



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
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Commentary...

Planting the Seeds of the Next War

By Itamar Marcus

One of the most meaningful gauges of the integrity of the peace process and its likelihood of success is the degree to which the parties educate toward peace. It is by this yardstick that the Palestinian Authority's education apparatus, formal and informal, has been such a dismal disappointment.

Instead of seizing the opportunity to educate future generations to live with Israel in peace the PA has done everything in its power to fill young minds with hatred. Making matters worse the PA has been spreading two clever lies about its schoolbooks that have succeeded in deflecting international pressure for change.

PA Foreign Minister Nabil Shaath answered Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom's complaint about the schoolbooks by saying that the PA has "spent five years" rewriting the books implying they are now acceptable.

Then, he added, Israel itself used these same old Jordanian books for educating the local Arab population "for 30 years," which means it can have no valid complaint to the PA.

The truth about the PA schoolbooks is that they contain anti-Semitic content, delegitimize Israel's existence and incite to hatred and violence. For example, the new 6th-grade Reading the Koran openly presents anti-Semitic messages as children read about Allah's warning to the Jews that because of their evil Allah will kill them: "...Oh you who are Jews ...long for death if you are truthful... for the death from which you flee, that will surely overtake you..."

In other sections they learn of Jews being expelled from their homes by Allah, and in another Jews are said to be like donkeys: "Those [Jews] who were charged with the Torah, but did not observe it, are like a donkey carrying books..."

This religious-based anti-Semitism is particularly dangerous because children are taught that hating Jews is God's will. Islam also contains positive attitudes toward Jews yet PA educators chose to incorporate only hateful teachings.

The new PA schoolbooks Shaath is so positive about compare Israel to colonial Britain: "Colonialism: Palestine faced the British occupation after the First World War in 1917, and the Israeli occupation in 1948." Moreover, the book refers to Israel exclusively as Palestine. For example: "Among the famous rocks of southern Palestine are the rocks of Beersheba and the Negev" and "Palestine's Water Sources - ... The most important is the Sea of Galilee."

But the Negev, Beersheba and the Sea of Galilee are in Israel and do not border the disputed territories of Judea and Samaria. So why are PA children taught these areas are Palestine?

Educating against Israel's existence is further cemented through tens of maps in the schoolbooks in which Palestine encompass all of Israel. Israel does not exist on any map, within any borders at all.

The PA defends its schoolbook maps by arguing that since there are no final borders the map is not portraying modern Palestine but Mandatory Palestine. That is an insult to our intelligence. Are we expected to believe that when Palestinian children see the map called Palestine in all their schoolbooks they imagine Britain a half-a-century ago? And that when Beersheba is called Palestine, the children are picturing biblical history?

Another new book teaches what must be done for "occupied Palestine" and the "stolen homeland." "Islam encourages this [love of homeland] and established the defense of it as an obligatory commandment for every Muslim if even a centimeter of his land is stolen. I, a Palestinian Muslim, love my country, Palestine..." The complete and total message Palestinian children are taught is that Jews, according to Allah, are like donkeys; Israel is a colonial occupier that stole their land; the cities, lakes and deserts of Israel are occupied Palestine; and that the children have an obligation to liberate it if even a "centimeter is stolen." Shaath's other lie that Israel used these same old books is particularly resourceful, as the best lies include a grain of truth.

Israel did indeed use Jordanian books to educate the local Arab population. However, it reprinted the books without the hate content. In fact, Jordan registered a complaint with the UN charging that Israel's changing the schoolbooks was a violation of international law, but the UN checked what Israel had done and approved it.

The PA put back into the old Jordanian material all the hate content that Israel had removed. Moreover, three years ago some foreign governments offered to pay to reprint the versions that didn't contain hateful material, but the PA turned them down.

Finally, all the books cited here were written during the most optimistic periods of the peace process, before the violence began in September 2000.

They are not a reflection of the war, but they were a contributing factor to it. By dismissing the criticism and retaining this hateful material the PA is planting the seeds of the next war in their young people. And the defenders of this PA hate-education including some Israelis are nurturing those seeds of war. (Jerusalem Post Jun 29)

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America's Jenin: A familiar reality in Iraq By Rand H. Fishbein

It took less than four weeks for American-led Coalition forces to rout the army of Saddam Hussein. Yet it took only days for U.S. field commanders to find themselves confronting many of the same problems faced by Israel in its fight against Palestinian terrorism. It's a familiar scene: soldiers disguised as civilians, weapons hidden among mosques, hospitals, and schools, child fighters, and suicide bombers.

Listening to administration officials rail against the savagery of Iraqi military tactics, it is hard to believe that just 14 months ago many of these same voices were heard chastising Israel for the way it handled the siege of the Jenin refugee camp.

U.S. military planners have been both surprised and angered at the level of resistance they continue to encounter from a population so recently liberated from Saddam's tyranny. In cities and towns all across Iraq — Baghdad, Tikrit, Fallujah, Nasiriyah, Mosul, and Habaniyah — the attacks are becoming evermore frequent and more brazen by the day.

Between May 1 when the war in Iraq officially ended, and the middle of June, over 40 Americans were killed and dozens more injured in sniper and ambush attacks. The incidents follow a familiar pattern:

June 22 — One U.S. soldier was killed and another injured in a grenade attack outside Baghdad.

June 20 — Two U.S. soldiers were injured when a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) hit an electrical transformer in Fallujah.

June 19 — A U.S. Army medic was killed and two soldiers were injured when a military ambulance was ambushed outside of Baghdad.

June 18 — One U.S. soldier was killed and another injured during a drive-by shooting in Baghdad.

June 17 — A U.S. soldier was killed by a sniper while patrolling in Baghdad.

June 13 — A U.S. tank was ambushed outside of Balad, 43 miles north of Baghdad, by irregulars using RPG's.

June 8 — A U.S. soldier manning a checkpoint at Al-Qaim along the Syrian border was killed after being approached by two men in a vehicle. The men opened fire after asking for medical assistance for a sick comrade.

June 5 — One U.S. soldier was killed and five wounded by an RPG while policing Fallujah. One soldier was wounded by gunmen while guarding a bank in central Baghdad.

June 1 — Two soldiers were wounded outside of the Abu Hanifa mosque in Baghdad after being attacked by snipers and their vehicle hit with what were probably plastic explosives.

May 28 — Two soldiers were killed and nine injured in an RPG attack in Fallujah. A woman was killed in Baquba as she attempts to throw a grenade at U.S. troops.

May 27 — Two U.S. soldiers were killed and four injured as two military convoys were ambushed in Baghdad.

May 19 — Three soldiers were killed and four injured in three separate guerilla attacks across Iraq.

May 9 — One soldier was killed by a sniper in Baghdad and another killed directing traffic on a bridge in the city. A third soldier was injured in an attack.

One of the most dramatic attacks on unsuspecting U.S. forces occurred just days after the war began when a group of armed Iraqi irregulars, dressed

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as civilians, attacked a lightly armed American support unit outside of the town of Nasiriyah. The irregulars, members of the Fedeyeen Saddam, feigned their surrender to the Americans. As they approached the convoy they opened up with automatic weapons. In the ensuing mêlée, at least a dozen members of the American 507th maintenance company were either killed or captured.

Bush-administration officials have vowed to end all resistance to the U.S. presence in Iraq and to use whatever force is necessary to do so. In late April and then again in mid-June, American forces moved against the town of Fallujah, a stronghold of Saddam loyalists and a launching pad for guerilla strikes against U.S. troops in the region.

As the April attack commenced, the American vehicle-mounted loudspeakers announced their intention in Arabic: "The Coalition is involved in a dangerous operation," the announcements said. "For your safety, you must evacuate this area. Stay off the streets or you'll be hurt or wounded." In the ensuing confrontation, 18 Iraqis were killed and at least 78 wounded, many of them civilians. During the second raid, called Operation "Spartan Scorpion," soldiers of the Army's 3rd Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade swept through into town with 100 soldiers and armored reinforcement. They searched buildings, seized weapons, bomb-making material, and communications equipment, and arrested dozens of suspects — all in an effort to quell popular resistance.

Perhaps haunted by the specter of America's ignominious retreats from Mogadishu in 1993 and Beirut in 1983, American commanders have vowed to meet continued Iraqi opposition with overwhelming force.

It was a little over a year ago that the Israeli military decided to storm the heavily fortified Jenin refugee camp in what the government termed, Operation Defensive Shield. The camp had become a safe haven for a number of Palestinian terrorist groups that together had been responsible for the murder of scores of Israelis in attacks around the country.

Terrorist cells from Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Fatah, and the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade used Jenin as an operations center from which to store weapons and build bombs as well as plan and execute attacks on Israeli civilians. Twenty-eight suicide bombers emerged from Jenin. Twenty-three of these were successful in carrying out their deadly missions.

Like the U.S. in Iraq, Israel has based its response to Palestinian terrorism on those provisions of international law that provide for national defense. For Israel, normal life is clearly impossible without an end to the violence. Today, the country's economy lies in tatters. Over 780 of its citizens have died and over 5,000 have been injured since the start of the Palestinian uprising in September, 2000.

Jerusalem takes great pains to avoid civilian casualties by urging noncombatants in an area targeted for large-scale military operations to leave the vicinity well before the fighting starts. This was certainly the case in the heavily populated town of Jenin and was one of the principal reasons why so few Palestinian lives were lost.

Still, this was not enough to save Israel from the condemnation of the world community which roundly accused Israel of perpetrating a massacre in the town of anywhere from 500 to over 1,500 people. With no evidence to substantiate their claim, leaders of the Palestinian Authority repeated the allegations until few questioned their veracity. The European Community, the U.N., and many of the large Western media outlets eagerly joined in the anti-Israel chorus.

Even the United States, led by the State Department, castigated the government of Ariel Sharon for employing force in a way that they characterized as indiscriminate and disproportionate. Nothing, however, could have been farther from the truth.

In fact there was no massacre in Jenin. Total Israeli casualties were nearly as high as those suffered by the Palestinians.

Over 15,000 people live in the Jenin refugee camp, a sprawling rabbit warren of narrow alleys and tenements less than a square mile. Israeli commanders reasoned that any attack that relied exclusively on artillery and air power would almost certainly have resulted in a large loss of civilian life.

Wishing to minimize Palestinian casualties, the Israeli commanders decided, instead, to mount a ground assault on the camp. From the outset, the Israelis knew any assault would almost surely result in a high number of casualties to their own troops.

It did not take long before their worst fears were realized. In just three days of combat, Israel lost 13 soldiers in close quarters fighting, 23 by the end of the operation. The Israelis quickly discovered that booby-traps were rigged to everything from wheelchairs to corpses. Over 50 buildings were wired by the Palestinians for detonation.

Soldiers returning from the scene told of female suicide bombers hurling themselves at troops being shot at by Palestinian snipers as they went to the aid of their Israeli comrades crushed by falling debris.

In the end, Israel's worst suspicions about Jenin were validated. Soldiers uncovered a number of explosives laboratories, mortar factories, Qassam rockets, large quantities of ammunition and even an unexploded car bomb.

As with Iraq, this arsenal of terror was amassed under the eyes of a less than vigilant United Nations. For years the employees of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) denied that Palestinian terrorists were operating in their midst. The Jenin operation, like the U.S.-led operation, Iraqi Freedom, exposed these wanton lies.

From the outset of hostilities, Iraqi military leaders knew that their Army was no match for Coalition forces. Having eschewed the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), their only hope of slowing the advance of American and British forces was to employ classic guerilla tactics. That meant avoiding head-to-head clashes with Coalition armor in favor of strikes against soft targets like supply lines and infrastructure.

Commonly, an Iraqi vehicle would speed toward a group of American soldiers, its occupants cheering and waving white flags. Once they were within striking range, the Iraqis would open up with a fusillade of small arms fire and RPGs.

On April 4 the Pentagon reported that a car had exploded near an Army checkpoint. Three soldiers were killed along with a pregnant woman in the vehicle. Her screams of desperation were heard by witnesses just before the detonation. Survivors suggested she may have been forced by Saddam's paramilitary thugs, the Fedeyeen Saddam, to participate in the operation. Such is war in the cradle of civilization.

Nearly five months after the fighting began, Coalition forces remain on high alert for evermore imaginative enemy attacks. Already they have encountered suicide attacks using school buses, roadside bombs, snipers dressed as civilians, and booby-trapped buildings. American troops have been ordered to treat all Iraqi civilians as potentially hostile and, if necessary, to fire first on suspicious targets rather than risk the lives of more soldiers.

During a routine sweep of one Iraqi town, coalition forces uncovered a large cache of American-military uniforms. American commanders believe that they belonged to a special Iraqi military unit and that they probably were destined for use in terrorist operations.

The American attempt to subdue Iraq highlights an age-old battlefield dilemma. How far should a commander go to protect the lives of civilians when in doing so he may jeopardize the lives, morale or tactical position of his own troops? It also begs the question: Why is there a double standard when it comes to Israel?

There is little to distinguish the tactics employed by Iraqi irregulars against U.S. forces and those used by Palestinian terrorist organizations against Israel. Where the situations in Iraq and Israel diverge is in the nature of the victims.

With so few British and American civilians in Iraq, it has been the U.S. military that has borne the brunt of the casualties since the ouster of Saddam Hussein's regime. By contrast, all Israelis live and die on the front lines of their conflict. Leaders of the Palestinian terrorist organizations have made it clear that they make no distinction between civilian and military targets and reserve the right to strike both with impunity.

The result is that Israeli malls, theaters, residential districts, cafes, restaurants, open-air markets, hotels, and transit buses have all been targeted for indiscriminate attack by suicide bombers' paramilitary squads. For over a decade now scores of attacks have been carried out on civilian sites by each of the principal Palestinian terror organizations.

By contrast, Jerusalem's response has been measured and discriminate, striking back at known military targets or the property of the terrorists. Those who plan and carry out terrorist strikes have been targeted for assassination. Homes belonging to terrorist families have been demolished, and restrictions have been placed on the movement of Palestinians in and out of the territories. When Palestinian civilians have been injured or killed, it is often as a result of their unfortunate proximity to an Israeli military target.

The densely packed towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza afford Palestinian terrorists ideal defensive cover from which to mount their operations. They are well aware of the difficulties Israel has in launching precision strikes against their safe houses and so have gone to great lengths to conceal them within hospitals, schools and domestic dwellings.

The American response to terror attacks in Iraq has been swift and unrelenting in keeping with the uncompromising rhetoric of the president and his secretary of defense. On June 9, after weeks of harassment by Iraqi irregulars, 4,000 members of the Army's 101st Airborne Division, backed by special-operations troops, began a sweep of towns north and west of Baghdad. The assault, termed "Operation Peninsula Strike," was the largest U.S. offensive since April and resulted in the deaths of 97 Iraqis. Of these, 70 guerillas were reported killed by U.S. forces when they surrounded and razed what they termed a terrorist training camp. Approximately 80 SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles were seized in the action along with 78 rocket-propelled grenades and numerous AK-47 assault rifles.

A day later, tanks belonging to the 4th Infantry Division were ambushed in the town of Balad, 43 miles north of Baghdad. The attackers placed land mines on the road and opened up on the tanks with small arms fire. The Americans responded by calling in AH-64 Apache helicopters and Bradley Fighting Vehicles to chase down the fleeing irregulars. The word out of the battle zone was that 27 of the attackers had been killed in the operation.

Within days, however, it was learned that these initial reports were wildly exaggerated. In fact, only seven Iraqis had died in the operation and of these, only two were combatants. The other five were a shepherd, his three sons and a son-in-law, apparently all innocent victims.

Yet, unlike Jenin, there has been no international condemnation of the

American operation, no calls for a U.N. tribunal to investigate the incident and no Security Council resolutions. The mass hysteria which accompanied Israel's raid against a terrorist stronghold has failed to materialize in the aftermath of this latest American offensive in Iraq.

Taken together, there is little that differentiates Israel's strike at Palestinian terrorists and America's efforts to control Iraqi terrorists linked to Saddam's old regime. The goals are the same, and the tactics, for the most part, are similar. And on occasion, the unavoidable happens, and civilians are killed.

Where the experience of both countries differs is in the way each is portrayed in the media and the far harsher treatment meted out to Israel by the world community. As is so often the case in the Middle East, facts matter less than the perception.

Pentagon officials have made it clear that they intend to give no quarter to those who agitate against the U.S. presence in Iraq. This includes the use of massive firepower, if need be, to overwhelm the enemy with the fewest possible American casualties. Not to be ignored is the use of fighter aircraft to deliver precision strikes against heavily populated urban targets.

By contrast, Israel specifically refrained from using strike aircraft in its operation against Jenin. As a result, its forces suffered significantly more casualties from direct fire than have American units faced with similar tactical situations.

Today, in Iraq, the shoe is on the other foot. The U.S. and its Coalition partners find themselves confronted by an enemy who, even in defeat, is prepared to use any means to carry on the fight. This includes using disinformation to incite the local population into believing that atrocities committed by Saddam's forces against his own people are actually the work of Coalition troops. The presence of over 3,000 chemical protective suits and atropine injectors secreted away in one civilian location in Iraq provide clear evidence of the ruthlessness of Saddam's regime.

Speaking to a group of reporters gathered at his field headquarters in Iraq, Lt. General William S. Wallace, Commander of the U.S. Army's V Corps, admitted at the height of the fighting that: "The enemy we're fighting against is different from the one we'd war-gamed against." His remarks were echoed by undersecretary of defense, Paul Wolfowitz, who noted that Coalition forces did not expect the guerilla attacks emanating from Basra, a city that many in the administration felt would welcome them as liberators.

The guerilla tactics employed by both the regular and irregular Iraqi forces have been indistinguishable from those used against Israel. Iraqi officials boasted openly of their intention to turn Baghdad into another Stalingrad. Similarly, Yasser Arafat and members of his senior Palestinian leadership has urged his followers to make Tel Aviv a desolation and to turn every Jewish settlement into a battleground. Both have called upon their populations to mobilize for total war, which includes the use of terror tactics when, and wherever, possible. No citizen is exempt. No method of warfare is beyond the pale.

The old Iraqi leadership, like its Palestinian counterpart, was well aware of the power of public opinion. Saddam understood that images of civilian casualties along with those of women and children resisting the military might of the "infidel" provided an evocative presence on the world's television screens. Hussein's eagerness to provide between \$10,000 and \$25,000 to the families of martyred Palestinians only encouraged a practice which many in the West find repugnant.

Like Saddam, the Palestinian leadership has no compunction about employing children as young as five or six in urban combat or holding civilians hostage as human shields. Palestinian terror organizations regularly conceal weapons inside hospitals and mosques and place military revetments in civilian neighborhoods.

It is common practice, for instance, for the Palestinians to use Red Crescent ambulances and relief vehicles to transport weapons and explosives to fighters throughout the West Bank and Gaza. Though this is a clear violation of the Geneva Convention, it is Israel that is regularly chastised in the press for interfering with Palestinian "humanitarian" operations.

In societies where ethical considerations rarely influence the course of policy, the formula for resistance can be shockingly brutal. American soldiers, unaccustomed to this type of unconventional warfare, have been forced to adjust rapidly to a new and sobering reality.

While America's political leaders have openly chastised Israel for its urban warfare tactics, U.S. military officials have openly embraced many Israeli solutions. One of these is the use by American forces in Iraq of the Caterpillar D-9 heavy bulldozer to clear away battlefield obstacles and open breaches in built-up urban terrain. Israeli designers added armor sheathing to the vehicle to make it impervious to small arms fire, shoulder fired rockets and even landmines.

Realizing it lacked this capability in its arsenal, the U.S. Army placed a rush order with Israel for an estimated 14 D-9s just months before the fighting in Iraq started. Nine of these behemoths were delivered to the 94th Engineer Combat Battalion in Kuwait.

The D-9 was a principal workhorse for the Israelis during Operation Defensive Shield and also was put to extensive use during IDF assaults on fortified positions in Gaza.

The tactics employed by U.S. commanders during the second Gulf war and the Afghanistan campaign have been remarkably similar to those used routinely by Israel: the targeted killing of key terrorist leaders using guided aerial munitions

and cruise missiles, the destruction of dual-use infrastructure, the use of unmanned vehicles in urban reconnaissance and attack roles, and the isolation of towns and villages known to harbor terrorists.

U.S. commanders even ordered the Air Force to drop cluster bombs on Iraq, a munitions system that when employed by Israel during the Lebanon war of 1982 was strongly criticized by the American government as being both excessive and indiscriminate.

Yet, ever since the tragedy of September 11, 2001, U.S. officials have looked increasingly to Israel for new technologies and doctrines used in the war against terrorism. Despite the incessant grumblings from the State Department, it would appear that many of these lessons have been absorbed and employed by both the U.S. military and law enforcement communities.

Whatever the disagreements of the past, America and Israel now find themselves united in an antiterrorist war that pits the values and institutions of the West against those of the non-democratic East. The enemy is the same. The stakes are the same. And so, too, the approach must be the same.

There is nothing that better symbolizes the common dilemma now facing the U.S. and Israel than the actions of the Palestinian Authority after it was learned that four American soldiers manning a checkpoint in Iraq had died at the hands of a suicide bomber. Within days of the killing, PA officials decided to honor the terrorist's "martyrdom" by renaming the center of the Jenin Refugee Camp, "Ali Alnaamani," after the bomber who killed the Americans.

America, it seems, must now come to terms with the new face of Jenin, not as a victimized town, but as a metaphor for a harsh new reality that for Israelis is all too familiar. (National Review Online Jun 26)

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Where Hatred Trumps Bread By Cynthia Ozick

And what rough beast, its hour come at last, Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born? -- W.B. Yeats

When, some years ago, Golda Meir contentiously remarked, "There are no Palestinians," she was historically correct and evolutionally mistaken. She was right because the people who had only recently begun to take on the name "Palestinian" were ethnically and civilizationally Arab, part of what the Arabs themselves were pleased to call, with the poetic resonance of indivisibility, "the Arab Nation." Palestine, moreover, had its origin as a term of malice, the Roman invaders' way of erasing Judea by naming it after the Philistines who warred against the Jews. And like the Palestinians today, who deny the ancient reality of the Jewish Temple on the Temple Mount, the emperor Hadrian also had the distinction of reassigning the history of Jerusalem; he dubbed it Aelia Capitolina, in honor of Jupiter.

Yet at the same time Golda Meir was mistaken: She declined to recognize a growing sectarianism rooted not merely in the bitterness of contemporary politics -- the Arab war against the Jews -- but far more comprehensively in a particularized and developing cultism. Whether the Palestinians nowadays constitute a cult or a sect or a nation within the greater Arab world is scarcely to the point. They have become a nation in their own eyes -- and, with the blessings of the road map, internationally as well. Nevertheless it is not the determination of political borders that makes a nation; a nation is defined by its traits and usages, by its heroes and aspirations -- in short, by its culture.

History, in Benedetto Croce's formulation, "is about the positive and not the negative." No one can refute the truth that the Palestinians have fashioned a culture peculiarly their own -- but one so steeped in the negative as to have been turned into a kind of anti-history. In order to deprive Jews of their patrimony, Palestinians have fabricated a sectarian narrative alien to commonplace knowledge. Although the Arab invasion of Palestine did not occur until the seventh century, Palestinian Arabs are declared to be, according to activist Salah Jabr, "the descendants of civilizations that have lived in this land since the Stone Age." With equal absurdity, other such deniers of Jewish patrimony claim a Canaanite bloodline. By replacing history with fantasy, the Palestinians have invented a society unlike any other, where hatred trumps bread. They have reared children unlike any other children, removed from ordinary norms and behaviors. And they have been assisted in these deviations by Arab rulers who for half a century have purposefully and pitilessly caged and stigmatized them as refugees, down to the fourth generation. Refugees, abetted also by the United Nations, has itself been joined to the Palestinian cult of anti-history. A people respectful of history, including its own above all, will work to fructify and invigorate life; it will not debase and vitiate it.

The salient attribute of any culture is originality and its legacies. Genius, no matter how rare, is a human universal. It sends into the world new perception and new experience, inspiring duplication: Out of Israel came monotheism, out of Greece philosophy, out of Arab civilization science and poetry, out of England the Magna Carta, out of France the Enlightenment. What has been the genius of Palestinian originality, what has been the contribution of the evolving culture of Palestinian sectarianism? On the

international scene: airplane hijackings and the murder of American diplomats in the 1970s, Olympic slaughterings and shipboard murders in the 1980s. And toward the Jews of the Holy Land, beginning in the 1920s and continuing until this morning, terror, terror, terror.

But the most ingeniously barbarous Palestinian societal invention, surpassing any other in imaginative novelty, is the recruiting of children to blow themselves up with the aim of destroying as many Jews as possible in the most crowded sites accessible. These are not so much acts of anti-history as they are, remarkably, instances of anti-instinct. The drive to live is inherent: The very mite crawling on this sheet as I write hastens to flee the point of my pen. The child who has been taught to die and to kill from kindergarten on, via song and slogan in praise of bloodletting, represents an inconceivable cultural ideal. And it is a cultural grotesquerie that Dr. Abdel Aziz Rantisi, a pediatrician entrusted by his vocation with the healing of children, is in fact a major recruiter of young suicide bombers. (When his wife was asked by a neighbor why her husband did not outfit his own teenage son in a bomber's vest, the good doctor instantly sent the boy abroad.)

Confronted by this orgiastic deluge of fanaticism and death, there are some who would apply the term psychopathological. But it is metaphysics, not Freud, that is at stake: the life force traduced, cultism raised to a sinister spiritualism -- not because the "martyrs" are said to earn paradise, but because extraordinary transformations of humane understanding are hounded into being. A Palestinian ethos of figment and fantasy has successfully infiltrated the West, particularly among intellectuals, who are always seduced by novelty. We live now with an anti-history wherein cause and effect are reversed, protection against attack is equated with the brutality of attack, existential issues are demoted or ignored -- "cycle of violence" obfuscations all zealously embraced by the State Department and the European Union.

The Road Map permits no contradiction to the Palestinians' emerging nationhood. But if it is teachings and usages that characterize a nation, then what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches out of Bethlehem to be born? *The writer, a novelist, is the author of "Quarrel & Quandary: Essays" (Knopf, 2000).* (The Wall Street Journal June 30)

The Sign of Lunacy By Rabbi Berel Wein

There is a famous hassidic story about a king and his wise adviser who discover that the grain crop of the coming year contains a substance that, when ingested, induces lunacy. Since the kingdom is wholly dependent on the local grain crop for its sustenance there is no escape from consuming this lunacy-inducing grain.

The king initially suggests that he obtain healthy grain for himself, his adviser and their families. But the adviser gently reminds the king that if everyone else in the country is insane and only he and the king remain sane, they will be judged the insane ones.

The king sighs and says, "You are right. We also will eat from the lunacy-inducing grain to be like everyone else. But let us at least put a mark on our foreheads so that when we look at each other we will realize and be reminded that we are really insane!"

I can think of no better parable to describe our current political, diplomatic and military situation. What sane country would dismantle outposts, release terrorist murderers from prison, and offer to strengthen the hands of those who are pledged to destroy it - all in the name of an illusory road map to peace that has no more chance of leading anywhere than its ill-conceived predecessors over the past 40 years, all while its citizens are subject to daily terrorist attacks?

So our government and we are insane. Good. That apparently seems to meet the wishes of most of the population here, not to mention satisfying the desires of the famous wise men of the US State Department, the UN, the EU, Russia and other assorted savants, all graduates of Chelm University, who have created such a wonderful world for us to live in.

But at least let us mark our foreheads so that we ourselves will know we are insane. Let us not stupidly state that terror won't deter us from making peace, that Mahmoud Abbas has to be given a chance, that Arafat is irrelevant, and that a Palestinian state next to us will somehow be a good thing.

And let us protest against Shimon Peres, now temporary head of the Labor Party, negotiating his own foreign policy with world leaders and at international conferences as though nothing had changed in the past decade.

We have heard and experienced all this before, and it has led only to blood and trauma beyond belief. We are therefore insane for pursuing such policies further. But since this is an insane world, we desire to be like everyone else.

Perhaps we have no choice but to follow such an insane policy, what with America and the rest of the world insisting on it. But we should at least mark ourselves so we know we are behaving in an insane fashion. Simple honesty requires at least that.

The Palestinians may not be much of a partner for peace, but they certainly are our partners in lunacy. Just as that king needed his adviser to be marked, so too the Palestinians serve as our companion in this dance of the macabre.

In an interview last week published in Haaretz (where else?) Dr. Abdel-Aziz Rantisi of Hamas stated that this struggle against the Jews would go on, if need be, for another 500 years.

Imagine that! What sane person would wish to subject his people to another 500 years of abject poverty, social disruption, "martyred" suicidal children and a permanent feeling of alienation, rejection, inferiority and hatred?

Rantisi and the Palestinians keep harping back to the Crusaders and the fact that their kingdom was overcome by the Muslims after 200 years of struggle. Well, the 13th century is not the 21st century, the Jews are not the Crusaders, and Rantisi and his murderous cohorts are not Saladin. But as long as the Palestinians are crazy enough to continue to think in 13th-century terms, there is little hope that any road map can take us anywhere. If there is no sense of the rational and no acknowledgement of the reality of the situation - only wild dreams of unrealizable claims fueled by fanatical religious beliefs - there will be no chance of accommodation here in the Middle East.

As bleak as that outlook is, it is at least close to sanity. To think otherwise is the triumph of unfounded hope over reality. And that really is a definition of craziness.

We should earnestly pray that our leaders are endowed with a sense of reality and sanity. We should pray that they not throw the dice wildly as they did in Oslo, Wye, Hebron, Camp David and Taba, in the deluded hope of appeasing the tiger. And it would not hurt our leaders to pray also for guidance, insight, strength, courage and a restoration of sanity. For as it now stands, we are all marked with the sign of lunacy. (Jerusalem Post Jun 27)

The CIA and Hamas By Joseph Farah

The Central Intelligence Agency has begun training Palestinian Authority security personnel in the West Bank in police techniques.

The rationale for this mission is to support "moderate" forces in their efforts to control "extremist" forces - such as Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, terrorist groups that rejoice in killing innocent Israeli citizens and anyone else who happens to get in their way.

But, I have a question about this program.

Let's say you wanted to train a police force in inner-city Washington, D.C., or Los Angeles. Who would you call? Would you call in the CIA? Or would you call in police professionals?

While the CIA specializes in assassinations and covert operations, I've never known it to have much expertise on policing communities.

This is one reason I am suspect of this program - just one reason.

Right now, the CIA is training 154 security officers in Ramallah and 170 in Jericho. The security personnel are part of Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas' Preventive Security Service. Abbas is the new darling of the West - supposedly a "moderate" leader who is battling Yasser Arafat for the hearts and minds of the stateless Arabs in the region.

I have a bad feeling about this. Is the CIA equipping these men with arms? What kind of techniques are they teaching? How will these newly trained forces be used?

I have no problems with destroying Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Don't get me wrong. In fact, if that is the goal of this operation, let me emphatically say I support the goal. But Hamas' strength is not in these territories. It is in Gaza. And the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, it must be repeated over and over again, is an offshoot of Fatah, the faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization founded by Arafat and the home of Abbas.

Why do I severely doubt these new forces will target an organization funded and directed by Arafat himself? That's a rhetorical question.

If the goal is the destruction of Hamas, the forces being trained are too small and located in the wrong communities. And we ought to be open and honest about the objectives. Destroying Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade is a legitimate and worthy goal. Why not be honest about it? Why should we say we are training police forces when, in fact, we are training little militias?

What guarantees do we have that these new militias will not eventually be used in battles with Israelis? It's happened before. In fact, while Arafat and Abbas poor-mouth about not having sufficient firepower to control their territories, the truth of the matter is they have more armed security personnel than many metropolitan areas with far bigger populations.

Arafat has never skimped on buying arms for his security forces. The security forces are not his police force, they are his army. They represent one of his biggest bargaining chips. He may have trouble paying them, but he has no trouble arming them. Right after filling his own foreign bank accounts with cash, this is Arafat's No. 1 priority.

So, once again, I ask the questions: Why is the CIA training Palestinian Authority security personnel? What are they teaching them? What limitations are placed on these newly trained soldier-policemen? How will we ensure they don't become part of the problem? How will we ensure they will not help the terrorists rather than fight them? For years we've witnessed shoot-outs between PA security forces and Israeli police and troops. How is peace fostered by training more bad guys? And if this is a legitimate police mission, why is the CIA uniquely qualified to carry it out? (WorldNetDaily.com Jun 27)