



## Quote for the Week...

"O God, the Jews have transgressed all limits in their tyranny. O God, shake the ground under their feet, pour torture on them, and destroy all of them." - Saudi Shaykh Abd-al-Bari al-Thubayti, in sermon broadcast on Saudi TV2 (in Arabic), official Government television station, June 7 [while the Saudi Government invests in a televised ad campaign in the US to win the heart and minds of Americans] (IMRA June 11)

## Commentary...

### Smarter than His Administration Jerusalem Post Editorial

Sometimes it looks like US President George W. Bush is the only person in his administration with his head screwed on in the right direction.

When asked after his meeting with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon about growing speculation over an international Middle East peace conference, Bush responded, "The conditions aren't even there yet that's because no one has confidence in the emerging Palestinian government." Asked about recent Israeli military actions, Bush said, "Israel has a right to defend herself. And, at the same time as Israel does so, the prime minister is willing to discuss the conditions necessary to achieve what we want which is a secure region and a hopeful region."

And on Saturday, standing next to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Bush was asked whether Israel was expecting too much in linking talks to a cessation in violence. Bush responded, "Chairman Arafat must do everything in his power to stop the violence, to stop the attacks on Israel. I mean everything. And that includes reforming the security forces so that they are their primary function is to deal with violence." Bush also deftly deflected Mubarak's attempt to set a timetable for establishing a Palestinian state.

Taken together, these and previous statements form the outline of a clear, if interim, US policy toward the Middle East. According to this policy, the US is for a Palestinian state, but not one which, like the Taliban in Afghanistan, was up to its eyeballs in terrorism. Until the Palestinian polity cleanses itself, the American vision of Palestine will not only remain a vision, but there is no point in a conference to discuss it, even at the ministerial level.

This is, of course, absolutely right. The only mystery is why Bush has to swim upstream within his own administration to say it. One can almost hear the teeth grinding in the arm of government that is supposed to be devising American foreign policy. This current series of sensible Bush statements continues a pattern of presidential pioneering, offered despite, not with the support of, his foreign-policy establishment. The most fundamental of these breakthroughs was Bush's "axis of evil" speech in January, which it is fair to speculate would never have seen the light of day if vetted in Foggy Bottom. Even now, Bush is practically the only member of his administration to use the "e" word.

But the pattern continues. Since then, one might think that the State Department would be busy building the case for ousting Saddam Hussein, and certainly would not block with all its might any meaningful assistance to the Iraqi National Congress. Instead, State has decided that solving the Arab-Israeli conflict is prerequisite to confronting Saddam Hussein hence the flurry of activity to convene an international conference.

Bush and the Pentagon know full well that the evil ones (Saddam and Arafat, but don't tell State) see a combination of international diplomacy and Palestinian terrorism as their last best hope to divert an American liberation of Iraq. They see that, for now, the "peace process" has become a run-interference-for-Saddam process. But they seem powerless to convince State to get with the program. Now State and the usual suspects are hoping that Bush, following his round of meetings with leaders of the region, will make another key policy speech. Their dream is for Bush to move Palestinian statehood a notch forward with a deadline

## ISRAEL NEWS

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even a vague one, such as, ד"ר  
 "by the end of my first term." Bush should take the opportunity to do something completely different and thereby reclaim his foreign policy: put the horse before the cart. The Clinton administration's fundamental error was to pretend that regional radicalism could be diffused by solving the Palestinian problem. This was always backwards more obviously so since September 11 but the Bush administration has only

hinted at the truth.

Bush would save himself a lot of grief if he simply said, in effect, the road to Palestine goes through Baghdad. The delicate way of putting this is that, before there can be a Palestinian state, there must be not only Palestinian reform, but an regional climate that favors peace. The last such climate was created when Saddam was defeated in 1991; the next will come when that defeat is made permanent. (Jerusalem Post Jun 11)

### The House that Yasser Built: *Losing support.* By Nissan Ratzlav-Katz

The panel on the radio call-in show included a representative of the Islamist terrorist organization Hamas and a representative of Fatah, the terrorist faction headed by PLO chairman Yasser Arafat. Callers from the Palestinian Authority weighed in with their opinions as to the desirability of reform in the PA governing structure. Of course, the show would never have been broadcast at all had PLO leader Yasser Arafat not already agreed to make changes in the Authority, as demanded by the United States and others, but it was still unique in that it was a forum for oblique public criticism of the PA leadership. Surprisingly, the Hamas spokesman came out strongly against any changes to the structure of the PA, despite the fact that his organization is not currently represented in official circles, while the Fatah man was solidly behind anything agreed to by his supreme leader. After most callers pressed for pursuing political reforms in the PA, the Hamas representative felt it necessary to "explain" his position. Hamas, he clarified, is against reforms only because they originate with Israel and the U.S. and are intended to halt the intifada, not because there is something wrong with reforms per se.

The call-in show was a small, opaque window into the world Arafat has created for the Arabs of the Palestinian Authority. A recent poll, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Public Opinion (PCPO) has also reflected this reality, with the overwhelming majority of PA Arabs (72.5 percent) expressing support for "changing the Palestinian government." A similar majority (68.6 percent) supported "the restructuring of [the] Palestinian Authority" and (67 percent) "support Javier Solana's statements and calls on the PA to be more transparent, accountable and democratic." Arafat got his first taste of the public discontent with his leadership in May, when he was released from his Ramallah headquarters at the end of a month-long standoff with Israel and after a widespread Israeli military offensive against terrorist bases in PA areas. At first, Arafat was received with cheers in Ramallah, but only small crowds greeted him as he made his way through other PA towns. He even cancelled a tour of Jenin when he was informed that he would be confronted by supporters of the Islamist opposition.

This grassroots support for the Islamists is the reason why Arafat offered to incorporate them into his governing structure, as part of the much-discussed reforms. It is also the reason that the Islamists refused the invitation. They get much more mileage out of being independent of an administration seen by many as corrupt and weak than they would by sitting closer to the governmental plate. In addition, the Hamas and Islamic Jihad want to remain free to continue suicide bombings against Israelis, something Arafat has said is not currently in the Arab interest. One might conclude, based on their behavior, that the Islamist gangs do not believe that Arafat has any intention of implementing anything but cosmetic reforms, nor that he has any real intention of putting an end to terrorism, Islamist or otherwise.

If so, then the Islamists hold the same view of Arafat as does Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Shaul Mofaz. "The Palestinian approach to Israel will not change as long as Arafat is navigating the ship, incorporating

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terrorism and violence," Mofaz told an audience of journalists this past week. The same is true for the reforms, he said, "As long as Arafat is the one in charge of the reform it's not going to happen. He will try to water it down." Mofaz pointed out that the calls for reform are not just Israeli demands, they come from the people in the PA street, from the Arab world, and from the United States. Some Arab leaders, noted the chief of staff, actually seek to reduce Arafat's influence in the PA in order to facilitate a political solution.

One of those leaders is Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Mubarak told Patrick Tyler and Neil MacFarquhar of the *New York Times* earlier this week that the plan he intends to present to U.S. President George W. Bush includes the declaration of a Palestinian state early next year, with Arafat assuming a ceremonial role by that point. In other words, Mubarak wants to kick the old boy upstairs. The Egyptian president minced no words when telling the *Times*, "I am not saying Arafat is the best man, no. But we have to use Arafat in this present situation. Arafat would be much more flexible than ever before after this period of the past year."

There is a great deal of skepticism about Yasser Arafat even at home, as reflected in the recent PCPO poll of residents of the Palestinian Authority. Despite their overwhelming support for reform in the PA, they do not believe that Arafat is serious about it. The largest group of those polled "believe that Arafat's call for reformation was only to get out of a plight," with 52.5 percent of them agreeing that "decisions made by the PA will remain in the hands of [a] limited number of people." As stated by a senior White House official in another context, after a suicide bombing killed 17 people on an Israeli bus this week, "Yasser Arafat has never played a role of someone who can be trusted or effective."

Arafat can be counted on for one thing, though — trying to extricate himself from any commitment to halt violence against Israel or to share power. After the IDF retaliated for the latest suicide bus bombing by entering Ramallah and destroying part of his headquarters there, Arafat told reporters, in English, "We are defending the holy places of the Christians and Moslems and we are ready to die defending them!" On June 4, prior to the Megiddo bus bombing and its aftermath, on the Voice of Palestine radio station, Arafat is reported to have said, "the continuation of the aggressive policy and destructive war will deprive our people of their right to participate in the parliamentary, presidential, and local elections. It will also obstruct holding the elections at the target dates and hinder the reconstruction of the areas and installations that were destroyed by the occupation forces."

The PA daily *al-Ayyam* quoted a senior Authority official as saying, "The President stressed that restoring the peace process and bringing about security and stability in the region is unattainable while the Israeli occupation forces continue their siege, closure and incursions, which cause daily suffering to our people." Employing a tactic former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu called "reversal of causality," the PA leader is attempting to blame the lack of democratic process in the Palestinian Authority and the ongoing terrorist offensive on the recent Israeli antiterrorism campaign in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The problem is that the recent two-month-long Israeli offensive against terrorist bases cannot explain the preceding years of incessant terrorism, systemic corruption, and lack of democracy in Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority. (National Review June 7)

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### **Guardian Evangelicals** By Zalman Shoval

The Guardian once a famous liberal British newspaper, is not now known for exemplary journalistic accuracy or impartiality in matters concerning Israel or the Jewish people. Some months ago, in fact, one of its editorials said that the establishment of the State of Israel may have been "too high a price to pay" for the way Europe behaved towards the Jews during the Holocaust.

It is, therefore, only natural that one would treat anything the paper has to say about Israel these days with more than the proverbial grain of salt. For once, however, it was right on target when it reported (on June 1) on "secret Middle East talks" which had taken place a few days earlier in the idyllic setting of an English country house near Stafford. As the sponsor of the event, the paper did go a bit overboard in beating its own drum by describing the event as the "highest-level talks since the failed Taba meetings." (Participants from Israel included MKs Avraham Burg and Naomi Chazan, former minister "Run-Yossi-Run" Beilin, former IDF chief of staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, and novelist David Grossman.) Attaching to the opinions of a number of functionaries on the fringe of Israeli politics and public opinion - none of whom are speaking today, or likely to speak for Israel, anytime soon - any significance beyond their desire to remain in the limelight (and there is nothing which serves this purpose better than holding "secret" talks) shows, at best, a lack of journalistic professionalism.

In addition to the Israelis and the Palestinians, the other participants at the Stafford retreat included a few politicians from Northern Ireland, whom the editor of the Guardian described as "great evangelists for their peace process,

keen to offer practical advice," and some British and European Union representatives, the latter evidently having a vested interest in the proceedings, as they are reported to be the financiers of Beilin's political activities and of Israel's Leftist, self-proclaimed "peace coalition."

Though there have recently been reports in the press of members of the IRA training Palestinian snipers, one doesn't want to doubt the genuinely good intentions of the delegates from Northern Ireland at the talks. They probably truly believe that their own country's experience could be of some help to solving the Israeli-Palestinian problem, using the model of the (temporary?) settlement of their own conflict. Unfortunately, any similarity between the two situations is purely coincidental - among other things, because, unlike Northern Ireland, Israel is surrounded by 21 states, some still out to destroy it, with populations 50 times larger than its own, few among which even recognize Israel's right to exist.

The purported aim of the meeting was "to help in moving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict out of its impasse." Apparently, in the "evangelistic" eyes of some of the participants, the "impasse" in question is an act of God - not the result of Yasser Arafat's total rejection of Israel's and America's more than generous offer to the Palestinians at the above-mentioned Taba conference (97 percent of the territories, 3% of Israel proper, most of East-Jerusalem, and opening more than a narrow crack to the so-called "right-of-return") or of the fact that for over 20 months now, that same Arafat has been waging a no-holds-barred, premeditated terror campaign against Israel and its citizens.

Even more astounding than the meeting itself, however, is the following report (quoting the Guardian), about the new initiatives emerging from the talks: "The creation of a shadow Israeli-Palestinian government as an alternative (my italics) to Sharon's government; and the drafting of a peace plan that will flesh out the proposals at Taba, including setting out for the first time an exact figure of how many of the 3.5 million Palestinians will be given the right of return."

Because of my respect for at least some of the Israeli participants, I harbor hope that those were proposals made only by the PLO delegates, and not joint Palestinian-Israeli "initiatives." As should be obvious to anyone, the first "initiative" calls in effect for an end to Israel as a Jewish Zionist state, and the second one would open the door to the destruction of Israel from within. Disturbingly, none of the Israelis present has yet made an effort to deny the Guardian's report.

There is nothing wrong with Israelis holding meetings with Palestinians. Still, one would expect the speaker of the Knesset - who, by virtue of his position, should rise above the level of partisan and highly controversial politics - to be a bit more discriminating in choosing his partners. This is especially true where partners who advocate and justify acts of terror are concerned, such as Palestinian Authority Information Minister Yasser Abed Rabo, who reportedly has said in the past that Israel must be made "to bleed." Or partners who oppose the Israeli government's (and US administration's) demand that ending the violence must precede political talks. (Jerusalem Post Jun 9)

The writer is a former Israeli ambassador to the United States.

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### **Tom Friedman's Settlement Obsession** By David M. Weinberg

Thomas L. Friedman has the best job in the world. The celebrated foreign affairs columnist of The New York Times has an unlimited budget and a global brief to go anywhere in the world and write on any policy subject his heart desires. He can boldly stake out any position, give vent to any feeling, relentlessly hammer home any point - without the constraints that impinge upon diplomats or the cautions required of politicians. He is very good at it.

Too bad that when it comes to the Arab-Israeli conflict, Friedman continues to peddle a hackneyed, insidious symmetry between the warring parties - "evenhanded" pabulum that borders on professional misconduct, even imbecility. His compulsion to balance and compare every Arab misdeed to an Israeli misdeed is practically neurotic. Settlements are his primary bugaboo on our side.

To take a step back, I'll grant that, overall, Friedman's Mideast commentary has been remarkably perceptive and notably ahead of the curve. He pointed to Arab societal and political failures and the increasingly dangerous terrorist threat fed by these failures - long before September 11 and the emergence of the suicide bomber phenomena. His analysis and criticism of despotic and autocratic Arab elites, including the utterly corrupt leadership of the PA, has been ruthlessly piercing.

More than once, his op-ed page columns have driven policy, not just analyzed it, and set the foreign affairs agenda. The Saudi "peace initiative" this spring, for example, was brought to the world by Friedman. The item dominated world coverage of Mideast diplomacy for weeks. (I think that Friedman was played for a sucker by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, but

that's a different matter).

Getting back to the subject of Israel, there is a hobgoblin that haunts Friedman's writing and warps his commentary. He is obsessed with settlements in the "occupied territories." They are the root of all evil. Now, I know many people who (wrongly) would prefer, for legitimate (albeit misguided) political reasons that no or few Jews live in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. Fine. However, the frequency and vehemence with which Friedman harps on settlement sins (in seven columns since January, by my count) suggest to me that more is at play.

According to maestro Friedman, Israeli settlements are "insane;" a "cancer for the Jewish people" that "threatens the entire Zionist enterprise." Israel's "colonial occupation" and "insane settlement land grab" could yet lead to a war of civilizations, Islam against the West, he warns.

His fixation goes further. Anybody who "collaborates" (note the connotation!) in the building and strengthening of settlements - including "feckless American Jewish leaders," fundamentalist Christians, and neoconservatives, along with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu, and the "lunatic core of the Likud" - are "enemies of peace" and "enemies of America's national interest," no less. Why this primitive, emotional hyperbole - not to mention way-off-base analysis - so uncharacteristic of Friedman's writing on other issues? What drives the eminent New York Times commentator, the maharishi of Mideast punditry, to incessantly, relentlessly - ad nauseam - push the canard that Jews have no rights in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and that settlements are an obstacle to Mideast peace? This, even after Yasser Arafat blew his cover and launched a war to push us out of all of Israel! The answer, my friends, lies in Tom Friedman's fanatical need to show "balance;" to prove that he is not "too" pro-Israel; to make sure that his criticism of the Arabs doesn't make him persona non grata in liberal circles.

Friedman regularly stokes his bona fides as a "fair-minded" blogby offsetting Arab barbarity and tyranny with the bad boys from Judea and Samaria. Thus, just last week he compared Arafat's "Suicide War" with "the idea of the Jewish right that Israel could maintain a colonial occupation of the West Bank and continue to seize Palestinian land for more settlements." Moderates realize that both are discredited, spent ventures, Friedman pontificates.

In other recent columns, Friedman has compared extremist Palestinians who want to destroy Israel, to the "lunatics of the Likud" who reject Palestinian statehood; Palestinians who want to continue the intifada, to Sharon's commitment to "insane settlements in Gaza;" and Arab dictators whose support of suicide bombings threatens Islam, to the "collaborators" whose support for a "colonial Israeli occupation" threatens Zionism.

And what must be done to save the future? Friedman's solution is judiciously balanced, of course: Palestinians must "uproot Hamas and the Arab regimes must deal with their fundamentalists," while Israel must "uproot most of the Jewish settlements." Excuse me if I find such equilibrium morally repugnant. To state the obvious: The Jewish drive to re-build Jewish life even in "disputed areas," is a "building" movement rooted in love of homeland, which offers respect and human rights to local Arabs. The Arab/Islamic drive to roll Israelis into the sea or blast them into smithereens, is a "destroying" movement rooted in hate that offers Jews expulsion or annihilation.

It's sad that this crucial moral distinction dissipates in Friedman's forlorn search for self-regard. (Jerusalem Post Jun 9)

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**History Calling** Book Review by Victor Davis Hanson  
*Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East*  
By Michael B. Oren

Israel won two conflicts with its neighbors before the Six-Day war, and one after it. But the modern Middle East had never witnessed anything quite like what transpired between June 5 and 10, 1967. Even today, the astounding chain of events of some 35 years ago reads more like fiction than history.

Cut off from military aid by France's Charles de Gaulle, hitherto a reliable arms supplier, and not yet an ally of the United States—which had recently sold or given away hundreds of millions of dollars in arms to the Arab world—a beleaguered Israel found itself surrounded by massive armies in Syria, Egypt, and Jordan. These combined militaries fielded 900 combat aircraft, 5,000 tanks, and 500,000 soldiers, ensuring an astounding edge of three-to-one or even greater in every category of military asset.

Preening with sophisticated Soviet arms, and with assurances that the Soviets would hold off the Americans while his pan-Arabic forces liquidated the Jews, Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser prepared to marshal the Arab nations for what he called "the operation that will surprise the world," reversing the humiliating Arab defeats of 1948-49 and 1956. Privately, Nasser told his generals to launch the attack (code-named Plan Dawn) by "June 5 at the latest." Ahmad Shuqayri of the PLO, a terrorist organization founded three years earlier and headquartered in Cairo, summed up the increasing jubilation in the Arab world at the rumors of

war: "We shall destroy Israel and its inhabitants, and as for survivors—if there are any—the boats are ready to deport them." Just as today, a murderous Assad ruled in Syria and a passive-aggressive Hashemite king in Jordan. Each based the degree of his own bellicosity not on confidence in his armies but on lies and distortions from his intelligence services, promises from Egypt, threats from the Soviet Union, back-door maneuvering with the U.S., and fear of the omnipresent "Arab street."

As 1967 wore on, Nasser proceeded to evict the UN's peacekeepers from Gaza, close the Strait of Tiran and thereby cut off Israel's access to imported oil from its Red Sea terminus, increase the number of flights over Israeli territory, and sponsor terrorist raids from Lebanon and Gaza. For their part, the Israelis quietly prepared for the worst, making plans to strike the Egyptian air force's 420 sophisticated Soviet jets—the linchpin of Plan Dawn—while they were still on the ground. And so, in the event, they did. In just 100 minutes on the morning of June 5, Israeli pilots carried out 164 sorties, destroying 286 planes and wrecking thirteen air bases. Minutes after the attack, General Mordechai Hod reported that "the Egyptian air force has ceased to exist."

These early Arab losses were catastrophic; but they were also not reported in the Arab press—and the Israelis themselves were observing silence. As an Egyptian intelligence officer later lamented, "The whole world thought our forces were on the outskirts of Tel Aviv." In the meantime, the fighting on the ground went on at a furious pace. Israel's defense forces found themselves battling—and pushing back—Egyptians in the Sinai, Jordanians on the West Bank, and Syrians on the Golan Heights.

The ultimate butcher's bill for the six days of conflict was staggering: 30,000 Arab casualties, including 5,000 Egyptians captured along with 21 of their generals. Military hardware worth billions was destroyed outright; indeed, the Jordanian, Syrian, and Egyptian militaries were temporarily out of commission altogether. As had happened in 1956, and would happen again in 1973, it was not Arab armies but outside pressure and a sense of self-restraint that kept the Israelis from rolling into downtown Cairo, Amman, and Damascus.

With Israel's triumph, however, there also came a reminder of the perennial dilemma that has faced that country from its birth—translating tactical success into strategic victory. In the aftermath of the war, the Arab states rushed to replenish their arms, while both France and the United States delayed military assistance to Israel. Rather than causing introspection or a movement of democratic reform within the Arab world, defeat only deepened the sense of shame and the thirst for vengeance. Arab autocracies mobilized to threaten oil embargos against the West, to spread terrorism worldwide, and to prepare for the next round of fighting.

Israel also now found itself with 1.2 million Palestinians under its control in the West Bank and Gaza, indigent and stateless refugees who, despite their efforts to destroy the Jewish state, expected (and got) better treatment from it than what they had been receiving until now at the hands of Jordan and Egypt. Arab leaders, quietly relieved that the Palestinians were Israel's—and no longer their own—immediate problem, championed their cause more vociferously than ever. The world turned its attention to the West Bank and Gaza and forgot about the anti-Jewish pogroms that arose in Egypt and Libya, not to mention the 7,000 Jews who were immediately arrested and expelled from Baghdad and Damascus.

In short, rather than being a prelude to lasting peace, Israel's brilliant victory in the Six-Day war was followed by years of terror originating from land it had never sought to acquire but could not afford to give up. On the diplomatic and cultural front, having lost its status as an underdog, it came to be seen, and to be portrayed, as a bullying regional superpower.

Michael Oren's riveting account of this entire saga—drawn from previously untapped American, Russian, and Israeli archives, along with Syrian and Jordanian sources—puts to rest a number of old misconceptions and untruths. One of them is that, with its predawn raid on the Egyptian air fields, Israel itself "started" the war; in fact, as Oren shows, Nasser was just hours away from bombing Israeli cities and hitting the nuclear reactor at Dimona. Nor was the Israel Defense Force (IDF) planning a war of conquest; it believed that its preemptive strike on Egyptian planes would buy, at most, a year or two of peace. The conquest of the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights was mostly the result of ad-hoc fighting by commanders in the field. So unprepared were many of them that they got lost when they reached the Old City of Jerusalem and had to negotiate its unfamiliar streets.

The Israelis were not the only ones confused. Throughout much of the war, the U.S. was buffeted by threats of intervention from the Russians and lies about its role being propagated by Radio Cairo and Damascus. Our embassies were under siege in Arab capitals. To compound matters, the American surveillance ship *Liberty* was mistakenly hit by Israeli jets. All this, coupled with the quagmire of Vietnam, hampered a well-meaning President Lyndon B. Johnson from properly assessing or exploiting his full

range of options.

There is an eerie feeling of déjà vu in reading Oren's history just now, and the cumulative effect of his meticulous research is quite depressing. Today we talk in hushed tones about Saddam Hussein's horrific use of gas against his own people in Iraq—forgetting that Nasser had no qualms about gassing Yemeni villages. Ten years ago, in the Gulf war, Israelis donned gas masks—but in 1967 they had to be given thousands (from Germany!) in preparation for Nasser's threatened attacks on Tel Aviv. There was also the same chilling rhetoric, and from the same chilling places—the threats to exterminate the Jews, the lies that Americans were fighting alongside Israelis, the lunatic claim that Arab martyrs were on the march to a great victory. Indeed, some of the principals in the present conflict got their start before and during the Six-Day war—the thirty-something Yasir Arafat leading terrorists into Israel on a murderous nocturnal raid, the young Hosni Mubarak, then in the Egyptian air force, claiming falsely that his fellow pilots had encountered American jets, the fathers of the present Syrian and Jordanian rulers doing then what the sons are doing now.

In his systematic and exhaustively researched narrative, Oren presents the whole frightening tale with a detached matter-of-factness. As an Israeli, he is perhaps reluctant to offer any explicit answers to one of the most baffling military questions of all: how the Israelis routed their enemies so thoroughly on the battlefield. Yet his narrative provides plenty of reasons for the Arabs' defeat, most of which come down to the role of culture in modern warfare.

The Israelis had been scrupulous about maintaining their tanks and planes in prime condition, ensuring that their dated models were far more battle-ready than the state-of-the-art weaponry held by the Arabs, 20 to 30 percent of which was so ill-kept as to be inoperable on any given day. Once the fighting began, Israeli officers talked constantly with their enlisted men, arguing and improvising as they went along; by contrast, Egyptian generals and grandees feared execution if they reported honestly the unfolding disaster of the first day, and did not dare make on-the-ground changes in their preconceived and unrealistic battle scripts. Israeli generals braved gunfire; many Arab commanders ran away before their troops did. At the government level, the Israeli cabinet hourly hammered out military solutions to unexpected crises with (as the record shows) banter, black humor, and candor; on the other side, Nasser, Hussein, and Assad lived in terror that their generals were lying to them, even as they could only lie to their own people.

The heroes of the book emerge as an odd array of truly brilliant, courageous, and eccentric Israelis, military and civilian alike, not all of them mutual friends and many of them downright rivals or enemies: Ben-Gurion, Dayan, Rabin, Eshkol, Elazar, Hod, Allon, Eban, Meir, Peres, and, yes, Sharon. What they shared was Pattonesque audacity and, above all, no illusions about the nature of the danger their country faced.

From where did such rare officers and statesmen come? Some were battle-hardened veterans of World War II; others were Holocaust survivors. A few were experienced, wounded, and maimed veterans of the 1948 and 1956 wars. None of them really felt any innate hatred toward their Arab neighbors; all instinctively mistrusted them, and were confident they could be beaten in a fair fight. One wonders if Israel will ever see such types again, in such profusion—and one can only be thankful that there are still a tiny few of the 1967 generation in the country's current hour of peril.

Michael Oren has written a near masterpiece of judicious but captivating history. In its suspense and human drama it is reminiscent of Steven Runciman's *The Fall of Constantinople* or Donald Morris's *The Washing of the Spears*; in its scholarship and professionalism, Gerhard Weinberg's *A World At Arms*. While Oren's goal is to write history, not contemporary political analysis, *Six Days of War* turns out to be a far better guide to the present crisis than what we read and hear daily from our historically ignorant columnists and pundits.

Well before the occupation of the West Bank, the Golan Heights, and Gaza, Arab leaders promised to destroy Israel and wipe the Jews off the face of the earth—not for what they had done, but for who they were: successful and proud reminders of what their neighbors were not. Without first seeing a change in the heart and minds of the Arab world, one would have to be mad today to advocate returning land for "peace." Americans should read this book and remember that.

(Commentary June 2002)  
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## No More Herring By Hirsh Goodman

Why should Israel have to explain that suicide bombing is a bad thing? Shouldn't the information problem be a Palestinian thing?

About a month ago, when the battle in Jenin was at its height, I received a call from a Norwegian radio station. "How," I was asked, "is the Israeli media covering the massacre in Jenin?" "Are you so sure there is a massacre in Jenin?" I replied.

"Of course I'm sure, I read it here in our morning papers and see it on television: Hundreds have been killed. It's a massacre."

"You think Israeli troops would commit a massacre?" I asked.

"It looks like it," he responded.

"Are we on air live?"

"Yes," he said.

"Well .... you," I said.

And that's exactly the way I feel about the Norwegians, whose unions have imposed a boycott on Israeli goods, the Danes who are no longer buying Israeli oranges, the Germans -- bless them -- who are holding back on tank parts and the Belgians, who couldn't even leave politics out of the Eurovision song contest.

When the NATO allies, including the above, went to war against the former Yugoslavia, they pounded the country into the ground. They left hardly a bridge or building standing. The Chinese embassy, radio and TV stations, electricity grids, water supplies, roads, trains, infrastructure were all reduced to rubble in order to rid Europe of Slobodan Milosevic. And then, only then, when the war had been won from the air, did the ground troops go in, mainly in the role of peacekeepers.

In Jenin, as we now all know, 23 Israeli soldiers were killed in hand-to-hand combat in the narrow alleys of the refugee camp; there were 54 Palestinian dead, many of them armed men. We could have learned from NATO in Yugoslavia, but we didn't, and the Danes won't eat Israeli oranges?

People ask what is wrong with Israel's information efforts? Why is the country's image so bad?

The real question is, I believe, somewhat different. Why should Israel have to explain that suicide bombing, men and women blowing themselves up in kindergartens, buses, pizza parlors, is a bad thing? Shouldn't the information problem be a Palestinian thing? Someone having to explain to a Norwegian or Dane that indelible image of a mother screaming at the television cameras that she wants all 10 of her children to be shaheeds – martyrs. In most societies, mothers would be throwing themselves at the enemy to protect their children. Here the equation has been flipped, but the meaning has not penetrated the European mind.

Think back to the picture of 12-year-old Muhammad al-Dura being killed in the opening hours of this war. The boy was huddled beside his father, desperately seeking safety in the cross fire of bullets. His father was crouching behind a barrel, the boy clinging to his back. Wouldn't you have placed your son between the barrel and yourself?

Saddam buys himself a suicide bomber for \$15,000 and Qadhafi gets one for \$10,000. The Palestinians sell their children to them and it's the Jews who have to explain their values? It's Israeli oranges they don't buy?

The people of Norway or Denmark have never suffered from living under the constant threat of terror, a situation where a child cannot go to a birthday party, or even to school, without fear of being killed or maimed. You never know where and when terror will strike. Its victims are indiscriminate. Not soldiers, but men, women and a disproportionate number of children and young people, considering the targets that have been chosen.

Jenin was a bomb-making factory. Dozens of attacks were planned there, including the Passover-night massacre at the Park Hotel in Netanyah. And, yes, that was a massacre, and it emanated from Jenin. The Israeli army had every right, in fact duty, to go in there and stop the murder. They did so without the excesses of NATO and at great personal cost.

The Europeans are now, apparently, committed to helping the Palestinians reform their society. They are going to help them write a constitution, set up an independent legal system and a stable democratic structure. Their ability to achieve this is in Israel's interest. We are all sure Chairman Arafat just can't wait to cooperate.

In the meantime, however, it may help the Europeans farther in implementing their democratic ideals if they stopped their de facto support of terror and the message they are sending the Palestinians that suicide bombing is a good thing. It would be useful, too, if some of the bleeding hearts out there in the European Union would say something about the synagogues being fire-bombed in France, Britain, Belgium and other countries in their Union.

The Europeans, and the European press in particular, owe Israel an apology. They lied. There was no massacre in Jenin. There was probably less collateral damage in almost two weeks of fighting in dense urban areas than in one day of NATO bombardment of Belgrade. It took 18 months of violence and almost 500 killed, two-thirds of them civilians, before Israel went into Jenin. The allies did not wait that long before they reduced Milosevic's Yugoslavia to rubble.

So if there is going to be a boycott, perhaps Jewish caterers should stop serving Norwegian salmon and Danish herring and Belgian chocolates and French champagne, and Jewish tourists choose other destinations for their vacation this year. As for those Germans who seemed only too happy to start Jew-bashing again, perhaps there is still some work to be done on that Holocaust thing. Remember? (Jerusalem Report June 6)