



Jerusalem 7:04; Toronto 8:46

## Commentary...

### Democracy or Banana Republic?

By Isi Leibler

Surrounded by neighbors committed to our destruction and standing in the front line of the global war against terror, Israelis can rightly take pride in being the only democratic state in the region. However, recent political developments do raise serious questions.

A genuine democracy does not start and end with elections. It requires government to behave in a transparent and responsible manner; to maintain a system of checks and balances, and for decisions to be endorsed by a cabinet and ratified by parliament.

Alas, in recent years the Israeli cabinet has become irrelevant, and of late prime ministers have been treating the country as though it were their personal fiefdom. That three such prime ministers were former generals undoubtedly contributed to their authoritarian approach toward notions of teamwork and collective responsibility.

The rot set in with the Oslo Accords. Yitzhak Rabin was elected prime minister on a tough anti-PLO platform. Yet he resurrected Yasser Arafat, who had been exiled in Tunis on the verge of political extinction. To obtain a parliamentary majority for this radical policy change, Rabin virtually bribed an opposition MK, who was recently indicted as a drug peddler.

The best one can say about Rabin's maneuver was that it was implemented with cabinet approval. Ehud Barak was elected on a hawkish platform, but then stunned the nation by offering Arafat 97 percent of the West Bank and agreeing to divide Jerusalem. He initiated this on his own authority, having sidelined his cabinet. His chaotic term of office culminated in the marginalization of Labor and the election of Ariel Sharon.

Following a fractious unity government, which soon collapsed, new elections returned Sharon with a landslide victory. His adversary, Amnon Mitzna of Labor, was vanquished at the polls because Israelis rejected his policy of unilateral disengagement, a virtual mirror image of what we face today.

Sharon's coalition was stable for a time, the Likud assuming the centrist role and reflecting the genuine aspirations of the Israeli mainstream in favor of separation from the Palestinians as long as this was not perceived as a reward for terror and was based on reciprocity.

From the outset, Sharon made vague statements about a need for "painful sacrifices" which found resonance with most Israelis. But other than his son Omri and his lawyer and bureau chief Dov Weisglass, nobody including his own senior ministers seemed to have the slightest notion what Sharon had in mind.

The first hint surfaced when he made a contentious reference to the "occupation." Subsequently his deputy Ehud Olmert followed with a call for unilateral withdrawals from Gaza and the West Bank.

Initially Sharon refused to discuss or elaborate his policy with his own cabinet colleagues. But before consulting those who share with him the collective responsibility for the government of the country, he did talk to Shimon Peres, President Hosni Mubarak, King Abdullah, and President George W. Bush.

With his party colleagues still baying for consultations, Sharon placated them by agreeing to a referendum among Likud Party members and provided a solemn undertaking to abide by the verdict. He then sent Weisglass to Washington, where he succeeded in extracting an extraordinarily positive statement from President Bush on final borders and refugees. That provided him with a misplaced feeling of confidence that he would carry the day at the referendum.

It is axiomatic in a democratic body that if a referendum is held and a proposal is rejected, the leadership must pause and review. That applies even more so when the prime minister and party leader has publicly pledged to uphold the outcome of a ballot.

YET AFTER the Likud referendum debacle, Ariel Sharon, in hubris, declared in a Napoleonic manner that those "with narrow personal political motivations" had hijacked the referendum. He insisted that he would carry on and implement what he defined as the national interest. He even had the effrontery to condemn as "rebels" those supporting the views of his own constituency.

He then tried to bludgeon his cabinet into rejecting the verdict of their own

# ISRAEL NEWS

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party. When that failed, he took the drastic step of creating an artificial majority by crudely dismissing coalition ministers who opposed his views.

A prime minister has the right to dismiss ministers who violate the principle of collective leadership, but this cannot apply before a decision or policy has even been determined.

A prime minister using this approach would be able to arbitrarily disregard votes, majorities, procedures,

and propriety whenever he was inclined to decide that "the national interest is at stake." It would be unacceptable in any mature democracy.

Sharon justified his behavior by brazenly insisting that "the public elected me to decide." This is outrageous because he was elected on a platform which rejected precisely his current policy.

Indeed, were Sharon to have employed such quasi-dictatorial tactics in promoting a right-wing agenda, the media would have been in uproar, and there would undoubtedly have been frenzied calls for his impeachment.

A democracy must operate within a framework in which decisions are determined through an agreed process. The leader must consult and dialogue with his cabinet, and ministers are entitled to disagree with him until a policy is adopted.

Decisions must be preceded by careful planning.

Important issues should be announced in major Knesset addresses or state of the nation messages, not by impulsive responses to journalists. The public must also be involved. The leader cannot go into seclusion. He is obliged to communicate crucial policy changes directly to the people and give them an opportunity to question and challenge aspects of his policy.

As the former champion of the settlers, Sharon also has a special obligation to talk directly to them. He of all people should appreciate how obscene it is that people about to be dispossessed from communities they created with the blessings of former governments are vilified.

Irrespective of political affiliation, the people of Israel must reject any suggestion that the end can justify dubious means.

They must insist that their prime minister stop acting as a law unto himself. Besides, given majority support, Sharon could certainly achieve his political objectives within the framework of democratic procedures and without marginalizing the Likud.

Setting aside the actual wrenching debate about unilateral disengagement, there are serious grounds for concern that if democratic conventions continue to be trampled, Israel could drift from being a unique democracy into being a banana republic. (Jerusalem Post Jun 16)

*The writer, a resident of Jerusalem, is prominent in the international Jewish arena.*

### A Long-Term Conflict By Rabbi Zalman Baruch Melamed

The ongoing confrontation between Israel and the Arabs living in the Land of Israel is not an isolated dispute; it is in fact a confrontation between the Nation of Israel as a whole and the entire Arab people. The aspiration of the Jewish people, to return to our homeland in its entirety and to thrive as citizens of own Jewish state, free from the yoke of the nations and in accordance with the distinctive spirit of Israel, thus fulfilling our unique role in the world - this aspiration is our very life. It did not cease throughout the two-thousand-year exile, and it began to take concrete practical shape more than one hundred years ago. We are today in the midst of an ingathering of exiles, the return of the people to its homeland - the holy land of its forefathers..

In contrast, the ambition of the Arab nation as a whole is that the entire Land of Israel be under Islamic-Arab rule. The Arab world-view claims that the Nation of Islam has replaced the People of Israel, that Islam is the true heir to the Israel and its faith..

Suddenly, the Jewish People have risen up again after two-thousand years of Exile. Its spiritual and material assets - the Torah of Israel and the Land of Israel - have not been bequeathed to another people. They are the exclusive property of the living Nation of Israel. Islam is not willing to come to grips with this fact. It desires that the entire Holy Land be subject to its own rule. Hence, the struggle between us and the Arabs living in the Land of Israel is a confrontation between the Jewish people and its faith on the one hand, and the Arab nation and its faith on the other.

For this reason, it is fruitless to consider a solution to the troubled

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relations between Israel and the Arabs which is detached from the source of the confrontation. If we refuse to recognize the source of the problem we will not be capable of dealing with it properly. The source of the conflict is religious in nature, and religious conflicts can find no true solution in political agreements. Its solution must be searched for in the religious-theological arena. We, for our part, request of God that a solution eventually be reached "neither through militia nor through force, but through My spirit."

The recognition that the source of the conflict between the Israel and the Arabs is national-religious in nature, obligates one to accept the fact that it is bound to go on for a very long period of time. Our approach to dealing with the conflict need not demand finding some solution to the conflict, but learning to live with it. We must rather accept the fact that we do not presently possess any way of solving the conflict: neither side is ready to abandon its national-religious aspirations. Therefore, we must learn how to live with the conflict. In the same manner that each of us must learn to live with hardships, difficulties, illnesses and catastrophes which contain no solution, so we must learn how to live with Arab hostility and terror..

We must learn to limit the amount of attention we give to this problem, to restrict the matter to its appropriate boundaries without putting all of our efforts and energies into it. Most of our energies must be poured into efforts to advance goals such as gathering in all of the exiles, strengthening the population of Israel, developing the Jewish State, and endowing it with the kind of spirit which makes us a unique nation. We must stop chasing after peace. Peace is neither relevant nor practical. Of course we do not desire war, and we are forever willing to discuss peace, but there is no reason to go chasing after peace, for the more that we chase after it, the more it distances itself from us.. If we stop chasing after peace, it will at least stop distancing itself from us.

#### *A Jewish State*

The State of Israel must see itself as a State for the entire Jewish nation. This was the reason for its establishment, and this is how it should be. The State of Israel is not a multi-national, non-denominational entity; it is the state of the Jewish people - the entire Jewish people. Though Israel's non-Jewish citizens, the Arabs, are citizens with the same rights as Jews, and each citizen of Israel is free to live his private life according to his own world-view and faith, the state as such must be Jewish with an unequivocal Jewish character.

Accordingly, the State of Israel must see every Jew in the world as a potential citizen. Every Jew should be allowed to take advantage of this privilege and receive citizenship, even if one has not yet immigrated to the Land of Israel and settled permanently herein. This step will have the effect of strengthening the connection between the land and the people. The assertion that the State of Israel is the state of the Jewish people is nothing new. It is anchored in Israel's Scroll of Independence, and in the spirit of the Law of Return. This new measure, though, will serve to strengthen the true fabric of the state and reinforce the bond between Diaspora Jewry and the state. Giving voting privileges to Jews living abroad, on the condition that they come to Israel regularly for short visits, will shrink the looming demographic question.

The assertion that the State of Israel is the state of the entire Jewish people justifies our claim to the entire Land of Israel. The world community understands and recognizes the fact that the Jewish people have a right to their own state; the world community also understands that the Land of Israel is the place for such a state - it is the ancestral homeland of the Jews. Consequently, our claim that the entire land, according to its historical-biblical boundaries should be the homeland of the Jews, and that it is improper to prevent us from settling the entire land will be understood.

The assertion that the State of Israel is the state of the entire Jewish people and that its objective is to ingather all of the Jews and to create a distinctly Jewish national life will make the depth of the conflict between us and the Arabs better understood. This is important because to hide from this fact only blurs the situation; instead of aiding to bring about a solution, it aggravates it. Presenting superficial solutions will, in the end, only cause heightened eruptions - and experience testifies to this.

We must accept the fact that at the present time there is no viewable solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Neither side wishes to join the other to create one united nation. It is therefore best to reduce the mingling of the two nations. The Arabs should be left to live their own private lives as they please, and they should also be allowed to manage their communal-cultural-religious life as they see fit in every area that it is possible for them to do this on their own. The state has the responsibility to encourage this separation between us maximally in order to safeguard our Jewish identity while at the same time allowing them to preserve their own identity. Joint activities will find expression only in those unavoidable areas where it is impossible to manage separate systems. In this manner we will succeed in reducing daily tension.

The state will guarantee complete equal rights, but it will also possess a very clear identity: it will be a state for the Jewish people; it will prevent citizens from assaulting its own sovereignty and Jewish aims.

#### *Jerusalem's Temple Mount*

We cannot finish without touching upon Jerusalem.. Unified Jerusalem is the capital of the State of Israel, and the Temple Mount is the most holy site the Jewish people have. The Holy City must be subject entirely to Jewish authority, and we must demand that the Temple Mount, because of its tremendous sanctity, be closed off to all people until both the Jewish people and the world are prepared to aspire to such a level of sanctity..

In sum, the conflict between Israel and the Arabs runs very deep. It is a

religious conflict to which there exists no solution at present. We must therefore stop investing all of our efforts in trying to create a path to peace. We must, rather, pour our energies into transforming Israel into a state for all of the Jewish people in the world and imbuing it with a clear Jewish character. We must keep the entire Land of Israel in our possession, declare an all out war on terrorism, and manage life in Israel such that there be as much separation between us and the Arabs in daily affairs as possible - not to blur identities.

It is impossible to halt the process of Israel's national revival, the reclamation of its entire land, and revival of its unique path. We are constantly progressing; every seeming barrier acts as an impetus to ascension toward the complete redemption. Fortunate is he who has the privilege of lending a hand in God's ongoing redemption of Israel.

*The writer is the Rosh Yeshiva of the Bet El Yeshiva Centre and Chairman of IsraelNationalnews.com . (Arutz Sheva June 9)*

#### **Keep Winning** Jerusalem Post Editorial

Zakariya Zubeidi, the Aksa Martyrs Brigades chieftain in Jenin, yesterday offered to order a halt to attacks on Israel in exchange for an end to Israeli incursions into that city and a withdrawal from surrounding settlements. This is excellent news. The government should meet it by stepping up its military offensive in Jenin and throughout the territories.

Zubeidi's offer is not an olive branch. It is not evidence of pragmatism, moderation, or good will. It is an admission of impending defeat. The Martyrs Brigades and other terrorist Palestinian factions have been devastated by repeated IDF/Shin Bet raids on their rank-and-file, and there are now over 6,000 Palestinians in Israeli custody, three times as many as at the height of Operation Defensive Shield in 2002. Successive generations of terrorist leadership have either been killed by the IDF or forced into hiding for fear of their lives, thereby disrupting planning and operational capabilities. Their ability to reach Israeli targets has been dramatically curtailed by the construction of the security fence. The killing of Hamas leaders Ahmed Yassin and Abdel Aziz Rantisi did not, in fact, lead to the threatened rivers of blood, but to the longest (relative) peace Israel has known in nearly four years. If the intifada seems over, as some people now dare to whisper, it is because the IDF is winning.

It wasn't supposed to be thus. We have spent the last several years listening to sanctimonious lectures about how (1) there is no military solution to the conflict; (2) any "escalation" on Israel's part leads to a commensurate Palestinian escalation; (3) "walls never solved anything;" and, finally, (4) what the Palestinians need is hope, not fear.

All this turns out to be demonstrably false. Israeli military escalation has led, unfailingly, to Palestinian de-escalation. Israeli pressure has been followed, unfailingly, by Palestinian reasonableness. The security fence is working as planned everywhere it has been erected. Israeli concessions - giving the Palestinians hope - has merely created openings for violence.

More broadly, the longer Israel prevents the Palestinians from scoring a tactical success, the more Palestinians despair of scoring one. The more they despair, the less they try. The less they try, the easier it is to interdict. And so on. It's what economists call a virtuous cycle.

Winning, of course, is not the same as won. The danger now is that the appearance of success will lead to a relaxation of effort, possibly encouraged by international pressure to show good will in the face of gestures like Zubeidi's. This would be snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. The main thing now is both to maintain the operational tempo and broaden the operational scope. Why, for instance, does Arafat continue to get a pass from Israel and the West when Zubeidi himself tells Israel Radio that "if Ramallah decides that we should stop, we will stop." It cannot be repeated enough that Yasser Arafat continues to be the primary terror master in this region and must be seen, and treated, accordingly.

We have written many times before that the key to any future negotiation with the Palestinian leadership is to expose them, as fully as possible, to the consequences of their conceits. If this intifada has seemed almost interminable, it is because Israel failed to do this early on, choosing instead to escalate gradually. As it is, the results have been worse for the Palestinians than they have for us. But it's never too late to rectify mistakes.

It is encouraging that the IDF's more aggressive posture coincides with the cabinet's momentous decision to remove settlements in Gaza. The great danger of disengagement is not the loss of territory, which can sometimes be an asset and sometimes a liability, but the loss of credibility. As we come closer to the moment of pulling up stakes, it will be necessary to take the anti-terror campaign to a new level of intensity. No Palestinian living in a future Palestinian state should be in any doubt as to Israel's will and ability to defend itself and its citizens against opportunistic aggression. It should go without saying that that is something no Israeli ought to be in doubt of, either. (Jerusalem Post Jun 15)

**Book Seeks to End Jewish Support for Israel** By Bret Stephens  
*Epitaph by self-described "ham on rye" American Jew full of factual errors - but is still winning critical acclaim*

Richard Ben Cramer is an American journalist who has written well-received books on baseball and politics. He also covered the Middle East extensively as a reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, winning a Pulitzer Prize in 1979. In 2002, he returned to Israel to find out what had happened to the country in the intervening years. The result is a book called "How Israel Lost," just out from Simon and Schuster.

This ought to be a provoking, instructive, uncomfortable book. It is so only by inadvertence. Cramer describes himself as a "ham on rye" American Jew, grown up on reflexive support for Israel and disillusioned by closer acquaintance. What he has written now is an epitaph. Israelis have lost sight of their ideals, their common identity, their sense of purpose, the very "ache of humanity" that properly makes a Jew. Everything that once made Israelis attractive has been squandered so they can hold on to the territories and be "the brutal kings of all they survey." So why support Israel? Cramer's message is, don't.

This is not a new indictment. Europeans have been making it for years, as have Americans on the farther reaches of the Left and Right (the book was glowingly reviewed in *The American Conservative*, Patrick Buchanan's magazine).

Cramer's contribution lies in his effort to mainstream it, particularly among skittish American Jews torn between their ethnic and political instincts. Thus the book is written in the Catskills patois of pishers and schlubs and schnorrers and shtarkers. Cramer is also a devotee of exclamation marks, scare quotes, italics, em-dashes and ellipses. A typical paragraph reads:

"So [DOT-DOT-DOT] now the long trend of privatization, atomization, individualization has come together with the hardening [DASH] the buffer that has to be built against the bad things Israelis have to do or see [DOT-DOT-DOT] except for the most part they don't see [DASH] day to day, they don't have to look [DOT-DOT-DOT] because that's a collective problem [DASH] not their doing [DASH] they're busy with their job, taking care of Number One [DOT-DOT-DOT] and that stuff "out there" is so ITAL disappointing ITAL [DASH] where is it written they should have to feel terrible? [DOT-DOT-DOT] And one more thing [DOT-DOT-DOT] a new thing, the latest thing: ITAL "They tried" ITAL [EXCLAMATION]"

PRESUMABLY, CRAMER'S intention is to give his prose a spoken quality, to capture voices and to project one of his own. There are, however, two problems with this. First, it is hard to endure 280 pages of unremitting syntactic crapulence. Second, the purpose of the ellipsis is not emphasis but elision. This is something Cramer seems not to understand, and it is the failing of the whole book: as he hops from one thumping indictment to another, he skips over every inconvenient fact, detail and nuance.

Thus, in explaining Ariel Sharon's malignant role in perpetuating the so-called cycle of violence, Cramer states as fact that "In the summer of [Sharon's] first year, 2001, Hamas had observed a cease-fire on Israeli civilians for a couple of months, until July 31, when the Israelis assassinated two Hamas commanders in Nablus."

Well, not quite. Between the June 1 attack on the Dolphinarium disco and July 31 the following attacks on Israeli civilians took place:

June 11, 2001: Yehuda Chaim Shoham, a five-month old boy is critically wounded in a stone throwing attack on his parents' car. He later dies.

June 12, 2001: Gur Pzopokatsatakis, a 35-year-old Greek Orthodox monk, is shot in a drive-by attack, and dies.

June 18, 2001: Doron Zisserman, 38, father of four, is shot in the head, and dies.

June 20, 2001: Ilya Kirivitz, 62, is shot in the head, and dies.

June 28, 2001: Ekaterina Weintraub, 24, is shot in the chest, and dies.

July 2, 2001: Aharon Abadian, 41, father of four, is shot at point-blank range, and dies.

July 2, 2001: Ya'ir Har-Sinai, 51, father of nine, is shot in the head and back, and dies. He is described as a "man of nature" who "would tend his sheep with no weapons and was on friendly terms with neighboring Arabs."

July 4, 2001: Eliyahu Naaman, 32, is shot at point-blank range, and dies.

July 13, 2001: David Cohen, 31, is shot in the head and chest in a drive-by attack, and dies.

July 24, 2001: Yuri Gushtzin, 18, is shot and stabbed to death.

July 26, 2001: Ronen Landau, 17, is shot in a drive-by attack, and dies.

The list excludes Israeli soldiers killed during this period. It fails to mention the July 16 suicide bombing at the Binyamina railway stop, which killed two soldiers but was aimed at civilians. It excludes an attempt to stage an attack at the opening of the Maccabiah Games in Jerusalem, which failed when the bomb exploded prematurely. It excludes a foiled suicide attack in the town center of Afula. And while it is true that most-though not all-of the victims listed above were killed in the territories, it is not precisely clear why they should be discounted as civilians. Was little Yehuda Chaim Shoham a perpetrator of occupation and thus a legitimate military target?

Nor are these Cramer's only omissions. The "cease-fire" he mentions was not, in fact, an act of Hamas' good will, but the result of intense international pressure on Arafat following the Dolphinarium bombing to rein in the terror. (It was observed mainly in the breach.) The Hamas cease-fire of summer 2003 followed a period of intensified targeted killings by the IDF, including a nearly

successful attempt on Hamas leader Abdel Aziz Rantisi's life. It was broken in late August with a spectacular bus bombing in Jerusalem that murdered 20 and for which there was no discernable Israeli provocation. How do these facts fit into Cramer's thesis that Palestinian violence is generally a response to Israeli provocations?

There are other, more basic, errors of fact. Binyamin Netanyahu was never a colonel in the IDF. Ehud Barak was not prime minister in 1998. The *New York Times* was never the "house organ of American Zionism" and even editorialized against the creation of a Jewish state. The notion that the Israeli government runs a well-oiled, lavishly funded PR machine is a bad joke. Systematic violence by Palestinians against Jews predates the settlement movement by decades. Traditional Islam did not "accord [Judaism] its deepest respect" but rather barely tolerated and frequently persecuted its Jewish minorities. Jerusalem is never mentioned in the Koran. The PLO was never "as irreligious as Zionism." And so on.

The middle part of Cramer's book consists of a screed against Orthodox Jews and what he deems their excessive and destructive role in setting the rules of Israeli life. Well, yes, it is a bit excessive for my taste, which is why I take my Saturday brunches in Ein Kerem or Abu Ghosh, along with thousands of my nonreligious correligionists. But it takes a moral imbecile and Cramer is up to the task-to take the next step and compare Israel to an Islamic Republic.

There is more, for Cramer spreads his contempt wide. The settlers, of course-he dwells at length on the seriously unhappy experience of one secular family in Tekoa. The army-it murders Palestinians with abandon and without conscience. The Russians-not even Jewish, cynically brought in by Israel for the sole purpose of "rescuing the Jewish state's occupation." The political class-all generals, for whom "force and more force is the only calling card." Ariel Sharon-not just a bad guy himself, but the archetype for what Israel as a whole has become: thuggish, corrupt, stupid, grotesque, irredeemable.

Are there any good Israelis left? Yes, the Machsom Watch, Gush Shalom, Shalom Arshav, Meretz: the people who take notes as the country "sheds its last decencies." But they are like the five just men of Sodom. And for Cramer, who renders judgment like a stalking God, that's not enough of a remnant to save the wicked city.

IN HIS concluding chapter, titled "Why is there no peace?", Cramer tells us that "any Jew who's not an Israeli, and not on psychotropic drugs, could solve this Peace-for-Israel thing in about ten minutes of focused thought." Later, he says the solution is "laughably obvious."

This is a common theme among the dull-minded: that the solution to all our strife is so blazingly evident that only knaves or fools could fail to grasp it. (And as Israelis are no fools-dot-dot-dot.) But Israel's conflict with the Palestinians is not so simple, and one needs to be a simpleton to believe that it is, or that malice or stupidity or greed prevents Israelis from grasping what they so obviously yearn for, or that a conflict that did not begin with the occupation can be ended by ending the occupation.

Most of us grow to learn that the world and life are complicated things, that there can be no easy certainties even if, at times, we require clear judgments. Cramer seems to have made the journey in reverse: from a talented reporter to an angry polemicist for whom condescension comes easily and understanding comes hardly at all.

As to whether Cramer is or has become a "self-hating Jew," it doesn't matter and I'm in no position to say. All the same, I hope he enjoys the encomia of *The American Conservative* crowd. He's earned it. (*Jewish World Review* June 15)

*The writer is Editor-in-Chief of The Jerusalem Post.*

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**To Fester No Longer** By Shmuel Katz

Throughout the public discussion on Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan for the Gaza district and the expulsion of Jews from their homes, not the least distressing feature is the delusions with which he and his supporters have tried to feed the public.

They have put forward the completely unfounded presumption that if the Jews don't accept the plan President George W. Bush will go back on his "guarantee" to oppose the "right of return" of the so-called refugees.

No such threat has been heard from Washington; nor could it be, for Bush gave no such guarantee. What Bush wrote in his letter to Sharon was a carefully drafted text designed to avoid an explicit rejection of the idea of a return of the refugees.

"It seems clear" he wrote "that a fair solution to the refugee issue should be found through a Palestinian State rather than in Israel." Far from being a guarantee about anything at all, it could be read as an argument for creating a Palestinian state.

There is another lesson for Israel here. Israel should not allow itself to be moved to make concessions in any field on the strength of even a promised presidential quid pro quo. It has been bitten time and again.

When, in 1974, after months of resistance by prime minister Yitzhak Rabin to secretary of state Henry Kissinger's demand that Israel give up the strategic Mitla and Gidi passes in Sinai, Rabin acquiesced, and got two promises in return. One, that the US would not carry on any negotiations

with the PLO except with Israel's consent; the other, that a new aircraft being planned (it became the F15) would be sold to Israel exclusively. Neither promise was kept.

Two years later Jimmy Carter was elected president and he, in spite of considerable senatorial opposition, insisted on Saudi Arabia also having the F15 (or Israel wouldn't get it either).

Carter tempered this breach of the commitment by excluding from the Saudi package an enhancement tank (for increased range) which had actually been created by Israel. As for not talking to the PLO, the Carter Administration interpreted this to mean that they could do so, provided Israel was not told about it.

Even had Bush made such a definite promise in his letter to Sharon, were it later to be broken by the president, he could explain it by the plea of *rebus sic stantibus* (which means, in effect, that circumstances have changed). Sharon (and any other prime minister of Israel) should have enough savvy to understand that for a world power dealing with worldwide interests one of a host of circumstances can change at any time.

In fact, the Reagan administration actually apologized to Israel for the breach of an undertaking and explained the lapse by *rebus sic stantibus*.

What, then, were the circumstances that had changed? War had broken out – between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan! Go know.

The essential fact here is not whether President Bush will withhold support for the Arabs' absurd and monstrous claim "for return of the refugees," but that, manifestly, Israel will on no account agree to it. Israel knows – and the US knows just as well – that, as President Gamal Nasser of Egypt in 1967 succinctly and optimistically put it, "Return of the refugees means the end of Israel."

Nor would the problem of the "refugees" be solved by planning to dump them on a Palestinian state as a home for them. Even if a Palestinian state were established it would not be able to cope with the problem.

What President Bush calls a "fair solution" requires first of all, pragmatically and morally, an answer to the question: Where did the problem come from, who was to blame for its creation? The answer is, after all, unequivocal: the Arab states, who in 1948 criminally and without any provocation invaded the by-then-sovereign state of Israel with the intent of destroying it and killing as many Jews as possible.

They then compounded their crime by calling on the Arabs living in the area of impending military action to evacuate temporarily (and then come back in a few weeks to inherit the Jews' property). They compounded their crime still further by callously deciding that those who had been left homeless should now remain homeless and wait for Israel to take them back.

In practice, then they washed their hands of the problem. The UN established the camps and the problem, now 56 years old, has grown year by year to its present proportions.

Now, if the Western nations seriously mean the near future to become an era of reform they must determine to press the Arab states, even now, to make redress. The Arab states should get together and plan the details for putting an end to the problem of the refugees that they brought about – by providing land within their tremendous domain.

The movement of the "refugees" from their present dwellings would mean a relocation from one Arab neighborhood to another. Jordan (eastern Palestine), about four times the size of Israel, is the nearest possible destination. It is also the most logical, for the source of most of its population is in western Palestine. It has in fact always been a Palestinian state.

However, there are other possibilities within the Arab area on which the Arab states and the refugees themselves would decide.

The idea has been touched upon in the past – for its innate justice and in recollection of the tremendously successful relocation of millions of real refugees after World War II. But it has been swept aside as a solution because of the Arabs' notion that Israel can somehow be forced to take them (and encompass its destruction).

The American president and the other statesmen in the west should tell the Arabs unequivocally that this is not going to happen, the refugee problem should be taken out of the context of the conflict between them and Israel, and it is in their own interest to treat it for what it really is – a "family problem" of the Arab nation. (Jerusalem Post Jun 16)

*The writer, who co-founded the Herut Party with Menachem Begin and was a member of the first Knesset, is a biographer and essayist.*

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### **Detached from Reality** By Gerald M. Steinberg

The disastrous outcome of the Oslo process – seven years of false peace negotiations that Yasser Arafat exploited to prepare a terror campaign – can be blamed on many factors.

It was driven by the personal ambitions and naive optimism of Yossi Beilin, Shimon Peres and the Labor Party, aided and abetted by eager European mediators and officials in the Clinton administration. Journalists who forgot that their job was to report the news, and not to become cheerleaders for political programs, also deserve some of the dubious credit.

But let's not forget some of my fellow academics who gave the process legitimacy, maintained the facade of peace long after the failure of Oslo became clear, and, even worse, continue today as if nothing has changed. This week, Tel

Aviv University is hosting a conference on "track-two diplomacy," but instead of offering a much-needed re-examination of this approach, packed the program with its architects.

The meetings in Oslo began under the cover of a track-two academic dialogue, such as had been conducted for many years by Prof. Herbert Kelman, a well-meaning social psychologist who runs Harvard University's Middle East Seminar.

These meetings included generally like-minded Israeli and Arab academics who exchanged pleasantries and negotiated the agreements that professors of peace studies eagerly sought.

These seminars, and the illusion of "ripeness," helped create the foundations for the Oslo process. Underpinning it all was the notion that Israelis and Palestinians understood each other's desires, perspectives, fears and vulnerabilities. But over a decade after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and four years after the process imploded into bitter warfare, we know that these assumptions were incorrect.

The expectation that most Palestinians, like most Israelis, were prepared to make pragmatic compromises to end the conflict on the basis of a two-state solution was disastrously wrong.

Indeed, the evidence clearly shows that when such dialogues go from the carefully controlled environment of the psychology lab to the world of politics and interests, the results are very different. This is true not only for Palestinian-Israeli hostilities, but also other bitter ethnic conflicts – the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, etc.

Time after time, handshakes and personal rapport did not translate into grand agreements. Instead, high hopes not grounded in the reality of interests, in an environment of opposing concepts of historic justice, generally ended in disaster.

When confronted with stark evidence of suicide bombing and Palestinian incitement, academics should be the first to rethink the theoretical starting points. However, like everyone else, we suffer from cognitive dissonance; when presented with evidence contrary to our beliefs even academics will try to rationalize disturbing data to reinforce their existing worldview.

As a result, academics like Kelman and Joseph Montville, and their Israeli partners, such as Ron Pundak, who heads the Peres Center for Peace, cling to the old Oslo mythology. Despite four years of unimaginable terror, their simplistic ideology based on viewing the Palestinians as victims confronting an all-powerful Israel remains dominant.

Their peace dialogues succeeded because they were limited to a small group of Israeli participants from the self-declared peace camp, partnered with Palestinians who tended to be aligned with Arafat's Fatah organization. These Palestinian leaders met relatively few Israelis who opposed giving up on Jewish historic links to Jerusalem or accepting Palestinian refugees claims.

When these views turned out to reflect those of the majority of Israelis – who reported to their military units to fight terror, voted twice for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, and now demand unilateral separation – Palestinians appeared to be taken by surprise.

And at the same time, the Israelis involved in the one-sided dialogues were unprepared for the depth of Palestinian rejectionism and the degree to which historic positions on the legitimacy of Jewish sovereignty, Jerusalem, and refugee claims remained dominant.

Four years after these myths violently exploded, influential academics continue to write articles and run meetings extolling the virtues of dialogue and heart-to-heart discussions.

In a recent op-ed published in *The Boston Globe*, Kelman promoted the Geneva Accords and declared that "unilateral steps would have disastrous consequences."

In addition to their refusal to recognize the failures of Oslo, the idea that the same Palestinian and Israeli leaders can be trusted to try again is absurd and detached from reality.

After decades of narrow Arab-Israeli dialogues, summer coexistence camps, and summit meetings, it is time for the teachers and researchers in the field of peace studies to confront reality: The quasi-religious belief in "mutually enhancing cooperation" and "reconciliation" is not only wrong; it is also dangerous. It prevents recognition of the situation on the ground and is readily exploited for war and terror, as we have seen.

It is clear that the techniques developed by social psychologists for family therapy cannot cope with deep political and religious hatreds, irreconcilable interests and the strategy of terrorism.

But this does not mean that there is no hope for stability and conflict management. Indeed, a political (rather than psychological) framework based on limiting friction while enhancing deterrence can greatly reduce levels of violence while creating an environment for stability.

Although far from the idyllic peace that diplomats and social psychologists imagine, the conflict management approach has the benefit of being realistic, while not contributing to increased terrorism and violence.

The time for the academics from Harvard, as well as from Israeli universities, to face this reality is long overdue. (Jerusalem Post Jun 14)  
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