group's founder and leader, Alastair Crooke, 55, was a ranking figure in both British intelligence and European Union diplomacy, someone who hobnobs with insiders, gives upbeat speeches at premier venues ("It is Essential to Negotiate with Terrorists" at the London School of Economics; "Can Hamas Be A Political Partner?" at the Council on Foreign Relations) and enjoys a fawning press.

But Crooke's true identity came out in a clandestine meeting he held with the Hamas leadership in June 2002, at a time when he still represented the European Union. We have an account of the meeting, prepared by Hamas, which Crooke claims is inaccurate. It deserves reading in full for an insight into Crooke's amoral, craven, appeasing and dhimmi-like mentality:

* He recounts to Hamas having insisted to two high-ranking European politicians that "the status of Europe in the eyes of the Palestinians has started to deteriorate" because Europe did not adequately support the Palestinians.

* "The main problem [in the Middle East] is the Israeli occupation," which is music to Hamas ears.

* "As for terrorism, I hate that word," he tells leaders of a leading terrorist organization, going on to imply that he instead sees Hamas operatives as "freedom fighters."

This last fits Crooke's routine public dismissal of terrorism as a threat. The West, he says, faces not "terrorism" (his quote marks) but a distinctly less-nasty "sophisticated, asymmetrical, broad-based and irregular insurgency." And his Conflicts Forum, dubbed by journalist Patrick Seale "a club of disaffected diplomats and intelligence officers," engages in a pleasant form of personal diplomacy that diminishes the horror of Islamist terrorism. Thus, at a Conflicts Forum meeting last month in Beirut with the leadership of four Islamist terrorist groups, including Hamas and Hizbullah, the mood and the food were too good to allow this inconvenient subject to intrude.

Stephen Grey, a journalist covering the event, later reflected on it: "Invited to dinner with the participants in the Beirut talks, and sharing jokes with the Hamas men over tiger prawns, avocado, pasta and cherry tomatoes, I wondered privately how one would explain all this intimacy to the mother of a child killed by a suicide bomber."

Conflicts Forum offers a seductive alternative to the hard business of waging and winning a war. Unfortunately, its wrongheaded, defeatist and doomed approach amounts to preemptively losing the war. Its counsel deserves a round rejection. (Jerusalem Post Apr 27)

The writer is director of the Middle East Forum and author of *Miniatures*.

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Pollard's Freedom and Our Freedom By Caroline Glick

Jonathan Pollard is one of the most polarizing figures of our times. Pollard, a former intelligence analyst in US naval intelligence, has now served 20 years of a life imprisonment sentence following his conviction for transferring classified US intelligence materials relating to Arab ballistic missile and nonconventional weapons programs to Israel from May 1984 until his arrest in November 1985.

For his contribution to Israel's security and for his long suffering in prison, Israelis consider Pollard a national hero. He is commonly considered the source of Israel's preparedness for the Iraqi missile attacks during the Gulf War. Israelis across the right-left and religious-secular divide are basically unified in their hope to greet Pollard in Israel as a free man.

For many American Jews, Pollard is reviled as a traitor. Since his arrest, a cloud of suspicion has hung over all Jews employed in the Pentagon, the State Department, the US military and intelligence services. Time after time, baseless allegations surface of American Jews spying for Israel. In spite of Israel's strategic alliance with the US, American intelligence agencies define Israel as a "country of concern" for intelligence breaches and American Jews are under constant, often malicious scrutiny. All a person has to do to expose the deep frustration of Washington Jews with the constant discrimination by intelligence agencies is mention the name "Pollard." Immediately he will be showered with bitter statements like, "If it weren't for that traitor, we wouldn't be in this position," and, "I hope he rots in jail."

For the past 12 years Pollard has been incarcerated in Butner Federal Prison in North Carolina. He was transferred to Butner from Marion Federal Prison in Illinois where he was held in a subterranean cell in solitary confinement for seven years. Pollard's treatment, like his life sentence, is unprecedented in the history of US espionage investigations. Never has a spy in the employ of a friendly country received such a sentence. On average, spies working for countries considered US allies receive between 4-7 years in jail. Aldrich Ames, the most notorious spy in recent history, who as head of the CIA counter-intelligence department compromised all US intelligence emanating from the Soviet Union for over 15 years and caused the death of more than 10 US agents operating in the Soviet Union – while sentenced to life in prison – was never placed in solitary confinement for stretches comparable to Pollard.

I went to see Jonathan Pollard last week. During a two-and-a-half-hour meeting, we spoke at length about his espionage, the conditions of his imprisonment, his feelings toward the US, Israel, the Jewish people and his hopes for the future.

Pollard is now 50 years old. He grew up in South Bend, Indiana. He studied political science, economics and classics at Stanford University and was studying towards a doctorate in military history at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts when he was recruited in 1979 by Naval Intelligence.

Pollard first visited Israel in 1971 for a summer program at the Weitzman Institute. He refers to his Jewish background as "modern-Orthodox, American style. The centrality of Israel for the Jewish people was emphasized."

"I had thought constantly about aliya," he says, "But it's hard to pick up and leave the 'Golden Medina.' My parents are proud Americans. My father is a decorated Army officer. He carries a copy of the US Constitution in his pocket. But when I joined Naval Intelligence my father warned me that it's not a good place for a Jew. There is a lot of anti-Semitism there. But even when I saw it, I thought it would be better for me to stay."

Today at Butner, Pollard is employed as a window washer. His life is one of constant terror. "I will give you an impressionistic description of my life. It involves constant noise, constant violence; profanity – every conceivable type of profanity. There is no place to be quiet or to find quiet – to read. You really have to be disciplined not to be provoked. You need to be disciplined to see when a situation is getting out of hand and to get away as quickly as possible. I have to be ready if my door opens at 2 in the morning.

"I live in a small room, not in a cell, with a roommate. My room is so small that when I sit on my bed and stretch out my arms I touch both of the walls. And it is impossible to lock the door. When I am not washing windows I spend my day reading and listening to the radio – to NPR and the BBC."

The prison has television sets set up in common rooms for inmates. His fellow inmates include murderers, rapists, armed robbers, pedophiles and other violent criminals. On September 11, Pollard was in the TV room, watching CNN.

What did you feel when you saw the World Trade Center and the Pentagon attacked?

"I felt sick to my stomach. The worst thing for me was that a lot of the Muslim inmates here greeted the attacks by saying Alla Akhbar and cheering."

But why would it bother you to see the US under attack? After all, you betrayed this country.

To this, Jonathan gave me a look of profound sadness and said, "I fell in love with two women – Israel and the US. It doesn't work in private life, and it doesn't work in politics. My reaction to September 11 was as an American. As an American, I believe that this country is guarding the gates of Western civilization from the barbarians."

In 1983, shortly after Israel and the US signed a memorandum on intelligence sharing, then deputy director of the CIA Admiral Bobby Ray Inman unilaterally breached the agreement by stopping all intelligence transfers to Israel on Arab and Muslim states not directly bordering Israel. This included Iraq, Iran, Libya, Tunis and Pakistan. Inman was hired after leaving the agency by a company called International Signal and Control. The company's owner,

James Guerin, was imprisoned later for transferring military technology to Iraq and South Africa.

Pollard, who was privy to the now embargoed intelligence, believed that Israel faced the specter of chemical and biological warfare attacks from these countries. Pollard claims that he considered all legal venues for ending the embargo but felt that informing the media, testifying before Congress or involving the US Jewish leadership of the situation would all be ineffective.

He claims also that "there was an incident during Operation Peace for the Galilee that provided me with my introduction to the US-Israel 'special relationship.' I saw the incredible cynicism with which the US views Israel. It flew in the face of everything that I thought was the point of the relationship. The way I viewed the world was destroyed. I had never before thought that my loyalties towards the US and Israel were in contradiction. But then I understood."

What did you understand?

"I understood that we are alone."

Pollard argues that his decision to spy for Israel, and thus betray the US, stemmed from his conviction that he "was preventing a second Holocaust."

One can question whether it was necessary for him to prevent it personally, or whether he could simply have quit his position, informed the responsible Israeli officials of the mounting dangers and let Israel – with its intelligence agencies and military -- contend with the issue as a sovereign state. But the fact is that Pollard chose himself for the task and Israel, too, in employing Pollard as its agent, chose him for the task. Over the 18-month period that Pollard worked for Israel, he provided suitcases of documents to his handlers on a regular basis.

Rafi Eitan, Israel's master spy who served as Pollard's chief handler from his position as head of the Office for Information Cooperation at the Israeli Embassy, told him that his information was discussed at cabinet meetings and Pollard understood that his main contractor was then Maj.-Gen. Ehud Barak, who then served as Commander of Military Intelligence.

Yet, when Pollard was arrested, Israel did whatever it could to deny its connection to him. From the moment then prime minister Shimon Peres ordered embassy security officers to physically eject Pollard and his wife-at-the-time Anne from the embassy, Israel has done everything in its power to distance itself from Pollard. It wasn't until 1995 that he was granted Israeli citizenship and it wasn't until 1998 that Israel officially recognized that Pollard was its agent.

Binyamin Netanyahu was the only prime minister to have made a serious effort to get Pollard released. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has abjectly refused to take any action on Pollard's behalf.

For Pollard, who expected to be protected by Israel if caught, it is the treatment he has received from the Israeli government that surprises and disturbs him more than the harsh and disproportionate punishment that he has received from US authorities.

"I had two particularly memorable terrible days since I was arrested. The first was when the FBI showed me transcripts of statements that Israeli officials made shortly after my arrest. It was clear that the Mossad had three goals. They wanted to put all the blame on the Office for Information Links and Rafi Eitan, they wanted to protect AIPAC at all costs and they wanted to bury me. It was the Mossad that was the source of all the disinformation about me and my character. The lies that I used cocaine and was a mercenary, selling secrets to countries other than Israel, it all came from them.

"Later, in 1995, a Mossad agent came here to see me and suggested that I kill myself. I said I would die for Israel not for some group of toadies.

"The Israelis claimed that mine was a rogue operation. But this was a total lie. Not only did the senior political and military leadership know what was happening, Ariel Sharon tried to use me for his own ends. Rafi Eitan was Arik's man. And he asked me to collect political intelligence for Sharon – what people in Washington were saying about him and the like. I refused.

"But what hurt me the most was when I saw the unclassified version of the Eban Report. [The Eban Report was a report of the Knesset's sub-committee on intelligence services investigation into the Pollard affair that was published in 1987.] It made me almost physically ill. The report includes a summary of a midnight conversation between [the prime minister] Shimon Peres and [the US Secretary of State George] Schultz about a week after I was arrested. Schultz asked Peres to return the documents I took and Peres agreed but made Schultz promise that the documents wouldn't be used against me and Schultz agreed.

"No one ever told me about this agreement. I could have used it in my defense. It is the country's responsibility. It had standing before the court. Israel is the only country to participate in the prosecution of its own agent.

Several years later [in 1990] Sharon attacked Yitzhak Shamir for going along with my abandonment. But that is what Sharon is doing now."

Although sources close to Sharon claim that Pollard may be released on the sidelines of the destruction of the Jewish communities in Gaza and northern Samaria and the pullout of IDF forces from the areas, White House sources knew of no request on Sharon's part to release Pollard from prison.

Ahead of Sharon's visit to the White House last spring, 112 Knesset members, including Sharon himself, signed a letter to President George W. Bush asking him to release Pollard from prison. Sharon refused to deliver the letter to Bush. This month, ahead of Sharon's meeting with Bush at his ranch in Texas, all current and former Israeli chief rabbis signed a letter to Bush

requesting that he free Pollard. Again, Sharon refused to deliver the letter to Bush during his meeting.

After meeting with Pollard, I contacted James Woolsey, the former director of the CIA. Woolsey told me that upon taking up his position in 1993 he reviewed Pollard's entire file carefully. "This man would not be my first candidate for clemency, but 20 years is a long time. As a general proposition, one dimension of this is that a substantial penalty has been paid, so that the element of deterrence is dealt with.

I do think there is a consideration here. Israel and the US, Australia, Japan, Poland and Britain are all in this war on terror together. We need to pay attention to the concerns of the citizens in fellow democracies. I would feel this way if it were Japanese espionage. We have to have a degree of sympathy for the sentiments of citizens in a fellow democracy." At the same time, Woolsey was quick to explain, "This is not a recommendation for clemency."

Woolsey also stated that Pollard was not suspected of having transferred secrets to governments other than Israel. In his view "the heart of the matter" was the US fear that Israel's own intelligence apparatus would be penetrated by hostile governments and that as a result the materials Pollard transferred would be picked up. This, he explained, "would present a danger to the US ability to collect intelligence.

The fear was that the Israeli government itself might have been penetrated, not that Pollard gave the information to anyone else."

When Pollard speaks of his future, he says that he has been training himself to go into a non-security related field if released from prison and most of his reading materials are scientific. "I have an interest in alternative energy sources to replace oil and on water desalination."

Is there any reason that the US should worry about security damage you may cause if released from prison?

"There is no substantive American worry regarding my release. My life has been destroyed so deterrence has been achieved. Nothing I know and certainly nothing I would ever do would be antithetical to US interests. The bottom line is, I want to come home so I can be with my wife, my people and my land."

In the days that have passed since the interview it occurred to me that the reprehensible behavior of the Israeli government in the Pollard affair tops that of all concerned parties – all of whom have behaved reprehensibly. Aside from the anti-Semites who take pleasure in spewing Jewish conspiracy theories, Israel was the only side that gained anything from Pollard's espionage.

The US gained nothing and Pollard lost everything. In shirking its responsibility for Pollard, Israel paved the way for the entire story being blown out of all proportion by opportunistic enemies of Israel and American Jewry for two decades now. If Israel had resolutely stood by Pollard, then the aspersions cast on Washington's Jews would be far more circumspect than they are today and the US would have seen that Israel is an ally to be reckoned with, not a doormat to be stepped on at will.

Pessah is the holiday of freedom. But for a nation to be free it must take responsibility for its actions, no matter how grave those consequences may be. In shirking its responsibility a nation is doing more than casting out the unwanted weight. It is casting off its own ties to freedom. Pollard said, "The abandonment of a nation begins with the abandonment of an individual."

If we wish to maintain our integrity as a free people, we can do so only by taking on the task of bringing Pollard home. He may be a hero and he may be a fool. However he is viewed, he is one of us and he has been discriminated against and persecuted because he helped us. And other Jews are being persecuted because we refused to defend him. It is time for us to take responsibility for Pollard because his imprisonment paves the road to our servitude. (Jerusalem Post Apr 22)

Boycott Worries? Take a Number

By Gerald M. Steinberg

The phones began ringing late Friday afternoon - BBC, AFP, co-authors, family - everyone wanted to know if I was worried about the vote in Britain to boycott my university. There was no time to get into details, but as a Jew and Israel, my automatic answer to any question that contains the word "worry" is yes. On the long list, the boycott comes close behind the dangers of Palestinian terror, the Iranian bomb, Hizbollah's missiles, Osama Bin Laden, reality TV, Israeli taxi drivers, and the waves of locusts migrating from North Africa.

In truth, the direct impact of academic sanctions proposed by the AUT (Association of University Teachers) against the faculty at Bar Ilan and Haifa universities is likely to be minimal. The few viscerally anti-Israel academics are probably not participating in any joint research projects in any case, and its their loss. Two years ago, my colleague Prof. Miriam Shlesinger, was ousted from the board of a journal in translation studies by an Egyptian-born editor based in the University of Manchester. And the politically correct anti-Israel atmosphere has probably led a few anonymous reviewers to reject research reports submitted to other journals - but this is hard to prove.

In any case, the quality of the Israeli academic research is generally very high, and good work still trumps bad politics, despite the nonsense of "post-colonialism", post-modernism, and post-Chomsky/Saidism. In molecular biology, immunology, anti-terror methodologies, electro-optics, strategic deterrence, and other fields, a political ban on Israelis would be particularly costly for the banners, if not for the banned. And efforts to understand the factors that distinguish between failure and success in arms control and peace efforts (my research focus) will be stillborn without the active participation of serious Israeli researchers in this field.

At the same time, this effort to impose a political litmus test on academic research has created a serious backlash. Since the recent revival of the boycott campaign, we have been deluged by emails from colleagues pledging to defy the policy, and to increase their contact with Israelis. Many also reject the medieval nature of such censorship, which contradicts the core principle of the marketplace of ideas.

However, the real threat from the boycott, as its authors realize, is not from the direct academic impact, but rather from its broader political objectives. Although the official terminology refers to "occupation" and "settlements", and singled out two universities for alleged complicity, the Israel-obsessed organizers of the AUT boycott (Susan Blackwell and Steven Rose), like their counterparts elsewhere, readily admit that this is simply a tactical decision. They have declared all Israelis who serve in the defense forces and support the government to be guilty.

Indeed, the boycott is only a small part of the broader political war against Israel's legitimacy as a sovereign Jewish state, and the effort to label Israel as the next "apartheid regime" is designed to put an end to Zionism. The use of the apartheid label does a gross injustice to those who suffered under the real thing, and is a form of modern anti-Semitism, this time turning the Jewish state into the devil. The grossly exaggerated condemnation of Israel, and the systematic removal of the environment of terror in the rhetoric of "war crimes" and "ethnic cleansing", is the political counterpart of the ongoing terrorism and military assaults. Major battles of this political war have taken place in the UN (the 1975 "Zionism is racism" resolution; the infamous 2001 Durban conference, etc.), on campuses such as Columbia University in New York, in the newsrooms of the BBC and CNN, and via the non-governmental superpowers such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

After the death of Arafat and the relative calm on the ground, reflecting the exhaustion of both Israelis and Palestinians, this political war has heated up, particularly in Britain. Christian Aid, a very powerful group that uses its charitable status for promoting a blatant ideological agenda, ran its massive Christmas appeal around the theme of "Bethlehem's Child". This campaign featured the stereotypes of Israeli aggression and Palestinian victimization, in which the context of terror had been erased. Similarly, Amnesty International issued a barrage of such reports, including one purporting to focus on the status of Palestinian women, in which Israel was blamed for violent attacks by Arab men against their wives and daughters. And Human Rights Watch, another NGO that competes with Amnesty in exploiting human rights in the war against Israel, is also active in the boycott campaign. Together, they contributed to building the environment for adoption of the AUT boycott.

So perhaps I am being too clever in dismissing the AUT's effort to launch a boycott of my university. For decades, the propaganda war has always accompanied and served justified the shooting war. If the anti-Israel forces on campuses and in NGOs are gaining strength in Britain, Europe and the U.S., this will undermine the current efforts to expand the cease-fire and conflict management activities in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Ramallah and Gaza. And this is the real tragedy of the AUT boycott decision - while talking about peace, its backers are actually contributing to war and hatred. (Apr 27) *The writer directs the Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation at Bar Ilan University and is the editor of www.ngo-monitor.org*

Whom Should We Back?

Jerusalem Post Editorial

What was initially whispered in Washington and Jerusalem is no longer a secret: Mahmoud Abbas is losing altitude.

The Palestinian Authority leader whose electoral success was originally hailed - mainly by those who were either tendentious or ignorant - as the dawn of a new era is actually failing to rule. He certainly has yet to spend his time coaxing investors and creating jobs, clearly one of the most urgent things to do in order to truly end the violence he had so admirably condemned.

On the security front, Abbas is nowhere near disarming the numerous gangs that roam the streets he nominally governs. As for Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the prospect of him confronting them in broad daylight, or even just in the dark of night, has never seemed less likely.

Faced with such setbacks, those who once deluded themselves that Abbas was "their kind of guy" now wonder what it is they must do to support him.

Israel must avoid such thinking.

Too much experience has been accumulated here about the impracticality, and boomeranging, of rule by proxy. Israel's nurturing of allies like Bashir Gemayel, Sa'ad Haddad and Antoine Lahad, as well as interlocutors like Yasser Arafat, all failed to deliver the strategic goods.

Politically, the common denominator among these was the Israeli failure to adequately gauge prospective allies' limited following. For our part, we believe that the weakness such leaders displayed stemmed from their lack of solid democratic credentials.

The way the Oslo Accords' masterminds saw it, this deficiency was not only tolerable, but even advantageous. That is what Yitzhak Rabin meant when he promised that Arafat would deal with the extremists "bli bagatz u'betzelem," namely without being "burdened" by an independent judiciary's supervision and assorted human-rights groups' scrutiny.

As it turned out, the PA's lack of such institutions and norms not only

failed to deliver peace, it delivered war.

Today, those of Oslo's supporters who concede its general failure often agree also about its misconception concerning democracy. In the spirit of the American analysis of the Middle East since the September 11 attacks, Israelis of all stripes should finally understand that it is not up to them to choose their neighbors' leaders, nor to back or trip them.

That also goes for Abbas.

Seen through a democratic rather than an opportunistic prism, Abbas's predicament lies not in his current lack of clout, but in his lack of viable opponents back when he ran for office. Had he faced, and defeated, a Hamas candidate back then, his adversaries would not have been in a position to undermine and intimidate him the way they currently do.

Even so, many outside the PA still question the wisdom of allowing Abbas's regime to be toppled, one way or another, by Islamists. The answer to them is that if he has failed to win the people's hearts no external power will salvage him, however unpalatable Israel might consider such a shift. And if the people's genuine democratic choice is Islamism - and we'll presumably get a good sense of this should elections to the Palestinian National Council take place as scheduled in July - then that is what they will have.

Chances that the Palestinian people will be satisfied with Islamist leaders are low, and prospects that the same people power that crowns them eventually will depose them are high. The choice, in any event, cannot be Israel's or any other foreign power's; it can only be made by the Palestinian public. (Jerusalem Post Apr 25)

Bereavement By Ellen Dlott

Don't cry because you lost it – smile because you had it. Everything happens for a reason. God knows best.

These and other aphorisms are commonly spoken or written to the newly bereaved spouse in the Western world. For the reeling survivor, they're about as comforting as a shot in the eye. No wonder an acquaintance of mine in the Southwest refers to such platitudes as "cheer up vomit."

No one knows what to say. So some people will dart to the other side of the street when they see you coming. Or worse, catch you in a clammy grip and garrulously explain how they can identify with you because their grandmother, cat or goldfish died.

Later on, if you're young, you're told that you'll find someone else. Those of us middle-aged and older are assured our memories will keep us warm and make us smile. When someone asks how you're doing, better to respond with the all-purpose "Fine." Because they really don't want to know. If you're standing upright and not looking like a Mme. Tussaud of yourself, that means you must be fine – right?

Wrong. My memories aren't holding me aloft during these bleak, lonely nights. My friends are. And my standard response to "How are you?" is often "Like six truckloads of sh-t." And I'm lucky. No one has told me it's time to cheer up. No one says they understand if they don't. No one calls the police if I erupt into fits of rage and cursing with all the windows open. And no one stares at me like I'm a madwoman if an image or thought triggers a gust of public tears.

That's because I am mourning in Israel, and not my native US.

ON THE grief message board I have haunted since the death of my husband, the term used for those particularly clumsy would-be consolers is "DGI" (Don't Get It). Reported remarks from the US, Canada and UK run the gamut of crass thoughtlessness ("Well, it's better than being divorced – at least you don't have to run into him in the supermarket") to dizzy ("The cemetery's just down the road, so you'll be close") to stupid ("It could have been worse. That mortician patched him together so well, who'd ever guess he was shot six times in the face?").

In comparison, I would say that Israel must have fewer DGIs than any other country represented on this board.

How different my own experiences have been. Not merely among my circle of friends, only one of whom is a widow – but my former coworkers, business and other acquaintances. It is expected, wherever you are, that your friends will prop you up for awhile. Mine did and continue to. The acquaintances have astounded me. They look me in the eye, extend their hands or arms, and say, "I am so sorry. This is so terrible for you."

Then there was the friendly cab driver who remembered Bill and was so saddened when he asked after him and I gave him the news that he refused to charge a fare; the kind owner of the kennel where my two dogs were boarded, who returned them together with a fat sack of dog food and said, "I know you didn't have time to shop"; the bank cashiers and supermarket personnel who noticed my wobbliness in the early days and ushered me ahead.

So often friends vanish when you are no longer half of a couple. Or once the early greater struggles have been resolved. Mine didn't. They are all still here for me.

Why this marked difference? I attribute it to the more humane, practical death rites of Judaism. And to experience as well. As a result of wars, terrorism and the road carnage, death in Israel is up-close and personal. Those who haven't been bereaved know someone who has. They know how to treat those of us who are. They look us in the eyes and keep their expressions warm, sincere and brief. They don't nervously change the subject when we mention our lost spouses.

Perhaps in the West, death and bereavement are considered contagious. Here

we know all too well that such is life. (Jerusalem Post Apr 27)
The author is a freelance writer and editor residing in Beersheba.

Here Comes the Counterrevolution By Daniel Doron

The revolution promised by Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's reforms has barely taken off – crucial financial market reforms must still clear the Knesset's Via Dolorosa – but the Left is already arming for the counterrevolution.

A group of neo-Marxists, anti-globalists and plain old-time socialists who wish Israel could regress to the good old days of Mapai state paternalism (minus Mapai's patriotism and its corruption, they vow) has been agitating from their university and media pulpits against the growing popularity of the market economy, which they claim has been dominating public discourse in Israel (we wish!).

Now they have banded together, The Jerusalem Post reports, to form a new "social-economic college... to teach social justice," namely, anti-capitalism, and create a cadre of activists to militate against economic reform.

The college is sponsored in part by the bankrupt kibbutz movement. Since the faculty of the college is entirely Left to radical left, with several avowed Marxists, communists and anti-Zionists included – but not even one representative of a different point of view – the new college's true purpose is evident.

Its star promoter is Professor Ariel Rubenstein of Tel Aviv University, a famous theoretician in arcane models of game theory (a reputation he exploits to construct manipulative models that posit two shoemakers in an isolated village, where competition results in the ruin of one and the attainment of monopoly status by the other as a model that "proves" that competition does not work and is actually ruinous).

He complained that Israeli universities, and especially their economic departments, do not teach their students critical thinking or offer them a variety of ideologies.

As if teaching ideologies, especially socialism, which the professor favors, were synonymous with "critical thinking," and as if in his college there would be any room for a dissenting view.

"It is not surprising," Rubenstein claims, that when students "leave the universities and become decision makers they support the same neo-liberal ideas."

RUBENSTEIN DOES not bother to explain why, if universities indoctrinate their students with neo-liberal ideas, the Israeli economy ranks so low on any index of economic freedom; why it has among the highest concentrations of political and economic power in the democratic world, why the government uses over 55 percent of the GNP, and why the economy is so rife with monopolies.

Nor does he mention that low economic growth causes hundreds of thousands of families to be unable to make ends meet since their salaries are so low and monopolistic pricing adds a premium of between 30% to 50% above world prices.

But then Rubenstein, a recipient of the Israel Prize in Economics, is never concerned by any gap between his pet peeves and theories and obdurate reality. Nor is his fellow college founder, lawyer Aviv Wasserman, who claims that "in Israel today, free-market capitalism has been taken to the extreme, creating terrible social gaps, while the weak have been tossed to the side of the road."

An attorney is trained to argue any case; but anyone who believes that in monopoly-ridden Israel, where government favor is still a major creator of wealth and crony capitalism is rampant, competitive free markets "have been taken to the extreme" will believe anything. More accurately, he will try to sell you anything, however absurd – such as the claim that in a country where over 30% of the budget is devoted to transfer payments the weak "have been tossed to the side of the road."

It is this kind of populism that attorney Wasserman evidently wants to promote in order "to create a cadre of people ... able to engage in well-informed debate and critically challenge the prevailing neo-liberal and neo-conservative social and political trends."

The debate is to take place only outside the college, apparently. For no one with neo-conservative views will be invited to join the faculty, of course.

"The college will offer," its brochure declares, "new ideas based on facts, trends, theories and research in topics such as the influence of the government budget on various population groups, society and the environment, feminism and social change, social and economic aspects of the national conflict, the globalization of capital, growth in gaps, discrimination and exploitation."

The formulation of topics tells us what the promoters consider "informed debate and critical challenges." They are also terribly fresh ideas, of course – so fresh that their promoters dare not call them by their true old name: rusty Marxist propaganda packaged in trendy terms and financed, of course, by capitalists. (Jerusalem Post Apr 22)

The writer is president of The Israel Center for Social and Economic Progress.
