



ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel
A service of the Bet El Twinning Committee of
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

Commentary...

The Jewish Refugees By Caroline Glick

The Quartet's envoy and former World Bank president James Wolfensohn is reputed to be quite a deal maker. One of the deals he made as the Quartet's envoy to the region was the purchase by wealthy American Jews of greenhouses owned by the Jews who were expelled from Gaza this past summer and their transfer as a gift to the Palestinians. Unfortunately, while the greenhouses were indeed abandoned by the Jews as the IDF threw them off their land, and they were transferred to the Palestinians, the Jews never received any money. According to the farmers, the World Bank claims that much of the equipment was looted from the greenhouses before the IDF withdrew and as a result they weren't paid.

This story is one of many that were never reported in the aftermath of the expulsions. Those expulsions, and the withdrawal of IDF forces that followed have enabled Gaza to be transformed into a new base of operations for global jihad. But aside from the foreseen strategic consequences of the withdrawal of IDF forces from Gaza, the expulsions have caused a humanitarian disaster for Israeli society. Hundreds of families have been living in hotel rooms in Jerusalem for the past three months. The largest group of refugees - some 350 families with another 150 on their way - lives in the temporary city of Nitzan.

When one enters Nitzan, at first glance it looks like a success story. The roads are largely paved. Each family lives in a red-roofed mobile home with grassy lawns all around. But dig just slightly beneath the surface and you see you are in a refugee camp. The fiberglass walls of the homes can be torn apart by a stray soccer ball. Children play in dirt plots next to moving bulldozers. Sewage runs openly between the homes. And those homes - 60 square meters for families of five and under, and 90 square meters for families with more than three children - are cramped and tiny. Most of the families in Nitzan had lived in homes that averaged 200 square meters in Gaza.

When they arrived at Nitzan many of the refugees realized that their furniture was unsuitable and so they were forced to buy new furnishings. Although each family's belongings were packed in containers, you will see no containers in Nitzan. The Defense Ministry, which runs the camp, only allows people to have their containers for 10 days. Anyone who does not remove their container after 10 days is fined. And anyway, the summer heat combined with less than professional packing by Defense Ministry contractors left the contents of some 20 percent of the containers ruined.

THE COMMUNITIES in Gaza were self-sustaining. Most of the residents worked where they lived. Eighty percent of the residents of Nitzan, who farmed, taught in schools, owned shops and worked in the local councils, are unemployed today. The massive unemployment, together with the trauma of having been forced out of their communities, has taken its toll on the residents. Divorce rates are skyrocketing. Parents, who spend much of their days watching television and climbing the walls, have lost control of their children.

The child refugees of Gaza are perhaps the worst hit by the expulsions. Violence among the youths is high and rising. Drug abuse, which was negligible in their communities in Gaza, is on the rise. Two empty mobile homes were locked after they were found to contain drug paraphernalia. So the party moved elsewhere. Nitzan is prime territory for drug dealers looking for easy prey.

Children and youths have an almost psychotic fear of policemen and soldiers. "When they see soldiers or policemen these kids start shaking uncontrollably and become hysterical," explains Eliya Tzur, the head of the One Heart volunteer organization that has been helping the residents get reestablished.

"The Education Corps of the IDF wanted to send officers to come to the schools to talk with them. I warned them not to," Tzur, a 24-year-old college student from Jerusalem explains. "They said they weren't afraid of hostility. I explained that it wasn't hostility that I was worried about, but violence. These

kids look at soldiers and see tyrants. I don't know what or how long it will take to change this."

The irrationality of the youths' reaction to the army and police is matched by the financial irrationality of many of their parents. They received NIS 50,000 from their overall reparations immediately after they were thrown out of their homes. Rather than save it, many bought cars they didn't need. The government deducts monthly

rent for the mobile homes from the rest of the restitution package, which averages NIS 600,000 per family. The residents, without jobs, are eating away the possibility of ever having the money to build new homes for themselves.

The government has met all these problems with indifference. The Labor Ministry has yet to set up an employment office in Nitzan. There is only one social worker assigned to the Potemkin town. Much of the property of the regional council in Gaza was disbursed to other communities. Four thousand books from Gush Katif's library are stacked up in one of the mobile homes, locked away. There is still no mikve. There is no grocery store. Buses come through twice a day and a taxi ride to the grocery store costs over NIS 100. Absurdly, when the residents moved in there was an IDF watchtower set up in the middle of the development for no reason. There are guard towers at its four corners, but they are unmanned. Theft is rampant.

One Heart organized workshops on everything from job searches to resume writing to teaching parents how to assert their authority over their children. Its volunteers scour the surrounding cities of Ashkelon and Ashdod to try to encourage businesses to employ the residents. The volunteers, who sleep on bare mattresses in an afterschool homework center they organized for elementary school children, also organized a community center and clubhouses for teenagers. When they tried to bring in a mobile home for a pizzeria, the Defense Ministry refused to allow it. Only Ministry contractors can bring in mobile homes - even though each mobile home, for no apparent reason, costs the taxpayers NIS 400,000 and the mobile home One Heart planned to bring in cost only NIS 120,000.

As the residents sink into impoverishment, someone is apparently getting rich at Nitzan. It would be interesting to know how the contracts were awarded.

INCOMPETENCE alone doesn't explain the Sharon-Peres government's treatment of the refugee population that it senselessly created. Today the refugees still want, most of all, to build new communities that will allow them to stay together with the people they have lived with all their lives. But while Sharon and Peres and Ehud Olmert grandly discuss plans to develop the Negev and Galilee, these people, who want to develop both, are shunted aside and left to disintegrate.

In its systematic demonization and criminalization of the Israelis of Gaza that preceded their expulsions, the government seemed to be begging for these people - who heroically withstood some 6,000 mortar and rocket attacks, thousands of shootings and hundreds infiltration attempts on their communities over the past five years - to do something that would prove their deprecators right. When these patriots left peacefully, deciding not to disengage from their country, Sharon and his spinmeisters were left with their tongues hanging out. The brutal indifference with which the refugees are treated today seems tinged with more than a slight hint of vindictiveness.

"Perhaps the most terrible thing about Nitzan," Tzur says, "is that we at One Heart have so much work to do here. We're just a bunch of students. Why are we necessary?"

But there's the rub. For the past 12 years the governments of Israel have been playing poker with our lives and well-being by granting land, guns and legitimacy to terrorists. The only thing that has kept this country going is the fact that the Israeli people have refused to collapse.

Once again, the vacuum created by government negligence, incompetence and vindictiveness is being filled by private citizens. One day, perhaps we will have a government that is worthy of us. In the meantime, we have no choice but to work around those who are elected and paid to serve us. (Jerusalem Post Nov 22)

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Folly in Gaza: The Sequel By P. David Hornik

Under intense American pressure, Israel recently signed with the Palestinian Authority a new deal that effectively ensures a steady flow of weapons and terrorists into Gaza. From there they will make their way to the West Bank, thereby guaranteeing that the "cycle of violence" will continue far into the future on terms detrimental to Israel.

The architect of the deal is Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. Rice came to Israel after suffering a defeat at the conference on Arab democracy in Bahrain. Egypt had blocked a draft declaration by insisting that Arab governments keep control over money transfers to NGOs and democracy groups. But while Egypt is hard to bully and insists on what it considers its interests, Israel under Prime Minister Sharon and Defense Minister Mofaz—even after the disengagement that was supposed to give Israel "moral capital" to resist further American pressure—easily submits to the will of the U.S. That works to America's advantage: When meeting with Arab recalitrance, the U.S. can always save face with a few shoves of its "sole democratic ally."

By all accounts, Rice had no patience for any further haggling on security matters. She demanded a deal posthaste. She even stayed one extra night in Israel and got the deal by Tuesday, before heading off to join President Bush in South Korea. Nothing that has happened in Israel in recent years seems to have convinced her or the president that Israeli security concerns are anything more than tiresome nuisances. Nor has anything dissuaded Sharon and Mofaz that bowing to the U.S. and propitiating it is, as always, the cardinal Israeli interest, easily trumping sanity in the security domain.

It goes nearly without saying that Israel's autonomy as a sovereign and democratic state is irrelevant when there are larger matters at stake. Matters such as demonstrating America's ability to keep the Palestinians happy. The new agreement itself makes clear how little, more than half a century after securing its independence, Israel has been able to establish, even in the eyes of its U.S. ally, that it is a genuinely sovereign entity entitled to all the security prerogatives this entails.

That much is evident in the new agreement. It contains astonishing clauses that compromise Israel's basic rights in a way that no country, democratic or non-democratic, would tolerate—except, that is, for a small, outcast Jewish state dependent on a single powerful supporter.

For instance, at the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza, incoming traffic of Palestinians and others from the Sinai is to be "monitored" by Egyptians on the one side and Palestinians on the other. Monitoring the monitors will be a contingent of EU personnel who, as EU officials have already made clear, will not serve as policemen, border guards, or customs officers; this will leave them little role except as passive rubber stamps. Considering that the EU has consistently backed Palestinian terror against Israel since the 1970s, one could not rationally have expected anything better.

The agreement also calls into question, yet again, the wisdom of Israel's recent disengagement from Gaza. Back in the days when the disengagement was being sold as a clever maneuver, whereby Israel would leave Gaza but seal it off as a security threat, the assumption was that Israel would maintain a presence on the Gaza-Sinai border—an obvious conduit for terrorists and weapons. This was a reasonable demand given that the Palestinian Authority, of which Gaza is part, is not a sovereign entity, but is anarchic, infested with terrorists, and has shown more than a little hostility to Israel.

But now that the Palestinians and Egyptians, with American backing, have stipulated that not a single Israeli security operative is to remain on this border, Israel has settled, instead, for surveillance cameras at the Rafah terminal. These will send video feeds to a liaison office at Kerem Shalom, which is in Israeli territory south of Gaza. Incredibly, the liaison office—to repeat, on sovereign, supposedly undisputed Israeli territory—is to be staffed by Israeli as well as European and Palestinian personnel. In this theater of the absurd, Israel not only loses the right to a presence on the Gaza-Sinai border; it also loses the right independently to monitor the monitors by video feed on its own territory without being monitored there, in turn, by other Europeans and Palestinians!

Then there is the matter of the Karni crossing from Gaza to Israel. Since the disengagement, 35 Gazan export trucks have gone through it daily. Under the agreement, this will increase to 150 by the end of this year, and at least 400 by the end of 2006. But the agreement also stipulates that bus convoys, by December 15, and truck convoys, by a month later, will pass through Karni to the West Bank. "The result is easy to see," former Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday, noting that "Kassam rockets and mortars will be transported through Judea and Samaria to be launched at Israel. . . . The biggest danger is that the Palestinians would be able to transfer the Strella [anti-aircraft] missiles, which are already in Gaza, to the area overlooking Ben-Gurion Airport and threaten planes landing and taking off."

He went on to note what would seem obvious to anyone genuinely concerned with Israel's well-being (whether or not that includes the Bush administration): "You can't treat the Palestinian Authority like a properly run

state. It's a failing regime that does not fight terror, and the security ring around it cannot be loosened." Indeed, it cannot be. But it has been. And not just loosened, but almost obliterated. Starting next month, each day dozens of buses and trucks will be crossing sovereign Israeli territory, carrying people and weapons from one part of an anti-Israeli terror entity to the other.

The problems with the Rafah and Karni crossings, however, pale in insignificance compared to the agreement's coup de grace: Israel has given the Palestinians a green light to start building a seaport in Gaza. Back in the misty past, less than four years ago, Israel created some hoopla over its capture of the Karine A cargo ship, which was attempting to smuggle a large consignment of weapons and explosives from Iran to Gaza. It need not have bothered. Under the new deal, the Karine A will be a harmless fishing boat compared to the munitions, certain to include long-range missiles sooner or later, that the Palestinians will be able to bring in routinely.

In the short term, the U.S. may feel that it has given the Palestinians breathing space and shored up its faltering image in the Arab world. In the long term, the new agreement advances the cause of Islamic terror and puts a loyal but obsequious ally in great jeopardy.

The writer is a freelance writer and translator living in Jerusalem who has contributed recently to The Jerusalem Post, The American Spectator Online, and Israeli news-views websites. (FrontPageMagazine.com Nov 17)

Prime Minister Paul Martin Is No Friend of Israel

By Alastair Gordon

Prime Minister Paul Martin is no friend of Israel. Even by the standards of politics, Paul Martin's willingness to lie to a Jewish audience, especially when it is certain that he will be caught out a few days later, beggars the imagination.

On November 13, Paul Martin spoke to an overwhelmingly Jewish audience at the General Assembly of the United Jewish Communities (UJC) in Toronto. He said [view video 1,2]:

"Canada has for many years supported Israel's rightful place in the international community, including at the United Nations. And we will continue to press for the kinds of reforms that will eliminate the politicization of the United Nations and its agencies, and in particular, the annual ritual of politicized anti-Israel resolutions." [my emphasis]

Three days later, Canada voted in the 4th Committee of the UN General Assembly on this year's ritual of 9 "politicized anti-Israel resolutions". Unbelievably, Canada voted against Israel 7 times, abstained once, and supported Israel only once.

Does that mean that Paul Martin lied to a Jewish assembly, or had he just forgotten to instruct his foreign minister as to the government's new direction? To answer that question, we need to go back a year to November 30, 2004 when Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, Allan Rock, announced that "resolutions [against Israel] are often divisive and lack balance" and hinted that he would improve the situation. Those who heaped praise on this foreign policy breakthrough didn't seem to notice that, the following day, Canada voted against Israel 5 out of 6 times on that year's first batch of "politicized anti-Israel resolutions", including one declaring that Israel has no legal, jurisdictional or administrative rights to any part of Jerusalem [3].

Is there a pattern here? Thunder with indignation before a Jewish audience as if the travesty is someone else's doing, and then continue the anti-Israel agenda unchanged. It worked in 2004, so why not try it again in 2005?

Did the cheering UJC audience notice that the only specific act of terrorism that Paul Martin highlighted in his speech last Sunday was the killing of Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish assassin? He spent more time on this item than any other. The ongoing atrocities committed by Palestinians against Israelis did not warrant so much as a mention.

Paul Martin's UJC speech is not the first time he has lied to a Jewish audience. In his speech at the inaugural parliamentary dinner of the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA) on November 1, 2004, he declared: "We must respond to every act of anti-Semitism! ... We must vigorously combat hate! ... THIS IS NOT OUR CANADA!!!"

For this, Martin received a standing ovation from the mostly Jewish audience, despite the fact that he had failed to respond in any meaningful way to growing anti-Semitism. When Mohamed Elmasry declared on television his support for killing all Israelis over the age of 18, Martin was silent. When Sheikh Younis Kathrada called Jews "the brothers of monkeys and swine" and incited Muslims to die as martyrs killing infidels, Martin was silent. When David Ahenakew, a recipient of the Order of Canada, praised Adolf Hitler and the Holocaust and referred to Jews as "a disease", Martin was silent. When Palestinian thugs and their supporters denied Ehud Barak the right to speak at Concordia University, Martin was silent. Martin was worse than silent when he personally appointed Yvon Charbonneau, a long-standing and well-known anti-Semite, to be Canada's ambassador to UNESCO. Was Paul Martin telling the truth when he said he would "respond

to every act of anti-Semitism", or was he playing the Jewish community for fools?

Equally instructive is the pattern of media releases and statements from the Prime Minister and his Foreign Minister. Reviewing Paul Martin's official statements [4] and news releases [5] for the past year, one cannot miss his condemnations of terrorist attacks in Jordan, India and Egypt, yet regarding the many attacks against innocent civilians in Israel, Paul Martin is silent. But if killing Israelis does not reach his threshold for a statement or news release, concessions by Israel to Palestinian interests, such as the Gaza withdrawal, bring enthusiastic praise. And there is his official expression of sorrow over the death of Yassir Arafat, one of the worst killers of Jews in history. But Paul Martin's finest moment had to be sending Pierre Pettigrew to lay a wreath at Arafat's grave, while failing to likewise honour the thousands of Israeli victims of Arafat's terror.

Would a friend of Israel have as his government's official policy that Israel has no jurisdiction over Jerusalem, including recalling all Canadian passports that had "Jerusalem, Israel" as the place of birth? Would a friend of Israel support the bogus Palestinian "right of return" that he knows would destroy the Jewish state? Would a friend of Israel send over \$300 million to the Palestinians [6] whose ruling charter declares that "Judaism is not an independent nationality. Nor do Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own" and call for the destruction of the state of Israel? Every Canadian, including Paul Martin, should take a few minutes to read the Palestinian National Charter, and realize that its genocidal goals are being financed by self-proclaimed "friends of Israel" using Canadian tax dollars.

In December 2004, the Paul Martin government announced its usual \$10 million annual funding of UNRWA [7]. When Marc Gold of the Canada-Israel Committee rightly asked the government to reconsider this funding in light of a massive body of evidence linking UNRWA to Hamas terror [8], the government actually paused to consider the evidence. After a few weeks, having seen videos showing UN ambulances being used by terrorists and hearing an admission by the Secretary General of UNRWA that Hamas operatives are on its payroll, our government made the decision to continue the funding. Paul Martin can view the evidence just as he can read the Palestinian National Charter, but his only explanation has been that Israel wants the funding to continue. One has to ask if our foreign policy is made in Ottawa or Jerusalem, and why Canada has no reasons of its own for knowingly allowing our tax dollars to pass into the hands of the terrorists. One also has to ask if we are hearing reality or diplomatic doublespeak.

As discussed in CCD's recent testimony before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs [9], Paul Martin rewarded Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas for breaking every commitment he made. Abbas came to office promising (1) to disarm Palestinian militants, (2) to end incitement in schools and media, and (3) to end glorification of suicide bombing. On that understanding, Prime Minister Martin promised an additional \$12.2 million in May of this year. Since receiving those Canadian tax dollars, President Abbas has reneged on all his commitments. Specifically, (1) Abbas's Foreign Minister publicly declared in June that the PA will not disarm Hamas and other terrorist groups under its jurisdiction; (2) Palestinian textbooks and PA-controlled media that deny the existence of Israel and preach the destruction of "the Zionist entity" have not changed [10]; and (3) Abbas himself, speaking to a group of high school students and educators in Gaza, glorified suicide bombing when he declared, "What has been achieved here [in Gaza] is due to the martyrs". The consequences? In September, our Prime Minister rewarded Abbas's bad faith with another \$24.5 million from Canadian taxpayers.

The lies of Paul Martin and the list of anti-Israel actions by his government are more than anyone has the patience to read. The real question is, why? Why does this government have such a blatantly anti-Israel foreign policy, a policy so important that our Prime Minister is willing to sacrifice his own credibility to maintain it? There may be a number of factors, but the one unalterable reality is that there are over 650,000 Muslims in Canada and only around 350,000 Jews. In the crude calculus of electoral politics, that means that Jewish concerns will get little more than lip service, especially considering that the Liberals have historically retained the Jewish vote no matter how they undermined Israel.

If the Jewish community wants to change this government's complicity in the existential threat facing Israel, they must demand that our politicians -- from all parties -- not only mouth platitudes about Israel, but act with honour and courage to support our only democratic partner in the Middle East. Sermonizing to Jewish audiences about anti-Semitism and then endorsing through silence incidents of Jew-hatred and incitement endangers every Jew in Canada. Professing to be a friend of Israel, and then demonizing Israel at the UN and sending tax dollars to groups dedicated to Israel's destruction should no longer be acceptable to any Jewish voter. Paul Martin speaks the right words to Jewish voters, but his actions consistently undermine Israel and strengthen her enemies.

Enough, already! Paul Martin is no friend of Israel.

The writer is president of the Canadian Coalition for Democracies.

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- [8] Canada-Israel Committee calls for investigation of UNRWA funding and its links to terror http://www.cicweb.ca/news/release_100404.cfm
- [9] CCD presentation before Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs <http://canadiancoalition.com/forum/messages/10869.shtml>
- [10] Analysis of hatred and incitement in Palestinian schoolbooks - June 2005 <http://canadiancoalition.org/forum/messages/10848.shtml> (Canadian Coalition for Democracies Nov 18)

When Seymour met Condi By Isi Leibler

Until recently, Diaspora leaders all agreed that on matters relating to security, Israel and the Diaspora are not equal partners. It is Israeli citizens who will face the consequences of decisions made by their elected government, whereas Diaspora Jews will not be called to make sacrifices on these issues. Simple morality should therefore presuppose humility and restraint, especially at a time when Israelis face a resurgence of terrorism and when most of the world is critical of Israel for seeking to protect itself from neighbors who shamelessly orchestrate suicide bombings and rocket attacks.

I was therefore astonished to learn that when Seymour Reich, president of the left-leaning Israel Policy Forum, and his associates met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, they actually urged her to pressure Israel to make concessions over the Gaza border crossing and other issues. They reportedly told her that by adopting a tough policy against Israel, "she would gain the support of Jewish Americans on both sides of the aisle."

Reich shamelessly told the media that "I have no doubt that we bolstered the secretary of state's instincts and strengthened her opinion that aggressive American involvement was needed to achieve practical results."

Of course Reich's group also added the mantra that the Palestinian Authority should be pressured to meet its commitment to fight terror.

Reich must surely be aware that Mahmoud Abbas has repeatedly reiterated his determination not to disarm Hamas, stating instead that at a later stage, he might even co-opt Hamas to the Palestinian security apparatus so that the terrorists would then also receive salaries from the international funds set aside to promote the Palestinian economy.

We know that Condoleezza Rice and James Wolfensohn subsequently bludgeoned a pliable Dov Weisglass into conceding ground on security issues, despite appeals from Israel's top military echelons not to submit to such hazardous demands. The defense experts had warned that under the new arrangements Palestinians would be able to smuggle heavy weaponry, including anti-aircraft missiles, into Gaza and the entire area could also be infiltrated by terrorists from abroad. The Sharon government's submission to these pressures is unprecedented and could exact a heavy price in Israeli blood in the future.

YET A former head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, who considers himself a Zionist, has the unmitigated gall to boast that he and his group helped to convince the secretary of state to take aggressive action to bring Israel into line; that he assured Condoleezza Rice that exerting such pressure would result in strong support from American Jews.

This is truly a sad day for Israeli-Diaspora relations, especially when in the absence of any meaningful concessions by the Palestinians, the government of Israel should have been able to rely on the support of American Jewry in their efforts to ensure the security and welfare of its citizens.

TWO AND half years ago, I publicly reprimanded Edgar Bronfman, the president of the World Jewish Congress, when on the eve of a meeting between President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, he co-signed a letter with former secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger calling on the president to reject Israel's intention to build a "separation wall." Without consulting any of his WJC colleagues, Bronfman also took it upon himself to urge the president to exert pressure on Israel and apply "the same

straightforwardness in his meeting with Prime Minister Sharon" as he had with the Palestinian leadership.

A few days later, Bronfman went further and commented that had the Palestinians concentrated exclusively on killing Jews over the Green Line, avoiding attacking Jews inside Israel proper, they would have achieved a Palestinian state and enjoy the support of the entire world. Jewish outrage forced him to apologize.

This behavior is reminiscent of the exploitation of politically naive liberals by communists during the Cold War. Like their present-day counterparts, they were flattered, manipulated, and duped into adopting public profiles designed to influence public opinion in the interests of the Evil Empire.

THERE IS obviously something sick in the state of World Jewry when purportedly mainstream leaders feel that they can lobby freely against the security policies of the democratically elected government of Israel. If this sort of behavior is to be tolerated we may as well write off our one remaining ally - Diaspora Jewry.

I can only hope that American Jews will vent their anger at the hutzpa of those purporting to represent the Jewish community who lobby their administration to pressure Israel on security issues.

But the ultimate responsibility for this sorry state of affairs rests with successive Israeli governments and the Foreign Ministry which, for over a decade, abdicated its traditional role of liaising and guiding Jewish communities in relation to Israeli affairs.

Today that no longer prevails and, setting aside the fact that ambassadors are now usually selected on the basis of cronyism or seniority rather than merit, most Jewish community leaders no longer retain the close liaison with ambassadors that was formerly taken for granted. The rot had its genesis with the Oslo Accords when Israeli leaders told Diaspora Jewish activists that in view of the "irreversible peace process" their unified pro-Israel activities had become virtually superfluous. This void paved the way for partisans on both the right and left to indulge lobby for their narrow causes. Now, in the midst of a new election season - both here and in the US - this partisanship seems to have reached a new zenith as the Israel Policy Forum unashamedly lobbies the State Department to exert pressure to bring Israel to heel even if that entails riding roughshod over our security requirements.

This can still easily be reversed. The reality is that despite the enormous erosion and chaos which has occurred in Israel-Diaspora relations over the past decade, a mainstream Jewish leader is still required by his constituents to be a supporter of Israel - at least on matters relating to its security - and to behave accordingly.

If the government and Foreign Ministry were to vigorously take action to restore the relationship with Diaspora Jewish leaders, it would still find highly enthusiastic partners. And leaders like Reich who cross red lines would rapidly discover that most Jews, irrespective of political affiliation, would not tolerate such irresponsible behavior.

There is absolutely no room in the Jewish mainstream for actively canvassing against the security related policies determined by the democratically elected government of Israel. (Jerusalem Post Nov 23)
The writer chairs the Diaspora-Israel relations committee of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, and is a veteran Jewish international leader.

The Blame Game Continues By Jonathan Tobin
The 'Muslim street' and Western intellectuals share a passion for scapegoating Israel

It came as little surprise that when a gang of Islamist terrorists blew themselves up in three Jordanian hotels earlier this month, that many in the Arab and Muslim world were quick to blame Israel.

As a New York Times correspondent who was, no doubt, sent out to the pavement of a Jordanian town in search of the mythical "Arab street," discovered, there was no shortage of locals willing to see Israel as somehow at the bottom of a horrific crime committed by Muslims in the name of their interpretation of Islam.

Like the seemingly imperishable canard that no Jews died in the Sept. 11 attacks because their brethren were the perpetrators, it didn't take long for the denizens of the "street" to reassure each other that it was the Jews who massacred a wedding party and other innocent Arabs.

The fact that Al Qaeda had already claimed responsibility didn't really diminish the willingness to blame Israel, nor did the capture of one of the members of the gang whose bomb had not exploded.

The immutable rules of the Middle East cannot be altered for facts, logic or even the faintest trace of common sense. Since the revival of Jewish sovereignty in a part of the otherwise all-Arab region is a terrible humiliation for Muslims, anything can be blamed on it.

But the truth is, many in the West no longer pay much attention to the ravings of the "street." That's why the enormous growth of anti-Jewish incitement and hate education (specifically in Palestinian schools) has always been a minor issue for the American foreign-policy establishment and many

of the other bright lights who opine on the region for a living.

But this week, we got a hint of yet another cause for the lack of outrage over the canards about Israel that have become so ingrained in Arab political dialogue. The clue came during the discussions over the negotiations about the opening of border crossings to Gaza that were concluded this week.

During the course of the talks, Israel sought to limit and control entry to Gaza while the Palestinians, strongly supported by the United States and the European Union, sought to minimize Israel's involvement.

In the end, Israel buckled and, despite some symbolic gestures aimed more at bolstering Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's domestic support than anything else, the Palestinians got their way.

But what was really interesting about the commentary on the talks was the way mainstream American publications were willing to paint Israel's position in the worst possible light.

According to Philadelphia Inquirer foreign-policy columnist Trudy Rubin, the fault for the failing Gaza economy was solely Israel's. She wrote on Nov. 9 that even after Sharon's unilateral withdrawal of every last Israeli soldier and settlement, Gaza was a "huge prison."

Unless, Gazan "tomatoes and peppers" were freed from the heavy hand of Israeli oppression and allowed to proceed unhindered to market, peace was surely doomed, she claimed. But the question of how entry to Gaza would be managed was not merely one of economics or logistics; Israel's interest in access to and from Gaza stems directly from the fact that the area is an armed camp bristling with terrorist arms and explosives.

Even though Palestinian demands for an Israeli pullout have been satisfied, terrorists are still trying to infiltrate the border to cause mayhem and bloodshed in the parts of "occupied Palestine" that even the United Nations recognizes as the territory of the State of Israel. And the indiscriminate firing of rockets from Gaza into Israel has only paused because of the direct threat that Israel will reoccupy the area.

But the harbingers of a new intifada that come so closely on the heels of the old one that it's hard to tell where one stopped and the other will begin does not impress the likes of Rubin, or even American officials who are otherwise sympathetic to Israel, such as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and administration Mideast envoy James Wolfensohn.

Their focus in the talks seemed to be entirely on pressuring Israel to give in, so as to pump up the Palestinian economy. That is, on the face of it, a reasonable argument since development of the territories is rightly thought of as integral to the peace process.

But what Rice and Wolfensohn forgot amid their posturing about the controls imposed on access to and from Gaza was that the only real obstacle to economic progress comes not from Israel, but from the Palestinians themselves.

If there were no Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israel - and the terror groups were not using the Israeli withdrawal and cease-fire to strengthen their "military positions" - then there would be no Israeli demands for tight controls on the borders.

But just as the State Department is prepared to keep looking the other way about the Palestinian Authority's continued use of mosques, newspapers and its television station to continue incitement of hatred against Jews and Israel, just as damning is the willingness of some in the press to ignore the reality of Palestinian intentions and behavior.

Rubin, in the course of her polemic against Israel's ultimately unsuccessful attempt to halt the use of the Gaza-Egypt crossings for importation of arms and terrorists, was even willing to falsify the recent history of Palestinian tomato production, of all things. While carrying on about the dire fate of those wilting vegetables - which were being forced to wait in the sun while wicked Israelis refused to let the flow of Palestinian traffic proceed unimpeded - she forgot to mention a salient fact. Though she noted that Wolfensohn had donated \$500 million of his own money to purchase the greenhouses built by now-evacuated Israelis, she forgot to mention that most of those facilities that were purchased by the cash of the envoy and other high-minded American Jews simply went to pot. Rather than profit from the jobs and the produce that the Israeli-built farms could give them, Palestinian mobs destroyed most of them.

Contrary to Rubin, the moral of the story wasn't that Israelis are causing Palestinian tomatoes to rot because of foolish fears of having their families slaughtered. The moral is that Palestinians would rather starve than make peace. So ingrained is the reflex to cast guilt on Israel that even the most reasonable of demands for security are automatically put down as heartless.

All of which means that columnists and officials who blame Israel for this situation aren't a lot better than the idiots on the "street" who blame it for the Amman bombings.

The fact that they will, unlike the Arab mobs, lament the Israeli casualties that will inevitably result from their diplomatic labors on the Palestinians behalf does not make them less culpable. Nor will it provide the scapegoated victims with any but cold comfort. (Jewish World Review Nov 23)

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