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Commentary...

Answering Ehud Olmert

By Michael Freund

At a time of rising anti-Semitism and ongoing Palestinian terror, there is nothing quite like a healthy dose of diplomatic defeatism to further dampen the nation's spirits.

This past Friday, Industry, Trade, and Labor Minister Ehud Olmert did just that when he formally joined the chorus of despair, singing the blues about Israel's future in an interview with Yediot Aharonot.

Turning his back on his ideological upbringing, Olmert came out in support of unilateral withdrawal from most of Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip, arguing that Israel has "no choice" but to turn over large portions of the Land of Israel to its foes.

The former mayor of Israel's united capital even hinted at a readiness to divide Jerusalem, suggesting that some of the city's eastern neighborhoods might be placed under Palestinian control.

"The choice is between the line presented by [Yossi] Beilin, and the right-wing line that I am presenting," Olmert said. "These are the two options. There are no others."

And then, without a trace of irony, Olmert asserted that his scheme was one of "hope," as though withdrawal and retreat should be causes for optimism, rather than concern.

Predictably enough, the remarks have caused a ruckus, if only because Olmert is considered one of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's closest confidantes, and is unlikely to have spoken so bluntly without first getting a green light from his boss.

Construction and Housing Minister Effi Eitam of the National Religious Party rightly condemned Olmert's comments, while his colleagues in the Likud denounced his willingness to give in to Palestinian terror.

But perhaps the most egregious aspect of Olmert's remarks is his insistence on inflicting upon people of Israel despondency and gloom, falsely maintaining that they will have to choose between withdrawal from the territories and withdrawal from the territories, as though there were no other possible options.

That is not leadership – it is fear-mongering and frailty. Olmert's ideas are neither revolutionary nor bold. They are little more than a repackaging of Oslo, one that will bring neither peace nor security in their wake.

The fact of the matter is that there is an alternative. There is a way out of the current morass. But it is one that requires faith in the justness of our cause, something that Olmert seems to have abandoned long ago.

After 10 years of retreat, it is time to try something else. Instead of running away from the problem, as Beilin suggests, or building a wall to hide from it, as Olmert would like, Israel must at last do what it should have done long ago: reassert complete military control over Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Topple the Palestinian Authority, arrest and try its leadership, and once and for all declare that this land is rightfully ours and we shall never again abandon it.

In other words, take it back, take it all back, and don't ever give it up again.

For if, as Olmert himself suggests, Israel must decide unilaterally what its future borders will be, and if, as he also states, irrespective of where that border is drawn, Israel will face harsh criticism from abroad, then we have little to lose by going all the way and taking back what we should never have given up in the first place.

Those preaching withdrawal seem to forget that we have been there and done that, and look where it has gotten us. We turned over land to Palestinian control in the Oslo Accords, the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, Oslo II, Hebron and Wye. We have repeatedly trodden down the path of concessions, but it is a path that led only to more violence and greater bloodshed.

Those, such as Beilin and Olmert, who nevertheless insist on retreat, are asking us to believe that our neighbors' appetites will be satiated on or near the 1967 border. They are willing to displace hundreds of thousands of Jews in the territories, tear away parts of our ancestral homeland, shrink the size of the state and endanger its future, all in the dubious belief that it will bring about a possible end to the conflict.

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More importantly, though, they are asking us to toss aside the Zionist dream, to tear up the promises of the prophets, and to forgo the heartland of our ancient patrimony. In effect, they are asking the Jewish people to declare defeat. Is this their idea of leadership?

In his memoirs, Ronald Reagan describes the mood prevalent in America in the run-up to the 1980 presidential election. "During the summer and fall of 1980," he writes in

An American Life, "there were many problems facing our nation but to me none was more serious than the fact America had lost faith in itself."

As Reagan saw it, there was only one possible way out: "We had to recapture our dreams, our pride in ourselves and our country, and regain that unique sense of destiny and optimism that had always made America different "

"If I could be elected president," he said, "I wanted to do what I could to bring about a spiritual revival."

That, after all, is what leadership is about – revitalizing the spirit of a nation, reinvigorating its sense of purpose, and laying out a path for it to follow as it moves toward its ultimate destiny.

We, too, have such a destiny. But only if we are guided by confidence and conviction, rather than capitulation and despair, can we ever hope to possibly achieve it. (Jerusalem Post Dec 10)

The writer served as deputy director of Communications & Policy Planning in the Prime Minister's Office under former premier Binyamin Netanyahu.

An Indefensible Resolution Jerusalem Post Editorial

When he served as ambassador to the UN, the late Chaim Herzog charged that the organization's attitude to Israel "belonged in Alice's Wonderland. If Alice wandered into UN headquarters, she would only have to wear a Star of David in order to hear the imperious 'off with her head' at every turn." What took place in the General Assembly Monday, only adds yet another illustration to Herzog's argument, unfortunately every bit as cogent today, as when he first made it some three decades ago. Nothing is seemingly more immutable than the UN's incredible anti-Israel double standards.

The General Assembly demonstrated its bias when it voted by a whopping 90-8 majority to refer the security fence to the International Court of Justice. Israel, desperately resorting to the most non-violent defensive measure against relentless terror, is thereby put on trial, while mass-murderers cast themselves in the role of the outraged plaintiffs.

But if any silver lining can be detected in this latest episode of the General Assembly's annals, it is that, unequivocal as the anti-Israel majority was, it was less massive than to which we have become accustomed.

No less than 74 nations chose to abstain, and many others were no-shows for the session. In all, less than half of the 191 assembly members voted against Israel. This didn't result in an Israeli victory, but as Ambassador Dan Gillerman noted, it was at least "a moral victory." In practical terms Israel can't view the vote as heralding an imminent change in its fortunes at the UN. Yet even the Arab world's automatic majority runs up against some limits when it distorts the fabric of the international system in its drive to vilify Israel.

Qualitative analysis of who voted for the Arab resolution and who did not is further enlightening. Israel was supported by the US, Australia, Ethiopia, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, and Palau. The longlist of abstainers include the entire EU contingent, along with all other European countries and all other members of the Free World. No democracy supported the Arab initiative.

The resulting picture is instructive. The dividing line seems to be that which separates democracies from dictatorships. Those who voted for turning the fence issue to the ICJ for deliberation were on the whole autocracies, which succumbed to the tyranny of tyrannies.

The ultimate salvation of the Free World and its ability to foil the threat of terror inevitably depend on its courage. Opting for the sidelines, instead of openly siding with a fellow democracy, is more of a cop-out than a show of resolve and determination to stand up to dictatorial apologists for terror. The abstainers effectively admitted that it was wrong to so politicize the UN and the ICJ, but they dared not forthrightly oppose it.

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However, given Israel's past unhappy experience at the UN, we must not scoff at the moral victory, small and unsatisfactory though it is in real terms.

It can be regarded as a poor man's consolation, especially when we consider the surreal viciousness of the debate which preceded the vote and which in essence constituted a compilation of anti-Israel invective. The Syrian ambassador went so far as to accuse Israel of "massacring Palestinians for sport." This followed Gillerman's introduction of photos of nine-year-old Tomer Almog, murdered in October at the Maxim restaurant outrage in Haifa, and of his brother Oran, left functionally blind.

Gillerman reminded the assembled representatives of member nations that they had recently overwhelmingly adopted a resolution for the "protection of Palestinian children," but that Israel was unable to secure a vote on protecting "Israeli children. We were told that Israeli children, deliberately targeted by terrorists, would not receive the Assembly's protection. Now we are told we cannot protect them ourselves."

In this sense, the UN's decision to declare the fence illegal was on par with its notorious and ultimately repealed "Zionism equals racism" resolution. For if Israel, despite the Geneva Convention's explicit permission granted to build fortifications, is not allowed to even passively defend its children, then it is being denied the right of self-defense. A nation that may not defend itself has no right to exist. Israel will never acquiesce to such a verdict, which has sullied the body in which it passed and those who did not oppose it more than it does this nation. (Jerusalem Post Dec 10)

Who Speaks for Israel? By Caroline B. Glick

Two Jews were brutally murdered in Paris in the week that followed the torching of the Jewish day school Merkaz HaTorah in the Paris suburb of Gagny.

In an interview with Boston's Jewish Advocate, French Jewish novelist Nidra Poller says that the two murders, of a 23 year-old Jewish DJ and of a recently widowed Jewish shopkeeper, were played down by the French press. In the case of the murdered young man, whose throat was slit and whose body was mutilated, the alleged assailant, a young male Muslim, reportedly told his mother after the act, "Now I can go to paradise. I've killed my Jew."

Poller relates that the French authorities have released the man from custody, claiming that he is insane and therefore unfit to stand trial. There have been no arrests in the case of the Jewish shopkeeper. Her ten year-old daughter and a customer, who hid in the shop's storeroom during the attack, said they saw two North Africans fleeing the scene. Nothing was stolen from the shop. The French authorities have not classified the murders as acts of anti-Semitism.

This week, an 11 year-old Jewish boy was brutally beaten by Muslim students at their elite Paris secondary school. While beating the boy, the Muslim students taunted him yelling, "We'll finish Hitler's job."

Although the headmaster says he has filed a lawsuit against the Muslim youth, they have yet to be expelled and no criminal charges have been brought against them. Speaking to The Jerusalem Post, the headmaster explained, "The issue is very complex. There is obviously a victim that should be protected, but there are no admissions and no witnesses willing to testify. We're in a dead-end."

In a speech before diplomatic correspondents in Tel-Aviv this week, the EU's ambassador to Israel said that he was "not willing to agree" that there has been a rise in anti-Semitism in Europe. At the same time, Ambassador Giancarlo Chevillard said he did know for a fact that there has been a rise in attacks against Muslims.

Chevillard's remarks gibe with the EU's refusal to publish its own commissioned report on anti-Semitism in Europe. That report raised the hackles of the EU bureaucracy by showing that the main source of anti-Semitic violence in Europe is the Muslim community, and that the mainstream press encourages anti-Semitism through its distorted coverage of the Palestinian terror war against Israel.

How does Europe defend itself against the growing evidence that the Continent has reverted to its pre-Holocaust levels of anti-Semitism? Aside from denying the truth, it relies on the good offices of sympathetic Israelis. In doing so, Europe is guilty of a kind of subversion.

This is not to say that foreign governments aren't free to make their views of Israeli politics known to Israelis, just as Israeli politicians are welcome to make their views of foreign governments known to foreign audiences. But it's a very different matter when these governments seek to manipulate our politics by funding, publicizing and lending their prestige to the work of Israelis sympathetic to their views.

This is all the more illegitimate given that Yossi Beilin, along with Amnon Lipkin Shahak, Nehama Ronen, Avrum Burg and Amram Mitzna, are all failed politicians. They have all been rejected by the voters, repeatedly. Their constituencies are as imaginary as their "peace treaties." They are as comparatively marginal to the political landscape here as, say, the Free Democrats are in Germany.

It would be interesting to know how German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder would react if the Bush administration (as part of its commitment to free-market economics, of course), began funneling millions to front groups connected to that party. One guess is that the Chancellor would be screaming bloody murder.

Yet this is precisely what the Europeans involved in the Geneva initiative are

now doing vis-a-vis Israel. Indeed, they are doing worse. Employing the rhetoric of peace, they are working steadily to undermine the legitimacy of Jewish statehood.

On the specious ground that "the whole world has a stake in Mideast peace," they are purchasing a seat at the Israeli cabinet table. Who put them there? Certainly not the Israeli electorate. Instead, they are creating a virtual constituency consisting of the media, foreign leaders, the UN, Left-wing NGOs and a handful of unpopular Israelis to shape the terms of our government debate.

The problem, however, goes deeper than European interference. There is also the problem of our willingness to let them interfere. Ever since we won our statehood 55 years ago, successive Israeli governments have failed to grasp that Israel is truly sovereign. We hear competing voices among the Jewish people, both in Israel and the Diaspora, and often fail to internalize the fact that these voices, however well funded, do not represent the collective will of the Jewish people embodied in the sovereign decisions of the Jewish state. They do not speak for us. As our collective voice, the government has the sole right to set our policies and defend our rights.

And defend us it must. Over the past three years, it has become absolutely clear that any thought we might have had that the establishment of the State of Israel would be the death knell of millennia of anti-Semitism was misplaced. Two thousand years of Christian Judeophobia and 1400 years of Muslim hatred did not dissipate in 1948. We see this in the daily libels against Israel in the European press and at the UN General Assembly. And we see it in the constant incitement to the annihilation of the Jewish people throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds. The fact is inescapable: Anti-Semitism remains one of the most potent forces in the world today.

Whether he knows it or not, Beilin serves anti-Semites in Europe and the Arab world as a fig leaf. It is he who allows them to advance their anti-Israel agenda with immunity. And this is nowhere as important as in the US. It is in Washington, where traditions of anti-Semitism never took firm root, where Beilin and his colleagues seek to advance their aims. And they are succeeding.

Within the administration, Beilin is being received by the State Department and – more remarkably – by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz.

Then there are the Democrats. With next year's presidential election before them, US Senators such as Diane Feinstein and Frank Lautenberg and US Congressmen such as Rahm Emmanuel and Darryl Issa are seeking to turn the Geneva initiative into their party's official Middle East agenda. In other words, they are using the fig leaf of Beilin to adopt one of the most anti-Israel documents in recent memory into their ostensibly pro-Israel party platform.

As the surge of anti-Semitism in what was until recently considered civilized Europe shows, much has not changed since 1948. Now, as then, there are millions of people who believe that their interests are advanced by anti-Semitism. Now, as then, Jews are under attack not because of anything that they have done, but because they exist.

But at the same time, something did fundamentally change 55 years ago. We Jews are no longer powerless. We have our government now to defend us. By setting the record straight on who speaks for the Jews, and by going on the offensive against our enemies, our leadership can protect us and strengthen our fellow Jews under attack in Europe.

Yossi Beilin may speak for Europe. He does not speak for Israel. It is past time for those who do to make themselves heard. (Jerusalem Post Dec 5)

Time to Come Home By Rabbi Stewart Weiss

I vividly recall my first visit to Turkey in 1987. I had come as part of a group of 150 Rabbis from the United States and Europe - the largest Rabbinic delegation to visit Turkey in that country's modern history - in order to participate in the re-opening of the Neve Shalom synagogue. A year earlier, Palestinian terrorists had murdered 22 worshippers at Shabbat services, sending the Turks - Jew and non-Jew alike - into a frenzy.

As our plane landed, just shy of the terminal, we were surrounded by tanks, and troops in full battle dress. A unit of soldiers boarded the plane, submachine guns in hand. The unit's commander welcomed us to Istanbul and thanked us for coming, and pledged to personally guarantee our safety during our brief stay.

He then introduced a representative of Istanbul's Jewish community, who waxed poetic about the wonderful relationship Turkey's Jews had enjoyed for centuries during both the Ottoman and Attaturk eras. As a welcome "gift," each of us was handed our own leather-bound copy of the Turkish version of the Armenian issue, vehemently denying that more than a million Armenians were massacred during World War I by the Turks, thus providing Hitler with a precedent for the larger Holocaust to follow.

Having been sufficiently indoctrinated, we were then permitted to disembark and go about our business.

All this comes back to me now as I witness the bloodshed of Neve Shalom II, seventeen years on. Same synagogue, same Islamic murderers,

same death toll, same paranoid rush by Istanbul's Jewish community to declare unending loyalty to its benevolent hosts. Yet beyond the obvious toll of human suffering, there is another tragedy at work here. For behind the bluster, patriotic statements being made by Istanbul's Jews, lurks a thinly concealed, deep-seated insecurity and complex identity crisis endemic to the larger Jewish Diaspora.

Listen to the words - and what lies BETWEEN them - of Lina Filiba, executive vice-president of the Turkish Jewish community, as she criticizes the Jerusalem Post's reporting of the bombing: "We appreciate our ties with Israel, but we are citizens of Turkey. By focusing overwhelmingly on the JEWISH aspect of the tragedy, it (the media) separates the Jews out from an event that in Turkey was seen as a joint tragedy. We are being exploited; these remarks are raising anti-Semitic feelings in the Turkish population."

Methinks the lady, alas, doth protest too much. In between trying to convince us that the Jews are equal, respected, contributing members of an overall tolerant Moslem society, she is projecting her inner fear that Turkey is not completely immune to outbreaks of anti-Jewish behavior, should the situation present itself. This kind of double-edged neurosis is common among small Jewish communities living under protected status. One recalls the massive portraits and bold public statements of unswerving loyalty to Saddam expressed by Iraq's few remaining Jews; or the glowing testaments of support still periodically mouthed by Iranian Jews trapped behind the mullahs' iron gates. And past visitors to the Soviet Union, in pre-Perestroika days, will remember the wall-to-wall "prayer for the government" billboards which hung prominently in Moscow's scattered synagogues, lavishly praising the beneficence and good will of Russia's Communist regime.

These accolades were uttered more out of fear than fealty, the reaction of a proud people gone stiff-necked through too much looking over their shoulders.

Now, I have no doubt that Turkey's Jews are treated well by their hosts. Skyrocketing intermarriage rates aside, the Jewish community of Turkey is an outstanding one, with an admirable infrastructure of religious services and distinguished leaders. For good reason, beautiful Turkey is the prime destination of vacationing Israelis. And I am equally certain that the suicide bombers who targeted Istanbul sought to attack Turkey's modern, secular democracy - and its strong political and military ties to the West - as much as its Jewish minority.

But all that should not obscure two primary messages for Jews which emanate from this latest episode of the global terror war.

The first is that we have become prime targets everywhere, from Manhattan to Mombasa; not only because we share values with the "great Satan" America, but for the simple reason that we are Jews, and as such are subject to the irrational, mindless anti-Semitism of racists from Athens to Kuala Lumpur to Ramallah.

Anti-Semitism remains, pure and simple, a deadly disease - not merely a political or religious philosophy - for which no cure has yet been found.

Once this is understood, the second message becomes obvious: Only the State of Israel can provide a lasting, secure homeland for the Jews. With all the manifold challenges confronting us, we can at least aspire to create a society here in which no Jew will be persecuted on the basis of his or her Jewishness; a place in the sun where our actions - and not our history or pedigree - will ultimately dictate our fate.

Peace and security may yet be a long way off for our beleaguered nation. But if there is any chance of achieving it at all, it must be within the confines of a country where Judaism is taken for granted, rather than merely tolerated.

The writer is director of the Jewish Outreach Center of Ra'anana.
(Jerusalem Post Dec 10)

EuroCash By Rachel Ehrenfeld

What does the Palestinian Authority do with European money?

When the international donors' conference convenes in Rome next week to consider a new contribution of \$1 billion to the Palestinian Authority, it is likely to continue to ignore the PA's ongoing funding of terrorist activities.

According to Hannes Swoboda, a member of the European parliament's ad hoc working group on aid to the PA, "No wrongdoing or misuse of funds by the Palestinian Authority, no instances of funds being used for terrorist activities instead of infrastructure development, have been proved."

His denial followed that of the European Union's external-relations commissioner, Christopher Patten, who on July 17 wrote in the Financial Times that "[t]he EU has worked throughout the bloodstained months of the Intifada to keep a Palestinian administration alive and to drive a process of reform within it.... At every step, the EU's help was made conditional on reforms that would make a viable Palestinian state a reality one day and in the short term make the Palestinian territories a better, safer neighbor for Israel."

By the time Patten and the members of the European parliament (MEPs) had made these statements, the Israeli government had already given them volumes of captured Palestinian documents providing evidence that the PA was using EU funds to pay for homicide bombings, the upkeep of terrorists, weapons, and bomb-manufacturing plants; vacations, travel, scholarships and medical treatments for members of the Palestinian leadership and their families; and — not least — Chairman Arafat's personal bank accounts.

How is it possible that the International Monetary Fund, CBS, the BBC, and even the PA itself were all able to document the PA's misuse of funds while

Commissioner Patten failed to acknowledge it?

Despite thousands of the PA's own documents — some signed by Yasser Arafat himself — Patten, Swoboda, and many other MEPs not only continue to deny that European tax money has funded Palestinian terrorism, but also claim that the PA documents, authenticated by American, German, and Israeli experts — and even by the Palestinians themselves — are "forgeries produced by Israel."

The IMF report "Economic Performance and Reforms under Conflict Conditions," released last September in Abu Dhabi, was based on the same PA documents that the Israeli government had earlier provided to Patten and the European Parliament. The report concludes that at least 8 percent (\$135 million) of the PA's annual budget of \$1.08 billion is being spent by Arafat at his sole discretion — and does not even take into account Arafat's control of 60 percent of the security-apparatus budget, which leaves him with at least \$360 million per year to spend as he chooses. In addition, the report states that \$900 million in PA revenues "disappeared" between 1995 and 2000, and that the 2003 budget for Arafat's office, which totaled \$74 million, was missing \$34 million that Arafat had transferred to pay unidentified "organizations" and "individuals."

Patten and many of the MEPs constantly deny that EU funds have been misused. They refuse to acknowledge that the PA leadership is corrupt and uses its aid money to fund terror, choosing instead to grant the PA ever more aid. According to the IMF report, much of this money continued to be misappropriated even under the PA's reform-oriented finance minister, Salem Fayyad.

The EU's moral standing and fiscal accountability are also questionable. For the ninth year running, the EU Court of Auditors refused to approve the EU's \$100 billion annual budget because the auditors could not account for 90 percent of the funds to the PA. The MEPs claimed that it was not the EU but the IMF and the CIA that supervised the PA budget. But the IMF has publicly denied this responsibility many times, and there is no evidence that the CIA has had anything to do with EU funds to the PA.

As for evidence that aid money was used to pay homicide bombers, Swoboda insisted that "there is no proof that any terrorist acts they committed were ordered by the PA — they may have been acting alone. Only if the DNA of the suicide bombers will match the DNA of those who received euros will we accept it as evidence."

Swoboda's comments did not come as a complete surprise. A week earlier, in an interview with Palestinian journalist Kawther Salam, Swoboda had said, "There was recently an opinion poll in Europe which places Israel among the top rank of the countries seen as creating dangers for peace. I think that we should take the results of this poll seriously."

In the meantime, the Belgian police announced that the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), together with Belgian and German police, began investigating the payment of EU aid money to the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades — one of Yasser Arafat's Fatah terrorist groups, listed by the EU as a terrorist organization.

It seems that the stronger the evidence of EU complicity in funding Palestinian terrorism, the stronger is the MEPs' refusal to acknowledge their role. Their anti-American and anti-Israeli attitudes explain their willingness to give ever more funds to Arafat while pressuring Israel to compromise its national security. Moreover, the EU continues to support other Islamist terror organizations dressed as NGOs, such as Hamas, that operate throughout Europe.

Further aid payments should cease until the PA explains how it spent more than \$6 billion in aid during the last decade, and returns the missing funds to the Palestinian people. But, incredibly, the World Bank last week gave an additional \$15 million in aid to the PA, and, over the weekend, the EU awarded the PA \$40 million for "reforms and emergency economic aid."

History gives us little reason to think the PA will stop funding terrorism. Maybe it's time to hold European donors legally accountable for the return on their investment. (National Review Dec 10)

*The writer, author of *Funding Evil: How Terrorism is Financed — and How to Stop It*, is director of the American Center for Democracy.*

Believing Isn't Seeing By Evelyn Gordon

The international enthusiasm for Yossi Beilin's virtual peace plan that was showcased at last week's gala ceremony in Geneva encapsulates one of the great mysteries of the current conflict:

How is it that so many intelligent people worldwide still believe that the Palestinians' goal is statehood and "an end to the occupation," and that peace would arrive if only Israel would accede to these desires?

Granted, official Palestinian spokesmen say so at every opportunity. Yet statehood and an end to the occupation is precisely what Ehud Barak offered three years ago. And the Palestinians rejected it — not once, but several times.

At Camp David in July 2000, Barak offered the Palestinians approximately 90 percent of the territories, including parts of east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians not only refused; they launched a terrorist war in

response.

In December 2000, then US president Bill Clinton upped the offer to 95 percent of the territories and additional portions of east Jerusalem, including the Temple Mount.

Barak agreed; the Palestinians said no again.

At Taba the following month, Barak sweetened the offer still further, to 97 percent.

And the Palestinians still said no.

The Palestinians offered two explanations for their repeated rejections. One is that they were unwilling to settle for less than 100 percent of the territories. In other words, given a chance to obtain just what they claim they have always wanted – statehood and an end to the occupation – they deemed the sufferings of occupation preferable to conceding a mere 3 percent of their territorial demands.

It is hard to believe that any thinking person could take this claim seriously – especially now that the Palestinian Authority has refused to endorse even Beilin's Geneva Accord, which gives them 100 percent. Yet both the Israeli Left and virtually the entire international community appear to have done so – apparently in order to avoid having to take the second claim seriously.

This claim was that the Barak-Clinton offer was unacceptable because it failed to include a "right of return" to Israel for both the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and every single one of their numerous descendants.

In other words, statehood and an end to the occupation were not enough: No agreement was acceptable unless it also included the right to eradicate the Jewish state by flooding it with enough Palestinians to democratically vote it out of existence.

A PEOPLE that truly desired to end the hardships of foreign rule would not reject repeated offers of statehood. Rather, it would act as the Jews did in 1947, when the UN partition plan offered them a state on a mere 10 percent of the territory originally slated for a Jewish national home under the 1922 League of Nations Mandate.

The offer did not even include Jerusalem – the city to which Jews have prayed for more than 2,000 years, and the home of Judaism's holiest sites, including the Temple Mount and the Western Wall. In short, it was incomparably worse than Barak's offer to the Palestinians. Yet the Jewish leadership accepted it, believing that in light of the Jewish people's sufferings, even a tiny state was better than nothing.

One of the reasons for this sense of urgency was the hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees created by the Holocaust. Israel, which numbered 800,000 people in 1948, dealt with this problem by absorbing an incredible 687,000 immigrants during its first three years of existence – whereas the Palestinians, far from desiring statehood in order to alleviate their refugees' suffering, have refused to even accept a state unless Israel first agrees to absorb the refugees in their stead.

One could argue, as President George Bush does, that Palestinian leaders have ignored their people's true desires, and therefore, what is needed is a new Palestinian leadership.

Unfortunately, this thesis is refuted by virtually every poll of Palestinian public opinion ever conducted. A poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in July 2000 found that an overwhelming 83 percent of Palestinians supported the rejection of Barak's offer at Camp David, while only 6 percent felt that Yasser Arafat, who made this decision, should have been more conciliatory. Indeed, Arafat's repeated rejections of statehood never dented his status as the most popular Palestinian leader, and the most recent PSR poll, conducted in October, found his popularity at its highest level of the last five years.

Repeated polls have also found that half of all Palestinians believe the goal of the current violence is "to liberate all of historic Palestine" – i.e. to eradicate the state of Israel. This finding has remained constant through a series of polls conducted by the Jerusalem Media and Communications Center, including the latest, which dates from October.

A poll conducted last spring by the Pew Global Attitudes Project was even more striking, finding that 80 percent of Palestinians agreed with the statement: "The rights and needs of the Palestinian people cannot be taken care of as long as the State of Israel exists."

Finally, the fact that large majorities of Palestinians consistently support suicide bombings within Israel – PSR's October poll found that 75% of Palestinians supported the bombing of the Maxim restaurant in Haifa, which killed 20 civilians – hardly bolsters the theory that most Palestinians really want to live in peace with Israel.

Nevertheless, one could at least argue that Bush's theory has yet to be definitively refuted. The same cannot be said for the theory espoused by the Israeli Left and the rest of the world: that even without a leadership change, the conflict could be settled if Israel would only end the occupation and give the Palestinians a state.

It seems the old truism that actions speak louder than words has been forgotten where the Palestinians are concerned. (Jerusalem Post Dec 9)

Expect More Sanctimony By Barbara Amiel

Under Paul Martin, Canada is unlikely to support Israel at the UN

Each year, the Israeli foreign ministry puts out a book listing all the UN resolutions passed on Israel, Palestine and the Middle East. It dutifully sets out the text and records the votes. If inclined, you can see how Brazil or Kiribati voted on Resolution ES-10/10: "Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory." (Brazil voted to condemn Israel for its "the attacks committed by the Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian people," Kiribati went missing that day and Canada abstained.)

The latest book, for 2001/2002, makes riveting reading. Every resolution begins with a little throat clearing in italics. The General Assembly is either stressing, reaffirming or possibly bearing in mind. Throat cleared, it speaks very forcefully and demands, condemns and, when it is having a hissy fit, also condemns. Were a Martian reading this book, he would conclude that the wickedest country on earth was Israel, followed by the United States. He would feel that the sole object of Israel's existence was to persecute the Palestinians and he would have no awareness of the malevolence of the Palestinian Authority or the names of the terrorist groups it funds and which kill Israeli civilians as they work and play.

He would not know, for example, the background to Resolution 10/10, which voices its deep concern at "grave breaches of international humanitarian law committed in the Jenin refugee camp . . . by the Israeli occupying forces." He would not know that the Palestinian inhabitants of Jenin found themselves being used as human shields for bomb factories and terrorists. Not being familiar with the Geneva Convention, he would not know that Article 51 outlaws such tactics and makes them a war crime. A Martian would think that Israel laid "siege on the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem" simply because it wanted to destroy some holy sites. He would not know that the church was first occupied by Palestinian militants who desecrated the interior.

Other resolutions would lead him to believe that only Palestinian children were in danger in the Middle East, because Palestinian children are the only ones in the world the UN has voted to protect by name (Res. 57/188). He would assume these resolutions were fair because decent countries like Canada did not vote against them. And if he looked further into UN resolutions, he would assume that the troubled continent of Africa was comparatively free of atrocities since condemnations of countries such as Zimbabwe or Congo are virtually unknown, no matter how much blood is spilled.

Israel is the only member state denied permanent membership in any of the UN's five regional groups. It should be in the Asian group, but Muslim countries have kept it out. As did various countries of the "Western Europe and Others Group" which kept it out until 2000, when they granted Israel temporary membership of four years in an uncharacteristic spurt of warmth after the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. But this temporary membership, following 42 years of isolation, came with restrictions. Israel is the only country that cannot take part in most group votes, including those on human rights and racism. Algeria, China, Cuba, Zimbabwe, Libya and Saudi Arabia can pass judgment at the UN High Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, but not Israel. China, home of forced abortions, and Iran and Sudan are key members of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, but not Israel. The Jewish state of Israel, created by the UN, is, as professor Anne Bayefsky of Toronto's York University has written, "disqualified, blackballed or left standing in the halls of UN bodies everywhere." The Israeli ambassador might as well wear the yellow star.

One wonders what Canada has done about this because it makes such an unholy fuss about being the world's goody-goody at the UN -- we are the world's moral referee in the great game between good and evil. If our leaders were less sanctimonious, one would feel less outraged. And because Israel has become a synonym for the U.S. and its values of Western liberal democracy, it assumes increasing importance. My own support for Israel, for example, is not based on my identity as a Jew. Rather it is because I support Western values.

In a few weeks time, Canada will have a new Liberal prime minister. But to believe that there will be fundamental differences in Canada's UN policies, one would have to believe that there was a streak of anti-Israeli feeling or even anti-Semitism on the part of Jean Chrétien. Whatever one thinks of him, this is not a fair assumption. It is more a question of Chrétien having read the temper of his Liberal party and the views of the core group of people that support it. To assume that a new leader will particularly want to disregard that temper or reshape it is an assumption both unwarranted and dangerous.

To believe that our country can forgo a sturdy opposition party simply because the new leader will be better strikes me as poor politics on any level. Without a credible opposition, democracy rots. One demands, stresses and requests, one endorses, decides and calls for citizens to come to the aid of a real opposition. We've voted yes or sat on the fence to so many bad things, surely we could vote yes on this. (Macleans Dec 1)