



Jerusalem 4:05; Toronto 4:43

Commentary...

Geneva Agreement Repeats Oslo's Mistakes

By Morton Klein

The Geneva Understandings, the agreement reached recently among a group of dovish Israeli politicians and Palestinians, repeat the mistakes of the 1993 Oslo accord by requiring Israel to make dangerous concessions in exchange for unverifiable Palestinian promises.

But the Geneva agreement is even worse than the previous peace initiative, because it comes after 10 years of constant Palestinian violations of the Oslo accords, violations which prove unequivocally that they have no interest in peace. No wonder former Labor prime minister Ehud Barak has denounced the Geneva Understandings as "delusional."

The understandings require that Israel withdraw to the indefensible pre-1967 borders, which the late Abba Eban, one of Israel's most outspoken doves, called "Auschwitz lines." The Jewish state would be reduced to nine miles wide at its midsection — approximately the width of Washington, D.C. Furthermore, only tiny modifications of the border would be allowed, and even then Israel would have to give the Palestinian Authority an equal amount of territory from within the pre-1967 areas.

The authors of the agreement argue for the immediate creation of a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Will that satisfy Palestinian aspirations and convince them to make peace with Israel? Unlikely. Syria, Iran and North Korea are sovereign states, and that hasn't made them peaceful.

Giving the Palestinians sovereignty means strengthening their ability to shelter terrorists. Israel's major population centers — Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa — will be within easy striking distance of Palestinian terrorists, who could blow up an Israeli bus and then, within minutes, reach the safety of sovereign Palestine. If Israel chases the terrorists across the border it would violate another country's sovereignty, triggering international condemnations and perhaps even sanctions.

Another flaw of the Geneva agreement is its one-sided approach to the question of timetables. There is a timetable for Israeli withdrawals, but no reference to any timetable for the Palestinian Authority to disband terrorist groups — which it calls "irregular forces or armed bands" — and no reference whatsoever to confiscating the tens of thousands of illegal weapons in the hands of terrorists. The process could drag on for years, even decades, while terrorists murder Jews and the government of Palestine insists it is "doing its best" to find the weapons.

The Geneva Understandings would divide Jerusalem. The eastern part of the city would become the capitol of Palestine. For 2,000 years, Jews prayed, dreamed and longed for the return of Jerusalem to Jewish hands. The Geneva agreement would tear Jerusalem apart and hand half of it to Yasser Arafat.

The understandings leave open the door to the Palestinians' "right of return" to the State of Israel. It allows refugees to choose among five options, one of which is settling in Israel. Israel can limit the number it takes, but the Israelis are required to "take into account the average number taken in by the third countries." Significantly, P.A. Foreign Minister Nabil Sha'ath last week branded as "unacceptable" a recent European proposal limiting the right of return to the boundaries of a Palestinian state.

The Geneva Understandings state that "Palestine shall be a non-militarized state with a strong security force." The final decision as to what weapons it will be allowed to have would be in the hands of an International Verification Group. Inevitably the group's members will include parties that have been consistently unfriendly to Israel and sympathetic to the Palestinians, such as the European Union, United Nations, Russia and the State Department — which for the last 10 years has regularly whitewashed P.A. violations of Oslo.

We would do well to remember what Henry Kissinger wrote to President Richard Nixon in 1970, concerning Egypt's violations of a cease-fire agreement with Israel: "We have an incentive to minimize such evidence, since the consequences of finding violations are so unpleasant [and] risk the blowup of our

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initiative.... Accordingly, we tend to lean over backwards to avoid the conclusion that the Arabs are violating the cease-fire."

The International Verification Group is, according to the agreement, to be dissolved after five years. At that point Israel, reduced to its narrow 1967 borders and straddled by a sovereign Palestine state, will have to trust the Palestinians to be peaceful — the same Palestinians who have spent the last three years slaughtering nearly 1,000

Jews and raising an entire generation to hate Jews and glorify mass murder.

What impact will the Geneva Understandings have on Israel?

The Geneva Understandings will weaken Israel's negotiating position. When prominent Israelis press the Israeli government to make more concessions, it sends a message to the Arabs that if they hold out longer, they will be able to extract more land and other concessions from Israel.

Whatever one's view of how to resolve issues such as borders, we should all be able to agree that undermining Israel's negotiating position, especially in the midst of a war, is simply wrong. (The Forward Oct 31)

The writer is national president of the Zionist Organization of America.

Strangers in a Familiar Land

By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

Who's country is it, anyways?

Last week, my wife decided to pay a visit to Kever Rachel, a site she had not been at for several years. Although the building housing Rachel's Tomb has been extensively renovated and is quite impressive, the experience of visiting there is a harrowing one.

The road between the border of Jerusalem and the kever itself is just 300 meters long, but is open only to bullet-proof vehicles - private cars are banned - which must proceed, snail-like, in single-file procession. Civilians are not allowed outside, so the vehicles pull up as close as possible to the tomb, at which time the visitors run like scared rabbits into the fortress-like complex.

Unfortunately, the situation at Kever Rachel is not an isolated one; at virtually every one of our Holy Places, free and comfortable access is the exception, rather than the norm. Every pilgrimage has the feel of a military mission, and it's a major struggle to safely get in - and get out.

The Cave of Machpela in Hebron - the ancient burial place of the Patriarchs and

Matriarchs - established that city as one of the four holy cities of Judaism. Visitors to the Cave encounter a heavy police and army presence, understandable in the light of numerous Palestinian terror attacks. After being thoroughly searched, Jews are permitted to pray in the "Avraham" and "Jacob" areas, but not in "Yitzchak" - the largest of the chambers - as that is reserved for Arabs only.

(On 10 days of the year, the Cave is open to either only Arabs or only Jews. It will be interesting to see what transpires this year, when the Yahrtzeit for Sarah - the first of the Matriarchs to be buried in Machpela - coincides with the end of Ramadan; both communities have requested exclusive access.)

Outside, near the entrance to the Cave, is a spot called "the Seven Steps." For many years, when the Moslems were in control of the Ma'ara complex, Jews were barred from actually entering the Cave itself. They were restricted to praying at the side of the building, on several steps that led to nowhere. There they pitifully lit candles and recited Psalms, so near - and yet so far - from the holy place itself.

The Palestinian Authority - our erstwhile "partners" in the "peace process" - have boasted that if and when they again take total control of Hebron, Jews would once more be banned from the Cave, and forced to huddle as beggars at the Seven Steps. I doubt they will get that far.

And what of the Temple Mount, Har HaBayit? The primary site of our ancient Bet HaMikdash - arguably Judaism's holiest spot - is essentially "Judenrein." Even on those rare occasions when Jews ARE allowed up there, the Moslem Wakf zealously watches them to be sure they do not move their lips in prayer or so much as bow in homage to G-d. If they do, they are rudely shown the exit and often even arrested.

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David Bar Ilan ז"ר
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While it is true that many Rabbis forbid Jews to enter Har HaBayit because of the prohibition to walk in certain sacred areas there, other Rabbinic authorities - most prominently the late Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren - ruled that there are clearly some places on the Mount that are NOT hallowed ground, and thus religiously accessible.

Our failure to visit Har HaBayit has emboldened some of our own politicians - whose ties to tradition are pragmatic, at best - to offer full control of the site to the Jew-hating Wakf. It also weakens our case that this is a Jewish treasure that must remain in Jewish hands. As one (non-Jewish) U.S. Congressman told me, "How can you Jews claim to revere this place so much, if you won't even step foot on it?"

And then there is Ke'ver Yosef, the Tomb of Joseph in Nablus. Just two weeks ago - for the second time in two years - wild mobs of rampaging Palestinians set fire to the holy place, gleefully torching any prayer books or holy texts they found there. This is where Rabbi Hillel Lieberman was murdered two years ago, when he tried to rescue Torah scrolls left behind when the IDF abandoned their post at the Tomb. Our presence there is sporadic, and fraught with danger.

All of this combines to send two, distinct messages:

The first is that the Arabs have never, and will never, respect the sanctity of Jewish holy places, regardless of world pressure. Just as the Jordanians systematically destroyed every last synagogue in Jerusalem's Old City when it fell into their hands in 1948, so will the Palestinians desecrate and destroy any place sacred to us if, G-d forbid, they wrest it from our control. And that includes the Western Wall; I have no doubt whatsoever that the Palestinians would attempt to do what even the Romans could not accomplish - turn the Kotel into a heap of rubble. Moshe Dayan's catastrophic decision to turn the keys to the holy sites over to the Wakf must be reversed, not reinforced.

But the second message is meant solely for us. We, in a sense, have become prisoners in our own homes. While our enemies roam free, and sleep the sleep of the just, we are restricted and restrained all over our land. At times I can understand why so many nations question our legitimacy in Israel; by our fear to assert full rights of ownership in our own homeland, we appear more like tenants than landlords.

If we have any sense of Jewish Pride, if we want to finally and fully establish our sovereignty over Eretz Yisrael, then we must sing, in full voice, "This Land is My Land." We must hold our heads up high and end this self-imposed national house arrest. We must take back that which is rightfully ours.

(Jerusalem Post Nov 2)

The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.

Worse than North Korea? Jerusalem Post Editorial

Over the past decade, the North Korean "people's" regime of Kim Jong-Il has starved an estimated three million of its citizens. A roughly equal number work in slave labor camps that dwarf Auschwitz in size and nearly in cruelty.

The regime has developed nuclear weapons, in violation of several agreements, and intends to sell those weapons to the highest bidder. It has lobbed ballistic missiles over Japan. It threatens a war of annihilation against its southern neighbor. It supports itself by dealing drugs and counterfeit currency. But at least it's not as bad as Israel.

That, at any rate, is the conclusion of a just-released poll of Europeans from 15 EU member states sponsored by the European Commission. Asked to rank 15 countries on how they threaten "world peace," Europeans chose their top threats thus: Israel, Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the United States.

A full 59 percent of those polled in 15 European nations ranked Israel as the top threat. What is one to make of this?

The simplest explanation cannot be dismissed. As Minister-without-Portfolio Natan Sharansky, responsible for Diaspora affairs, responded, the fact that Europe regards Israel as more threatening than nations that support and finance terrorism is "proof that behind 'political' criticism of Israel stands nothing less than pure anti-Semitism."

It is fair for Sharansky to challenge the EU to work to halt the "demonization" of Israel "before Europe again deteriorates to the dark vestiges of its past." But the poll results do not just reveal hateful and intense anti-Israel sentiment - they are incoherent.

Among the six nations ranked as top threats are two veteran democracies besieged by terrorism, the US and Israel; two rogue dictatorships, Iran and North Korea; and two former terrorist states now beginning to taste freedom, Afghanistan and Iraq. It is as if the European mind worked like this: any country that is in the headlines related to the war against terrorism, whatever side it is on and regardless of whether it is free or oppressed, is a threat to world peace.

We know that Europeans tend to regard any discussion of good and evil, or democracy and dictatorship, as "cowboy talk" and terribly unsophisticated. But now we find the European opposition to such petty distinctions taken to an opposite extreme.

How sophisticated is it for Europeans to become the modern-day equivalent of the old non-aligned movement with respect to the greatest threat of the day, the threat from militant Islam and its embrace of terrorism?

Truly sophisticated Europeans would perhaps notice that continental nihilism is getting out of hand. During the Cold War, an equally irresponsible neutralism

became fashionable in Europe between the US and the Soviet Union. But in reality, Europe remained part of NATO and the threat of being overrun by Soviet divisions was extremely remote.

Not so in the current conflict.

Militant Islam and its arsenal of terrorism will either be beaten, or it will engulf Europe as well. It does not take an enormous degree of sophistication to realize that, now that the United States and Israel have come under vicious attack, remaining neutral in the struggle will not save protect Europe over the long run.

This realization seems to have begun to sink in to the extent that even Europe is worried about Iran developing nuclear weapons. But this poll shows that whatever ability European governments have to distinguish between political fashion and reality may not extend to European publics.

The fact that so many Europeans feel that Israel and the United States are threats to world peace comparable to Iran and North Korea bespeaks a profound intellectual and ideological malaise.

Is Europe's fourth estate so confused that it would have answered the poll the same way?

In any case, European journalists should ask themselves, did we really intend to lump Israel, now suffering its fourth year of suicide bombings, along with Iran, a primary terrorism sponsor, and North Korea, a nuclear proliferator?

Ironically, the same poll found that 81 percent of Europeans thought that the EU should become more involved in Middle East peacemaking efforts.

Obviously, such polls confirm every Israeli instinct to keep Europeans as far away from any position of diplomatic influence as possible.

Memo to Europe: Demonizing a democracy under attack is no way to win friends and influence people. (Jerusalem Post Nov 3)

The Professors of Oslo By Martin Sherman

Wondrous are the ways of the Israeli establishment. The criteria by which it bestows rewards and penalties are completely inconsistent with any conceivable standards of logic or fairness.

Nowhere is this more starkly manifest than in academia.

It is difficult to forget how, in the period of giddy optimism and lofty hopes in which Oslo was conducted (or rather concocted), the overwhelming majority of Israeli academics rallied enthusiastically behind it. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced in the spheres of the humanities and the social sciences. These disciplines allegedly comprise the professional skills needed for erudite analysis of processes such as Oslo, and for sober assessment of the elements which are likely to impinge on their chances of success - or failure.

Across the country, in faculties and institutes of political science, international relations, history, strategy, and Middle Eastern studies, senior staff praised and lauded, almost without exception, the farsighted prudence and daring of the architects of the Oslo edifice. Prestigious lecturers, renowned researchers, and authoritative experts all repeatedly recited the long list of impressive benefits that would supposedly result from this bold vision. Time after time they explained, in detailed arguments, how a glowing future of peace and prosperity was about to be ushered in by this inspired initiative.

By contrast, there were others, usually those exiled to the margins of the academic establishment (and usually because of the disconcertingly dissenting opinions they expressed) who warned that the process was ill-conceived and ill-considered; that it was too hasty and too hazardous. But these warnings were dismissed with scorn, and those who issued them were blackballed and belittled - especially by colleagues of more senior academic status, and thus by implication, of purportedly higher qualifications.

However, a decade later, during which the opposing assessments underwent the test of time, the realities that prevail in Israel are far closer to the dire warnings of the spurned skeptics than to the rosy prognoses of the prominent (and popular) pundits. Today it is clear beyond any shadow of a doubt whose views were well-founded - and whose were unfounded.

But miraculously, despite the miserable failure of their professional evaluations, despite their proven inability to understand the events and processes which occurred within the field of their alleged expertise, the professional, public and economic standing of the nation's senior academic echelons seems virtually unscathed.

These false prophets continue to occupy the most prestigious - and best-paid - posts in the country's leading institutes of higher learning; they are frequent participants in the media, appearing as authoritative experts to interpret current events and to explain to the public the significance of emerging realities, realities which only a short time ago they dismissed - as authoritative experts - as totally unimaginable.

At the same time, there is surprising little change in the status of their dissenting colleagues, despite the fact that their predictions proved to entirely accurate, and despite the fact that they had demonstrated superior professional competence and greater comprehension of the developments. They remain in marginalized positions within the academic establishment,

largely devoid of material or other benefits. They continue to be largely ignored by the media for commentary on, and explication of, ongoing events and emerging realities which they had forecast with chilling precision.

These facts point to the existence of unacceptable social and ethical criteria for rewards and penalties. Such criteria threaten the very fabric of the system in which they are applied. For there can only be two explanations for the colossal fiasco of those who purportedly comprise the elite echelons of the nation's intelligentsia: either they suffer from a woeful lack of professional proficiency in their claimed sphere of expertise, or they opted to subordinate their professional integrity to the exacting dictates of political correctness - despite its ever-widening divergence from political truth.

By contrast, in adhering to their beliefs - even when this clearly entailed tangible costs in terms of social standing and career prospects, the maverick dissenters who resisted succumbing to these rapacious PC demands showed not only a substantial measure of professional competency, but also of professional integrity.

These are standards which portend ill. For under them, the untalented and the unscrupulous can expect to thrive, while the proficient and principled - who do not shrink from challenging false conventions, however popular or profitable - can expect to be penalized.

Academic freedom and the right to free expression without fear of retribution are, of course, indispensable for the progress and development of any society - especially in today's tumultuous and changing world. But when these freedoms are abused and exploited to propagate, with impunity, political agendas that defy established criteria of reason and responsibility, disaster will inevitably loom. Indeed, it is inconceivable that a professor of engineering would continue to enjoy unimpaired prestige and status if a new revolutionary theory of his regarding bridge construction resulted in a series of calamitous collapses. But this is precisely what has occurred with the Oslo-phile experts in the social sciences and humanities.

Academic accountability is a difficult topic to broach, and even more difficult to implement. It is, however, one that must be tackled in the light of the experience of the last decade. For those who reject some form of accountability in the name of academic freedom, and claim for themselves immunity from consequences of their failures, are confusing liberty with licentiousness. This interpretation of freedom is unacceptable and unsustainable; it will lead to certain ruin. (Jerusalem Post Nov 3)

The writer lectures in political science at Tel Aviv University.

"Those Jews" By Victor Davis Hanson

If only Israel and its supporters would disappear.

There are certain predictable symptoms to watch when a widespread amorality begins to infect a postmodern society: cultural relativism, atheism, socialism, utopian pacifism. Another sign, of course, is fashionable anti-Semitism among the educated, or the idea that some imaginary cabal, or some stealthy agenda - certainly not our own weakness - is conspiring to threaten our good life.

Well apart from the spooky placards (stars of David juxtaposed with swastikas, posters calling for the West Bank to be expanded to "the sea") that we are accustomed to seeing at the marches of the supposedly ethical antiwar movement, we have also heard some examples of Jew-baiting and hissing in the last two weeks that had nothing to do with the old crazies. Indeed, such is the nature of the new anti-Semitism that everyone can now play at it - as long as it is cloaked in third-world chauvinism, progressive thinking, and identity politics.

The latest lunatic rantings from Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad are nothing new, and we should not be surprised by his mindless babbling about Jews and his fourth-grade understanding of World War II and the present Middle East. But what was fascinating was the reaction to his madness: silence from the Arab intelligentsia, praise from Middle Eastern leaders ("A brilliant speech," gushed Iran's "president" Mohammad Khatami), and worry from France and Greece about an EU proclamation against the slander. Most American pundits were far more concerned about the private, over-the-top comments of Gen. Boykin than about the public viciousness of a head of state. Paul Krugman, for example, expressed the general mushiness of the Left when he wrote a column trying to put Mahathir Mohamad's hatred in a sympathetic context, something he would never do for a Christian zealot who slurred Muslims.

Much has been written about the usually circumspect Greg Easterbrook's bizarre ranting about "Jewish executives" who profit from Quentin Tarantino's latest bloody production. But, again, the problem is not so much the initial slips and slurs as it is the more calculated and measured "explanation." Easterbrook's mea culpa cited his prior criticism of Mel Gibson, as if the supposed hypocrisy of a devout and public Christian's having trafficked in filmed violence were commensurate with the dealings of two ordinary businessmen who do not publicly embrace religion. Michael Eisner and Harvey Weinstein simply happen to be movie executives, with no stake in producing Jewish movies or public-morality films, but - like most in Hollywood - with a stake in making money from films. That they are Jewish has absolutely no bearing on their purported lack of morality - unless, of course, one seeks to invent some wider pathology,

evoking historical paranoia about profiteering, cabals, and "the Jews."

Recently, Joseph Lieberman was hissed by an Arab-American audience in Dearborn, Mich. when he briefly explained Israel's defensive wall in terms not unlike those used by Howard Dean and other candidates. What earned him the special public rebuke not accorded to others was apparently nothing other than being Jewish - the problem was not what he said, but who he was. No real apology followed, and the usually judicious and sober David Broder wrote an interesting column praising the new political acumen of the Arab-American community.

Tony Judt, writing in *The New York Review of Books*, has published one of the most valuable and revealing articles about the Middle East to appear in the last 20 years. There has always been the suspicion that European intellectuals favored the dismantling of Israel as we know it through the merging of this uniquely democratic and liberal state with West Bank neighbors who have a horrific record of human-rights abuses, autocracy, and mass murder. After all, for all too many Europeans, how else but with the end of present-day Israel will the messy Middle East and its attendant problems - oil, terrorism, anti-Semitism, worries over unassimilated Muslim populations in Europe, anti-Americanism, and postcolonial guilt - become less bothersome? Moreover, who now knows or cares much about what happened to Jews residing under Arab governments - the over half-million or so who, in the last half-century, have been ethnically cleansed from (and sometimes murdered in) Baghdad, Cairo, Damascus, and almost every Jewish community in the Arab Middle East?

And what is the value of the only democratic government in a sea of autocracy if its existence butts up against notions of third-world victimhood and causes so much difficulty for the Western intelligentsia? Still, few intellectuals were silly enough to dress up that insane idea under the pretext of a serious argument (an unhinged Vidal, Chomsky, or Said does not count). Judt did, and now he has confirmed what most of us knew for years - namely, that there is an entrenched and ever-bolder school of European thought that favors the de facto elimination of what is now a democratic Jewish state.

What links all these people - a Muslim head of state, a rude crowd in Michigan, an experienced magazine contributor, and a European public intellectual - besides their having articulated a spreading anger against the "Jews"? Perhaps a growing unease with hard questions that won't go away and thus beg for easy, cheap answers.

A Malaysian official and his apologists must realize that gender apartheid, statism, tribalism, and the anti-democratic tendencies of the Middle East cause its poverty and frustration despite a plethora of natural resources (far more impressive assets than the non-petroleum-bearing rocks beneath parched Israel). But why call for introspection when the one-syllable slur "Jews" suffices instead?

And why would an Arab-American audience - itself composed of many who fled the tyranny and economic stagnation of Arab societies for the freedom and opportunity of a liberal United States - wish to hear a reasoned explanation of the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian war when it was so much easier to hiss and moan, especially when mainstream observers would ignore their anti-Semitism and be impressed instead with the cadre of candidates who flock to Michigan?

How do you explain to an audience that Quentin Tarantino appeals both to teens and to empty-headed critics precisely because something is terribly amiss in America, when affluent and leisured suburbanites are drawn to scenes of raw killing as long as it is dressed up with "art" and "meaning"?

How could a Tony Judt write a reasoned and balanced account of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict when to do so would either alienate or bore the literati?

So they all, whether by design or laxity, take the easier way out - especially when slurring "Israel" or "the Jews" involves none of the risks of incurring progressive odium that similarly clumsy attacks against blacks, women, Palestinians, or homosexuals might draw, requires no real thinking, and seems to find an increasingly receptive audience.

You see, in our mixed-up world those Jewish are not a "people of color." And if there really is such a mythical monolithic entity in America as the "Jews," they (much like the Cubans) are not easily stereotyped as impoverished victims needing largesse or condescension, and much less are they eligible under any of the current myriad of rubrics that count for public support. Israel is a successful Western state, not a failed third-world despotism. Against terrible oppression and overt anti-Semitism, the Jewish community here and abroad found success - proof that hard work, character, education, and personal discipline can trump both natural and human adversity. In short, the story of American Jewry and Israel resonates not at all with the heartstrings of a modern therapeutic society, which is quick to show envy for the successful and cheap concern for the struggling.

This fashionable anti-Semitism and anti-Israelism - especially among purported intellectuals of the Left - reveals a deep-seated, scary pathology that is growing geometrically both in and outside the West. For a Europe that is disarmed, plagued by a demographic nightmare of negative population growth and unsustainable entitlements, filled with unassimilated

immigrants, and deeply angry about the power and presence of the United States, the Jews and their Israel provide momentary relief on the cheap. So expect that more crazy thoughts of Israel's destruction dressed up as peace plans will be as common as gravestone and synagogue smashing.

For the Muslim world that must confront the power of the patriarch, mullah, tribe, and autocrat if it is ever to share the freedom and prosperity of the rest of the world, the Jews offer a much easier target. So expect even more raving madness as the misery of Islamic society grows and its state-run media hunker down amid widespread unrest. Anticipate, also, more sick posters at C-SPAN broadcast marches, more slips by reasonable writers, and more anti-Israeli denunciations from the "liberals."

These are weird, weird times, and before we win this messy war against Islamic fascism and its sponsors, count on things to get even uglier. Don't expect any reasoned military analysis that puts the post-9/11 destruction of the Taliban and Saddam Hussein's evil regime, along with the liberation of 50 million at the cost of 300 American lives, in any sort of historical context. After all, in the current presidential race, a retired general now caricatures U.S. efforts in Iraq and quotes Al Sharpton.

Do not look for the Islamic community here to acknowledge that the United States, in little over a decade, freed Kuwait, saved most of the Bosnians and Kosovars, tried to feed Somalis, urged the Russians not to kill Chechnyans, belatedly ensured that no longer were Shiites and Kurds to be slaughtered in Iraq, spoke out against Kuwait's ethnic cleansing of a third of a million Palestinians — and now is spending \$87 billion to make Iraqis free.

That the Arab world would appreciate billions of dollars in past American aid to Jordan, Egypt, and the Palestinian Authority, or thank America for its help in Kuwait and Kosovo, or be grateful to America for freeing Iraq — all this is about as plausible as the idea that Western Europeans would acknowledge their past salvation from Nazism and Soviet Communism, or be grateful for the role the United States plays to promote democracy in Panama, Haiti, the Balkans, or the Middle East.

No, in this depressing age, the real problem is apparently our support for democratic Israel and all those pesky Jews worldwide, who seem to crop up everywhere as sly war makers, grasping film executives, conspiratorial politicians, and greedy colonialists, and thus make life so difficult for the rest of us. (National Review Oct 31)

North American Aborigines and Palestinians

By Howard Gerson and Harold Waller

It is common to hear vociferous opposition to Israel's plan to erect a security fence to act as a buffer between its civilian population and suicide bombers. Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Bill Graham called the fence unhelpful.

Other commentators pressure Israel to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians without assurances of security.

These voices ring hollow when they issue from people whose daily lives are not threatened by terrorism and who live on one of the least populated continents — and whose own societies were created by displacing indigenous peoples. Moreover, Canada has been highly resistant to resolutions involving territorial concessions to aborigines.

Recently, regions of aboriginal self-government have been created in Canada, but there is certainly no talk of independent statehood or a seat at the UN for any aboriginal nation.

It is instructive and illuminating to compare Israel's experience in the Middle East to the European settlement of North America and the ongoing land disputes between descendants of European settlers and aborigines who inhabited the land long before the "discovery" of America in 1492.

A meaningful comparison ought to include such factors as the respective groups' historical, religious, or cultural ties to the land and the settlers' initial and continuing treatment of the peoples living there when they arrived. Such an analysis does not commit the sin of projecting earlier moral standards forward in time because the contemporary conditions of North America's native peoples make the comparison relevant.

Here is a comparison of the settlement of Palestine by Jews and of North America by people from Europe, and how that settlement affected Arabs in Palestine and aborigines in North America, respectively.

After living as a nation in their historic homeland for over 1,000 years until being colonized and expelled by the Romans, Jews maintained a small but continuous presence there for nearly 2000 years until the turn of the last century. Then, in 1897, responding to violent anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe, the Zionist movement, motivated by Jewish self-preservation, purchased lands from the owners, many of them absentees, to create settlements and agricultural communities.

This effectively made the Jews, the longest surviving indigenous people of the land (all others with prior claims having long since disappeared) its modern sovereigns.

Local residents displaced by this process outnumbered the Zionists and were descended from Arabs who had come to the region centuries earlier. The 1948 War following the Arab rejection of the two-state solution envisioned by the UN Partition Plan resulted in hundreds of thousands of Arab refugees, most of whom remain in refugee cities. After the 1967 Six Day War, these refugees, along with

their brethren living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, forged a political identity separate from the other Arabs and became known as the Palestinians.

On their behalf, the PLO employed terror in a vain bid to replace Israel with a Palestinian state. However, since the 1993 Oslo Accords, Palestinians have officially committed themselves to seeking a state that would live peacefully next to Israel and Israel has recognized as legitimate the goal of an independent Palestinian state.

Still, many Palestinians adhere to the original formulation and terrorist attacks have increased dramatically since Oslo.

COMPARING THE situation in the Middle East to that in North America reveals some similarities, but it is the differences that are particularly thought-provoking.

In North America, European settlement dispossessed the indigenous peoples from lands where they had lived for approximately 15,000 years. Aborigines had developed methods of surviving in a harsh climate and evolved forms of government and animistic religious beliefs that were deeply rooted in the land.

Beginning in the 17th century, Europeans with no religious, cultural or historical connection to the land, unlike the connection of the Jewish people to their historic homeland, began to settle North America as colonizers for the economic benefit of distant European nations — not as part of a movement for self-preservation which was the motivation of Zionism. This process, involving seizure of land and dislocation of indigenous peoples, continues to this day with the development of vast hydroelectric and mining projects, such as James Bay in northern Quebec.

Settlement proved highly destructive to the indigenous peoples both physically and culturally. The process by which a vastly different culture of superior power and technology subjugated and undermined the cultures of the indigenous peoples has resulted in conditions of staggering hopelessness.

Incidents of poverty, drug addiction, alcoholism, teen pregnancy, fetal alcohol syndrome and high rates of suicide and incarceration among aborigines in Canada and the US are sad reminders of the damage that has been done.

Moreover, treaties leaving the least valuable lands to the native peoples were habitually dishonored, while the aborigines were forced to live on reserves. Even though the Europeans' intent was not necessarily malicious, North American societies failed and continue to fail to come to terms with this history.

Indeed, the settlers have been lionized for taming a harsh environment, bringing Christianity to native peoples and building the foundations of our modern societies.

In contrast, until recently, West Bank Palestinians enjoyed a standard of living that was among the highest in the Middle East, as well as greater freedom of expression and religion than elsewhere in the Arab world. In fact, vital statistics show that the average living conditions among West Bank Palestinians have surpassed not only those of the North American aborigines but also compare favorably to those in neighboring Arab states.

While the poverty of Gazans is severe, they are afflicted with fewer of the adverse social and life-debilitating conditions than are experienced by North American aborigines.

Moreover, unlike North American society, the Jews in Israel are both indigenous to the land and sovereigns over it and have repeatedly expressed a willingness to accept a Palestinian state on lands comprising part of their historic homeland.

Given this, why does the refusal in North America to address native peoples' land claims and desire for self-government receive less attention than do Israel and the Palestinians? That faraway conflict generates an almost interminable commentary in the press, among intellectuals, and in governments.

In sharp contrast to the consideration given to the claims of North American native peoples, we find American presidents, the European Union, the UN and others fully engaged to address the Palestinian demand for statehood. Why do we treat so differently these two historical examples, each involving disputes over territory, claims for self-determination and grievances of oppression at the hands of newcomers?

While a dispassionate and constructive approach to the dilemma facing Israel and the Palestinians is required, too many commentators readily engage in self-righteous condemnations of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians or regard Israel's responses to terror as morally equivalent to the suicide attacks against its civilians.

When suggesting solutions for Israel, North Americans ought to start by abandoning any claim to moral superiority. Indeed, the history of the settlement of North America by Europeans and the re-settlement of Palestine by Jews discloses that far more damage has been done to North American indigenous peoples than to Palestinians. North Americans might then consider how they would react if native peoples pursued their land claims with terror campaigns in our cities. (Jerusalem Post Nov 4)

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