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Who's in Center

Herbert Zweibon

Israeli politicians are in a rush to claim "the center" in the coming elections. When Prime Minister Sharon left the Likud to establish the Kadima Party, it was because he felt confident he could obtain the support of the "political center." He seems to have been on to something. As a party based on the popularity of a single individual, Kadima should have collapsed without him, but instead thus far seems to have maintained the lead it had with Sharon at the helm. According to Hebrew University political science professor Reuven Hazan people are tired of left and right and want "something pragmatic in the middle."

The Likud is being urged by professed well-wishers to "out-center" Kadima. In *The Jerusalem Post* Aryeh Green, describing himself as "a business consultant active in Israel's public diplomacy efforts" urges newly crowned Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu to "bring the Likud back to the center."

Netanyahu needs no urging. He made purging the party of members not fitting the "centrist" image his first "mission" as Likud head. He sought to prevent Moshe Feiglin, who had come in third in the race for party leadership, from even appearing on the party's list of Knesset candidates. For Netanyahu the problem with Feiglin was that he was clearly not prepared to relinquish Judea and Samaria to Israel's Arab enemies. (In the end Feiglin voluntarily withdrew his candidacy, saying he preferred to build up his movement of resistance to surrender rather than to serve as another rubberstamp Likud Knesset member.) The National Union Party and the National Religious Party made overtures to the Likud to unite opponents of retreat in an electoral bloc - Netanyahu turned them down, fearful of being "tainted" by the right wing.

Likud "insiders" report that the party will be introducing a new "peace plan" to counter its post-Sharon image as a party of hardliners. As for Labor, its new head Amir Peretz, a hard core leftist on economic issues, promises, if elected, to produce a peace agreement within four years (the identical promise Labor made in 1992 and "fulfilled" by Oslo).

But what does being in the "center" mean? How does one define a "centrist" solution to the problems confronting Israel? What is a centrist response to Iran, on the verge of possessing a nuclear arsenal, with an apocalyptically inspired leadership dedicated to wiping Israel off the map? What is a centrist policy to preserve a "united Jerusalem" (to which Likud and Kadima are supposedly dedicated)? What is a centrist policy on Arab terror? A centrist policy on the across-the-board dedication of Palestinian Arab leaders, Fatah as much as Hamas, to destroy Israel?

Judging from the last decade, a centrist policy is surrender cloaked in euphemisms worthy of the ancient Greeks, who sought to appease the Fates by calling them Eumenides (the kindly ones). In the first post-Oslo decade surrender was called "peace," which has now morphed into "disengagement." It is hard to know which is more delusional - the notion that the Arabs are prepared to make peace or the notion that Israel, by unilateral retreat, can cut itself off from its threatening Arab neighborhood. As Steven Plaut has remarked, what does Israel think its Arab neighbors will do on the other side of the barrier it is constructing? Take up knitting? As the aftermath of Israel's deportation of its citizens from Gush Katif has already made plain, any territory Israel vacates in its selfsatisfied pursuit of "the center" will become headquarters for stepped-up terror operations.

Israel's political leaders should not be pursuing a mythical center but competing to fashion policies that will promote the national security previous policies have so badly eroded. As Israeli columnist Sarah Honig has bluntly observed: "Compromise without honor isn't necessarily prudent. It merely broadcasts to the world that we have no pride, that we're sick in the head."

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From the Editor

More "Trouble with Halkin"

Hillel Halkin is on his wildly veering course again. We last left him ("The Trouble with Hillel Halkin," *Outpost*, Nov. 2005) announcing in "Israel After Disengagement" (*Commentary*, October 2005) that it had been necessary for the disengagement to take place "for the strategy behind it to be revealed as unworkable" (too expensive and too divisive to continue in Judea and Samaria). We noted that typical of Halkin, it then turned out to be workable after all – if President Bush announced that once Israel withdrew from 90% of the West Bank, the U.S would recognize the new line as Israel's permanent border.

But now (*NY Sun*, January 10) it turns out the disengagement policy is pure gold. Netanyahu is eating his heart out for not supporting it to the end, in which case he could have taken up Sharon's mantle. (There Halkin is probably right, given the man's naked opportunism.) Far from being worried or divided, Israelis were beginning to feel optimistic that in Sharon's unilateralism there was, writes Halkin, "a way out of the dead-end into which Oslo had plunged them." Ehud Olmert's task, says Halkin, is "to convince Israelis that he can carry out elsewhere what Ariel Sharon started to do in Gaza." Too expensive? Too divisive? Halkin has forgotten all about that. After all, he wrote those words two whole months ago.

Halkin as a political analyst is simply ridiculous. The problem is that both the *New York Sun* and *Commentary*, on whom many vainly depend for sound analysis of Israeli policy, use him as their chief pundit on Israel.

Dividing Jerusalem

In permitting Israeli Arab residents of Jerusalem to vote for the Palestinian Authority Ehud Olmert is making a mockery of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the repeated claim of her leaders that a united Jerusalem is Israel's "eternal" capital.

A recent poll published in Haaretz indicates that 63% of Israelis are willing to cede parts of Jerusalem to the Arabs. IMRA (Independent Media Review and Analysis) notes that the phrasing of the question is loaded - the public was asked if it was willing to give up sections of Jerusalem "as part of a genuine peace agreement," an "if elephants could fly" question. But it is the willingness to cede Jerusalem that is significant, not the loading of the question. If this is your land, you are not willing to give it up, even if elephants should fly. Once you are willing to surrender it, the absence of a quid pro quo quickly becomes unimportant. Look at the way Israelis, who once would have only been willing, on poll questions, to cede any territory to Arabs in return for "a genuine peace," now are enthusiastic about relinquishing land for nothing ("disengagement").

Gush Katif Families Abandoned

Of the 1170 families expelled from Gush Katif by the Sharon government over 400 are still living in the most temporary of arrangements: hotels, tent cities, yeshiva dormitories. More than half the families have received not a penny of the promised compensation (and many of these are still being forced to pay mortgages on the houses and businesses the government destroyed). Of the 2100 people who lost jobs, only 220 have found new ones.

Robert Aumann, 2005's Nobel Prize winner for economics, speaking at the Herzliya Conference, declared: "The care for the deportees represents a national disgrace. This is criminal negligence...Many families have not seen one measly agora of compensation and those who have received compensation are forced to use it for their very existence."

Hebron Mini-Disengagement

The Olmert government has dedicated itself to expelling 11 Jewish families in Hebron from their homes on Jewish-owned land that once served as an Arab marketplace. Though many media reports say that the issue involves "Palestinian homes," the land was actually purchased by the Sephardic Jewish community of Hebron 200 years ago and transferred to the present-day Jewish community. Arabs worked there for a time, but did not live there.

Shiite from Shinola

On Worldnetdaily writer/blogger Ilana Mercer mentions a little known aspect of the agreement Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice extracted from the Sharon government: In the case of a terrorist threat — a daily reality -- Israel is not permitted to shut down the crossing from Gaza into Israel located on its territory. Instead, it must wait for Washington's authorization. Moreover, the stretch separating Gaza and the West Bank -- also Israeli territory — is now terra incognita to Israelis, but not to terrorists. They are allowed to move freely between Gaza and the West bank, because Israel is no longer permitted to stop them, search their vehicles, or arrest them. (continued on page 12)

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Editor: Rael Jean Isaac Editorial Board: Herbert Zweibon, Ruth King

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Americans For a Safe Israel

1623 Third Ave. (at 92nd St.) - Suite 205 New York, NY 10128 tel (212) 828-2424 / fax (212) 828-1717

Sharon's Legacy

Rael Jean Isaac

If Ariel Sharon had retired to his ranch in 2000, he would have gone down in Jewish history as a great leader and a man emblematic of modern Israel: the brave general who crossed the Suez Canal in the Yom Kippur War to snatch victory from the jaws of a looming defeat; the pioneering politician who created the Likud bloc, which ended the dominance of Labor as the unchallenged ruling party of Israel; the Minister

of Defense who, in a noble if failed effort, sought to drive Syria and the PLO from Lebanon, freeing that country while securing Israel's northern border; the passionate critic of the Oslo agreements, who foretold, while euphoria still gripped Israel and the Jewish world, their disastrous consequences. Strikingly, Sharon, like reborn Israel, excelled in the two areas Jews in the Diaspora period were thought most deficient: in war and agriculture.

But his accomplishments will be overshadowed by his failures as Prime Minister, his arbitrary uprooting of flourishing Jewish communities, the damage he did to democratic processes, his announced intention, had he been reelected, to continue headlong on this same destructive path.

Ironically, no group was better pleased than members of Americans for a Safe Israel when in February 2001 Sharon, with the largest margin ever in Israeli politics, swept to victory over Ehud Barak, whose massive concessions to Arab demands merely produced a renewed Arab onslaught. When Sharon, in his inaugural speech said "Since my youth I have devoted myself entirely to the country, to consolidating and building its security" we felt there was truth in these simple words. Here was the man who had done more than any single individual to build and strengthen the Jewish communities of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Here was the man who had denounced the idea of Israel retreating behind a wall (first proposed by Labor in 1995) saving: "Won't these fences be sabotaged? Won't they be penetrated? It is difficult to fathom such silliness." Here was the man who had said of a Palestinian state: "In Western Eretz Yisrael or part of it, a second Palestinian state shall not arise, not even a corridor to such a state in one or another form of selfgovernment."

True, from the beginning we saw worrying signs. In the run-up to the election campaign we noted (*Outpost*, Feb. 2001) that his campaign slogan "Only Sharon Can Bring Peace" and his speeches around the country promising "we will be able to reach peace—but true peace" were a sign that Sharon accepted "the conventional wisdom that the Israeli public will only vote for a leader who feeds their addiction to

the infantile cotton candy of 'peace'." Had he been forthright, saying he could promise only to increase security, for peace depended on a radical change in Arab attitudes, we said he would still have been elected and "might actually have a chance to govern free of the worst curse of all – a dishonestly promised peace."

We were deeply disturbed by much that happened in Sharon's first term in office. To our horror, Sharon not only chose to govern through an alliance with Labor, but installed as Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the architect of the Oslo agreements, though Sharon termed Oslo "the deepest mistake that any government has done." He even wanted to make Ehud Barak Defense Minister – Barak, whose offer to return Israel to the borders of 1949 and accept a substantial number of "Palestinian refugees" to boot -- had merely inspired Arafat to launch a new

Intifada. (Sharon had to settle for Benjamin Ben Eliezer when the Labor Party itself repudiated Barak.) Although the cabinet was the largest in Israel's history. the only active body was a mini-security cabinet consisting of Sharon and the two Labor Ministers, Peres and Ben Eliezer. As we noted at the time, the operations of the government were ludicrous, with Foreign Minister Peres going his own way, repeatedly contradicting Sharon's announced policies without so much as a rebuke. (Peres declared, in a Washington press conference: "I don't deny that the government has two views and eventually two voices.") In an article entitled "Yes, Prime Minister Peres" (Outpost, June-July 2001) this writer argued that Peres was the real Prime Minister, "having consolidated his power over a hapless Ariel Sharon through the political maneuvering for which he is justly famous." In retrospect this was wrong: in fact, Peres served Sharon's purposes perfectly, setting the government's course to the left while allowing Sharon, seemingly unable to control Peres, to keep his right-wing political base.

Haifa economics professor Steven Plaut turned out to be prescient: when Sharon was only in office a month, Plaut wrote (March 2001 *Outpost*): "It could very well be that Sharon's actual role in history will be to take Israel to the brink of destruction. If even he pursues Oslo, if even he has no agenda and no vision, then what hope is there for survival?" By April 2002 Sharon was proposing "buffer zones" to separate Israel from the Palestinian Arabs, something that sounded suspiciously like the Labor-proposed "Wall" he had hitherto denounced. And sure enough, two months later, Defense Minister Ben Eliezer announced a 362 kilometer fence would be constructed to wall

ARIEL SHARON: WARRIOR

[During the Yom Kippur War] the canal line was thinly defended by a series of strongpoints called the Bar-Lev line, which were designed to be integrated with mobile defenses by tanks moving into the spaces between them. The artillery attack by the Eqyptians (10,500 shells in the first minute, or 175 per second) was so devastating and the effectiveness of the Sagger missile against Israeli tanks was so great, that the soldiers – mostly civilian reservists – in the Bar-Lev line were cut off and surrounded.

This was the situation when Sharon arrived on the Suez front 18 hours after the war had begun. He had come ahead of his armored division, driven in a pick-up truck. Israeli tanks were withdrawing all along the line as he came up.

Sharon strode into Tasa, the Israeli command post behind the Suez Canal, and asked to be put in radio contact with the forts in his area. He identified himself only by his code name "forty." Immediately, his conversation with one of the forts was cut in on by a soldier:

"Forty, forty. We know you. We know you will get us out of here. Please come to us."

Amidst defeat, death and fear....hope: Ariel Sharon had arrived at the front.

[From *The Yom Kippur War* by Abraham Rabinovich, p. 139]

Israel off from the Palestinians.

Despite his sad performance, it was impossible not to hope for Sharon's reelection in 2003, given that the platform of the Labor Party, under the new leadership of Avram Mitzna, called for unilateral withdrawal from Gaza – and Sharon at least denounced this plan. We were moreover encouraged when we learned from Mitzna (speaking to the Israeli paper Haaretz) that on meeting after the election with Sharon to explore the possibility of another unity government, he was "shocked" by Sharon's refusal to consider evacuating the Gaza settlements, hearing instead "a lecture on the strategic importance of Netzarim and the historic importance of Kfar Darom."

After the election, Sharon lacked the fig-leaf of needing to satisfy left-wing coalition partners, for Mitzna, believing Labor had been hurt by participating in the previous Sharon government, decided to remain in the opposition. Sharon nonetheless proceeded as if Labor guided policy. The new administration had to respond to the "Road Map," produced by the United States, the European Union, the Soviet Union and the UN (three of the four clearly hostile to Israel) which called for Israel's retreat to the 1949 borders and a full

fledged Palestinian state by 2005. As Shmuel Katz wrote (Outpost, June 2003), Israel was given precisely the same treatment as Czechoslovakia at Munich on September 29, 1938. It was presented with a diktat. When the Sharon government protested that the Road Map needed changes, then National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice declared the Road Map was "not subject to negotiation" and Prime Minister Tony Blair said Sharon "evidently does not understand that there is no room for discussion." Sharon's government caved in. Sharon even refused to submit the Road Map for Knesset approval on the spurious ground it was not a legally signed document - this, although its consequences for Israel could not have been more profound. As Shmuel Katz pointed out (Outpost, September 2003), Sharon accepted a document made in secret, hostile in purpose, prepared in collusion with some of Israel's worst enemies.

But this was only the beginning. By February 2004, only a year after winning reelection on a platform denouncing Labor's plan to withdraw unilaterally from Gaza, Sharon had made this proposal his own. His supporters in the settlements were dumbfounded. They could find excuses for his accepting the Road Map in the supposition that behind the scenes U.S. pressures were too great for Israel to resist (although if that were the case, a real leader would have resigned, publicly denouncing the pressures being brought). In any case, the Road Map was going nowhere because the PA ignored the single demand made upon it, that the PA make a good faith effort to end terror. Why then reward the PA with "land for nothing," with what indeed would be interpreted by the Palestinian Arabs themselves as "land for terror?"

It was so difficult to find any rational explanation for Sharon's "conversion" that the questions piled up. What transformed Sharon from the champion of settlements to their destroyer? From the leader who said a Palestinian state on the west bank of the Jordan spelled Israel's doom to the Prime Minister who declared creation of such a state "the central goal" of his next (Kadima) administration? From the man who called the settlers Israel's finest citizens to the man who uprooted them and wiped out their communities? From the man who scorned the very idea of a wall to the man who thought a wall would safely seal Israel off from neighbors bent on her destruction?

There have been many explanations, none satisfactory. Was this his method of staving off the looming corruption investigation of himself and his sons? That might have been a factor in the decision to expel the Gaza communities, but could not explain the rest. Had he come to believe the Israeli people were so tired, so demoralized, that they no longer had the stamina for confronting the harsh realities of deterrence as the price for existence in the Arab Middle East? If so, Sharon's response represented a terrible failure of leadership. A true leader sets forth the truth

of the situation as he sees it, rallies his people, encourages them to confront honestly the challenges before them - he does not feed their delusions. deceiving them with false promises of "peace and security." Or had Sharon himself become delusional in his old age? Recognizing that Oslo was based on the fantasy that the Arabs wanted peace, did he come to believe in what Caroline Glick rightly calls an even more dangerous fantasy, that Israel could "disengage" from the Middle East by retreating behind a barricade?

The best explanation may well lie in a little remembered episode in Sharon's history, his brief leadership of the Shlomzion Party. It revealed that while Sharon may have taken the business of warfare seriously, politics was for him a game in which he had

little respect for the participants or for political principles and looked for personal advantage. Our thanks to Boris Shusteff for reminding us of this episode in his "Dissecting Sharon" (which draws on a 1985 biography of Sharon by Israeli journalist Uzi Benziman.)

First a little background. In 1973 Sharon entered politics and through the force of his energy and personality, created the Likud, welding together the chief opposition (to Labor) parties. Disappointed when the new party still

failed to topple Labor, Sharon left politics to become military advisor to then Prime Minister Rabin. Dissatisfied in this role, he returned to the Likud, where he sought to displace Menachem Begin as head of the party. When that failed Sharon decided to create his own political party.

To general astonishment, Sharon reached out to a man on the far left of the political spectrum, asking Yossi Sarid to take the second place on Shlomzion's list in the 1977 elections. The new party advocated negotiations with the PLO and the creation of a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria (Sharon wanted Israel to retain control of security arrangements). The enormity of this can only be appreciated in the context of the time: in 1977 Arafat and his PLO were anathema to both Labor and Likud which viewed them as murderers to be hunted down. The well known leftwing journalist Amos Kenan became Sharon's spokesman. Even long-time champion of a Palestinian state Uri Avnery considered linking up with Shlomzion, whose very name "Peace of Zion" suggested the new orientation. When negotiations with the far-left failed to mobilize sufficient support (Sarid turned Sharon down and an effort to meet with Arafat fizzled), Sharon turned on a dime and now portrayed himself as to the right of the Likud, calling for expansion of Jewish settlements.

When Sharon realized that his political acrobatics were not paying off in public support, he sought to return to the Likud (to which only weeks earlier he had vowed publicly never to return, regardless of what happened to his new party). But although Begin was amenable, the party was not and Sharon was forced to go to the elections on the Shlomzion list. This election turned out to be the revolutionary upset which finally toppled Labor as Israel's ruling party and installed Menachem Begin as Prime Minister. Shlomzion only won two seats. Begin welcomed back to the fold a repentant Sharon who promptly dismantled Shlomzion. There was from now on no left-wing rhetoric: seeking to position himself as the ailing Begin's heir, Sharon henceforth portrayed himself as an ardent supporter of Herut ideology. (He even voted against the Camp David agreement with Egypt, although he subsequently undertook the destruction of Yamit for

the Begin government.)

The brief saga of Shlomzion nonetheless offered fair warning: one could not count on Sharon's political principles should a very different set of ideas come to seem to him expedient. The episode foretold the future in another respect as well. At a press conference for the newly emergent Shlomzion, Sharon declared that "for him a political party was only a means" and if good ideas could not be fulfilled within a given

priate to create another. It was scarcely surprising then that almost thirty years later Sharon should once again abandon the Likud to create the Kadima Party, giving him more latitude to achieve his current "good idea" of "disengagement."

But whatever the reasons for Sharon's acthe results are already clear. He opened a moral chasm within Israeli society, strengthened Hamas (which takes credit for Israel's retreat), brought the front line closer to Israel's major cities as the rockets that once fell on Gush Katif are aimed at Israeli population centers, demonstrated to the Arabs that Israel is so desperate and vulnerable it will make radical withdrawals without any Arab quid pro quo and set the precedent for ethnic cleansing of parts of the Land of Israel by its own people. The ironies are enormous. Twice Sharon was cheated out of victory on the battlefield, first in the Yom Kippur War, when the road to Cairo lay open but Israel was forced by U.S. pressure to supply Egypt's encircled Third Army, and then in the Lebanon war, when U.S. pressure once again forced Sharon to allow PLO forces to sail away, unimpeded, into the distance. Politically, in his last years Sharon cheated himself - and Israel -- out of the victory over Arab enemies that lay within reach.

Today Sharon is being eulogized by those who once reviled him and for all the wrong reasons: not for what he did to strengthen Israel as soldier and builder, but for what he did to undermine her in his last declining years.

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In 1977, Sharon's

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The Weakness Continues

Paula R. Stern

Israel as a nation may choose to mourn the current status of its leader, or not.

But there are two things that we as a society cannot afford to do. We cannot pray for his death, that is not what our religion or society can accept; and we cannot stop fighting for our own physical and political survival, which the weak-minded Olmert government is now doing as it continues to live up to the standards set under Ariel Sharon.

Having wished Sharon from office untold number of times, it seems logical that some would assume that the right wing, the Orange People if you will, might wish him ill. But Jews do not celebrate death. We do not court it; we do not preach it. It is not our way. We do not worship martyrs, nor do we encourage our children to become them. And, in the same vein, we do not wish death upon others, even those who have harmed us.

For all that we wanted Sharon to go home, we did not wish it would happen this way. Political humiliation, a landslide defeat, shamed out of office for his corruption were all well within the scope of our wishes, but brain disease, strokes and paralysis were not.

Listening to news reports of Arabs celebrating in Palestinian-controlled areas just shows, again, how misguided were Sharon's last months. No one benefited more from his unilateral plan than the Arabs, and it is they who celebrate his tragic condition.

No one was hurt more by his harsh and ill-advised expulsion of the Jews of Gaza than the 9,000 people still suffering, most still without compensation, still without jobs, still without real community solutions. And yet, most of these people do not wish for his death. Many have prayed for his recovery. Isn't it interesting that those he harmed do not celebrate his illness, while those he enriched with land, resources and essentially independence, celebrate his physical fall even more than his fall from power?

And finally to Ehud Olmert's new government, to Sharon's legacy of capitulation that finds new voice in Olmert's actions. If Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is not prepared to lead decisively, he should not lead at all.

For months, the Israeli government has said that there would be no campaigning for the Palestinian Authority elections in Jerusalem. At last, we thought, a modicum of strength in a government plagued by weak leaders who deliver meaningless responses such as firing into empty fields, easing restrictions meant to protect, or giving weapons and land in the face of attacks and incitement.

Whatever strong message Sharon intended to deliver regarding the future of Jerusalem has been undermined by the Kadima-led government of Olmert which is allowing the Palestinian Authority to establish a foothold in Jerusalem. According to the Oslo Ac-

cords, no Palestinian Authority activities are allowed in Jerusalem. Even as we experience almost daily violence and rocket attacks, after months of saying it won't happen, the flip-flop government has happily grasped another opportunity to look indecisive and weak.

Trying to save face, Interior Minister Gideon Ezra of the Kadima party announced that Israel would only buckle selectively. According to Ezra, Israel would not permit "parties that still bear weapons" to campaign. This was meant to keep Hamas out. But wait, Fatah still bears weapons. Just three weeks ago, Fatah claimed responsibility for a barrage of rockets, including those that targeted Ashkelon, and less than a month ago, Fatah claimed responsibility for a "driveby" terrorist attack in which Yossi Shok was murdered.

Ever a man to recognize his mistakes and bow further to the enemy, Ezra was quick to backtrack and allow campaigning by those who still bear arms, so long as they accept the roadmap, whatever that means. Not wanting to be outdone, Defense Minister and Kadima member Shaul Mofaz has taken a further step, announcing that not only will the Arabs be allowed to campaign in Jerusalem, but they will be allowed to vote in Palestinian Authority elections as well.

To complete the theater of the absurd, Acting Prime Minister Olmert has chimed in with the incredible suggestion that the Arabs be allowed to vote, but not for Hamas. Thus Israel, a nation which revels in its democracy, will send a message of hypocrisy to the world, and a sign of our increased weakness to the Arabs.

The last years of Sharon's government were plagued by continued appeasement culminating in the expulsion of Jews from Gaza and Northern Samaria. This government's current fiasco on Jerusalem, allowing violent anti-Israel organizations to campaign and garner votes on our sovereign territory shows that Ehud Olmert has inherited not only the corrupt partners who plagued the Sharon government, but the same unwillingness to properly answer the threats of our enemies. The weakness continues.

In the last elections, held in February 2001, a democratically run Israel voted for a strong leader who said, "To an outstretched hand of peace we will respond with an olive branch, but expressions of terror will be met by fire more intense than ever."

Whatever twisted path took Ariel Sharon from the strong general he was to the corrupt, weak leader he became, his words remain for all of us the only true roadmap to the future and Israel's current leaders should heed the warning and deliver this strong message.

This appeared on the blog site of Paula Stern: www.paulasays.com

The Jewish Divide Over Israel: Accusers and Defenders

Edward Alexander

Paul Bogdanor

editors

Edited by Edward Alexander and Paul Bogdanor.

In The Jewish Divide Over Israel: Accusers and Defenders Edward Alexander and Paul Bogdanor have assembled eighteen essays that strip away the prophetic robes of Israel's Jewish detractors. Jews who hate Israel and compete with unabashed anti-Semites in the savagery and unscrupulousness of their attacks on the Jewish state are the "accusers" in

the subtitle of this book: Israel's "defenders" are its writers.

Before 1967, Israel had the overwhelming support of world opinion. So long as Israel's existence was in harmony with politically correct assumptions, it was supported, or at least accepted, by the majority of "progressive" Jews, especially in the wake of the Holocaust. This is no longer the case. The Jewish Divide Over Israel studies the role played by prominent Jewish intellectuals in turning Israel into an isolated pariah nation.

After their catastrophic defeat in 1967, Arabs quickly overcame inferi-

ority on the battlefield with superiority in the war of ideas. Their (English-language) propaganda stopped trumpeting their desire to eradicate Israel. Instead, in a nimble appeal to liberals and radicals, they redefined their war of aggression against the Jews as a struggle for the liberation of downtrodden Palestinian Arabs. The tenacity of the Arabs' rejection of Israel and their relentless campaign -- in schools, universities, churches, professional organizations, and, above all, the news media -- to destroy Israel's moral image had the desired impact. Many Jewish liberals became desperate to escape from the shadow of Israel's alleged misdeeds and found a way to do so by joining other members of the left in blaming Israeli sins for Arab violence. Jewish liberals now routinely rationalize violence against the innocent as resistance to the oppressor, excuse Arab extremism as the frustration of a wronged party, and redefine eliminationist rhetoric and physical assaults against Jews as "criticism of Israeli policy."

Israel's Jewish accusers have played a crucial and disproportionate role in the current upsurge of anti-Semitism precisely because they speak as Jews; indeed, since most of them are indifferent to religion and tradition, anti-Zionism is precisely what -- or so they think -- makes them Jews. Eager to evade the (supposed) "moral taint" of justifying Israel's right to self-defense or even to exist, Israel's Jewish accusers find themselves, in an age of suicide bombers, complicit in the murder of their fellow Jews, accomplices of Iran's president calling for Israel's erasure from the family of nations.

The essays in this book seek to understand and also throw back the assault on Israel led by such Jewish liberals and radicals as Tony Judt, Noam Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, Tanya Reinhart, George Steiner, Daniel Boyarin, Marc Ellis, Michael Neumann, Israel Shahak, Michael Lerner, Joel Beinin,

> Seymour Hersh, Judith Butler, and many others. These figures have been selected not because they are "critics of Israel" or of Israeli policies, but because they either explicitly advocate Israel's elimination or else seek to besmirch. vilify, and de-legitimize it so as to render it morally and politically vulnerable to its numerous enemies.

> The book's essayists, in addition to the editors, are Cynthia Ozick, Alvin Rosenfeld, Efraim Karsh, Benjamin Balint, Assaf Sagiv, Menachem Kellner, Alan Mittleman, Martin Krossel, David Roskies, Rael Jean Isaac, Jacob Neusner, and Irving Louis Horowitz.

Diverse in their approaches, they share the conviction that the foundation of Israel in 1948 was one of the few redeeming events in a century of blood and shame.

The Jewish Divide Over Israel is available for \$31.95 (a 20 % discount) from Transaction Publishers (e-mail: orders@transactionpub.com) and from www.bn.com and www.Amazon.com

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How Demography Fails

J. R. Dunn

Farther than a genera-

tion ahead, demogra-

phy is about as valu-

able as Tarot cards,

and not as interesting.

"Europe will be Islamic by the end of this century at the very latest."

The floodgates opened with that comment from Bernard Lewis. Since its publication in *Die Welt* in July 2004, countless responses have appeared from writers as varied as George Weigel and Patrick Buchanan. The latest is Mark Steyn, in a New Criterion essay titled, in his customary understated style, "It's the Demography, Stupid."

An unusual unanimity has prevailed - almost every writer concurs with Lewis that Europe is a lost cause, a casualty in the war against Islamofascism.

The argument is straightforward: the native European population is dropping, with birthrates in all countries below replacement level. The Muslim populace, for the most part unassimilated, is still expanding. One curve is going up, the other down.

When they cross, Europe will have effectively come under Muslim control.

But is it truly that simple? After all, there's a reason why you're not reading this in a U.S. with a population of 500 million+, which is what demography foresaw in 1950. Or in the 2006 world of 8 billion souls, as predicted ten years later. And certainly not in the 21st century universally forecast in the 70s, in which a few survivors grub about in the ruins left by the Great Crash following a runaway population explosion.

The reason these futures never came to pass is that predictive demography is not a science.

Oh, it's dependable in limited cases—in telling us how many teenagers will be around in five years, or how many deaths of old age will occur per annum. But farther than a generation ahead, it's about as valuable as Tarot cards, and not as interesting.

The shortcomings of predictive demography were apparent even as the discipline was being founded. In 1798, Thomas Malthus published An Essay on the Principle of Population in response to the many utopian tracts then in circulation. Malthus pointed out that population would always outgrow the food supply. While food increased at the arithmetical ratio of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, every twenty-five years, population growth was geometrical, growing at the rate of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32... At the end of two centuries the ratio would be 256 to 9. In three centuries, 4.096 to 13.

Put in simple arithmetic, Malthus' conclusion was powerful and unforgettable. His pamphlet was widely read, influencing economists and social thinkers throughout the 19th century.

But Malthus began having doubts. What he'd done was simply plot the curve of recent population growth and extend it into the future, the same method used by demographers to this day. After reconsidering that procedure, he published an expanded version of his pamphlet in 1803, "...to soften some of the harshest conclusions of the first Essay." Malthus now postulated a form of "moral restraint" that would cause people to abstain from sex and thus lower the growth curve. (This was the only way out Malthus could con-

ceive - he was an ordained par-

son and had a horror of birth control.) That solution may sound

impossibly utopian in and of itself. But Malthus was on to something, though you wouldn't have known it from the public response. The second edition lacked any stark, easily-grasped formula, and went largely unrecognized by readers. Despite all his efforts (he was to

publish several further editions), Malthus remained famous as the man who predicted mass starvation as the inevitable fate of mankind.

Demography grew no more cheerful in the ensuing century. It was a factor in the brutal shift in Southern slaveholding policy in the 1830s. A series of abortive revolts convinced Southern aristocrats that blacks were "outbreeding" whites and would soon overwhelm them. Punitive slave codes went into effect caging blacks on plantations, establishing curfews, and punishing signs of insubordination. It was a selfdefeating program, underlining criticism by Northern abolitionists and further isolating the South.

A similar school of thought lay behind opposition to immigration to the U.S., with claims that "uncivilized" Italians, Poles, Slavs, and Jews, with their enormous families, would eventually outnumber the native population (itself a mixture of ethnicities). The campaign ultimately abolished mass immigration, but only in 1925, decades after the peak of European influx.

At the turn of the century, Kaiser Wilhelm II's sick vision of Die gelbe Gefahr - the Yellow Peril - in which Asians would outbreed whites spilled across the continent, helping to fuel worldwide animus against Asians.

Comic relief at last arrived in the person of Paul Ehrlich, an insect biologist who achieved fame in the 1960s, that levelheaded and common-sense decade, whose The Population Bomb postulated an uncontrolled population explosion) which was beyond human solution and would end in universal famines leading to the collapse of civilization, if not the extinction of mankind. (How population could continue growing under conditions of mass starvation—the famines were supposed to begin in 1975—was only one contradiction of many.)

Ehrlich ended up as something of a legend: a prophet whose every last prediction proved wrong. (Quite an achievement – crystal gazing or palmistry will give consistently better results.) He did very well regardless, establishing his own heavily-endowed

foundation, receiving a MacArthur "Genius" grant, and being nominated several times for the Nobel Prize. The population bomb thesis survived, usually found in half-educated types who recite it with the intensity of the convert. Al Gore was ringing the alarm bell over it as recently as the 2000 election.

That's the record of predictive demography, always based on the same flawed premise, always mistaken, at worst a mask for racism, at best a selling point for intellectual hucksters.

So what do we make of Lewis and Steyn, who are neither?

I've always taken Lewis's statement as a warning, put in that form to force discussion, at which it has been an unqualified success. But many writers seem to view it as prophecy, a guarantee that Europe is already lost, with nothing remaining but the sack-cloth and ashes.

This stems from the same error as Malthus, Ehrlich, et al – taking the current statistics as given, drawing a curve stretching across the next century, and shouting apocalypse.

Of course, the numbers are not solid and unchangeable, because the main factor in demography is not statistical at all. As Malthus seems to have realized (though he erred as to the precise cause), it's human nature, the most unpredictable force in the universe. What tripped up Ehrlich and his followers was an effect known as the "demographic transition" — a byproduct of the same flaky 60s that gave Ehrlich his platform, in which young adults across the developed world began postponing families in order to enjoy life during their 20s. The result was fewer children and a collapse in population growth that has continued to this day and generated a counterpanic over deflating populations.

It's this drop that's causing the concern for Europe, coupled with Muslim immigrants importing their traditional large families. The numbers seem to bear these fears out, with all of Europe below replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. The Muslim rate is not as certain, but seems to range from 4 to 6, depending on country, two to three times more than native Europeans.

But how likely are these trends to continue? Are Arabs and North Africans immune to demographic effects that have overtaken the rest of the world? "Spengler" thinks otherwise. The political columnist for

the Asia Times, and one of the most formidable intellects working in the international press (for a cheap, nasty laugh, compare any of his columns to one on the same subject by, say, Thomas L. Friedman), Spengler has devoted several recent columns to the problem of Muslim demography.

According to Spengler, the Islamic world is facing its own demographic transition, and (no surprise here), is unlikely to handle it as well as the West:

"Urbanization, literacy and openness to the modern world will suppress the Muslim womb, in the absence of radical measures."

Algeria has a population growth rate of only 1.4% per year, Qatar of just 1.2%. Iran is falling below replacement level, with much of the Arab world poised to follow circa 2030. Muslim colonies in Europe, surrounded as they are by Western influences, are enduring the same process. The rise in hideous

"honor" killings throughout the region strongly implies that Muslim women are revolting against their Koranic status as brood mares, and the attitude of women is a key demographic factor.

What this means for Europe is that Muslims will have neither the time nor the numbers to turn the place into Greater Andalusia. And due to the demographic transition, the next generation is likely to be their last opportunity. This doesn't mean that Europe is not in for interesting times. The long postwar slumber is over – the July bombers and last autumn's vast Franco-Muslim car-burning spree are clear evidence of that. Europe has embarked on a rolling, decadeslong civil war to decide whether the Muslim population will join Western civilization or find themselves happier elsewhere. It will grow extremely painful before it's over. "The worst of the war," Spengler writes, "may be fought on European soil."

It would a smart move for the Jihadis, having failed in the Middle East, to shift operations to the Western heartland. It's interesting that both Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Al-Queda in Iraq and Ansar al-Islam have been building up their European networks in recent months. The Ramadis and Fallujahs of the 21st century's teens-decade may very well be notable European cities, with our eager and loyal NATO allies begging us for troops and military assistance.

And as WW II taught us, there's nothing like a bit of adversity to spark the birth rate.

Nothing can be expected from the EU, whose bureaucrats will continue deepening the same groove until they're at last ordered to grow beards and wear turbans.

But the European people are another matter. The mass rejection of the EU's phone directory/ quantum-physics textbook "constitution" is a good sign. So is Holland's reaction to the assassination of Theo Von Gogh. If Jihadi savagery can animate a people as politically lethargic as the Dutch, anything is possible. We also have the ascension of Pope Bene-

Paul Ehrlich

dict, who, like his predecessor, may succeed in mobilizing the Pope's divisions.

The spirit of Europe, the barbarian backwoods that became the dynamo of the world, may not yet be dead.

Or it may well be, with Europe doomed to become the Byzantium of the 21st century.

But demography is an awfully weak peg on which to hang such an argument. Earlier demographic visionaries would have been closer to the truth if they'd taken their vision and made the exact opposite predictions. You can't view statistics fifty years down the line as if they were facts; too much can happen in the long years between.

Like Malthus, we need to have more faith in human nature before we write off the gardens of the West. For the moment, and in spite of the numbers, my money remains on Europe.

J.R. Dunn was the editor of the International Military Encyclopedia for twelve years. This article appeared in the American Thinker website of January 18.

Gaza Vacation

Jack Engelhard

That spree of kidnappings in gun-totin' Gaza has some of us wondering what we're doing wrong. Why not us?

Apparently, honeymooners and other vacationers who don't include a Gaza kidnapping on their itinerary, well, they just don't know what they're missing.

Kate Burton, a British "human rights" worker, was recently abducted and then freed by her Palestinian Arab captors and her first response, to the press, was that she was treated wonderfully. This is more than I can say for myself in my own home. I am never treated wonderfully around this place.

At the same time that Kate Burton and her parents were kidnapped in Gaza, someone else was kidnapped in Gaza. This is Alessandro Bernardini, an aide in the European Parliament, who later (when he was freed) "told reporters that he had been treated well in captivity, receiving tea and cigarettes," as reported by the Associated Press.

So? When is the last time anyone offered you tea and cigarettes just for showing up? I can remember this happening to me just once when I was selling magazines door to door and this lady in a skimpy--oh never mind. That's another story. We're talking about Gaza, and if you want tea and sympathy, this is the place.

Chances are better that you will get your head chopped off, but, with the right hostage-takers, you could get lucky. Kate Burton, for example, is lucky, and confused. To one reporter she says she had a marvelous time, to another reporter she concedes that she feels guilty for bringing her parents along on her Rafah Vacation. They were also abducted. (Next time, Disneyland maybe?)

All these liberated captives feel that the Palestinian Arabs have been misrepresented by the press. Gosh, go figure. This goes for all the people who've been kidnapped and released, and there are quite a few that never make the papers. They all want to go back. Can you blame them?

Who wouldn't want to be in Gaza now that the Israelis have left and the weather is changing, along

with the leaves and the neighborhood? Getting kidnapped and being treated wonderfully by your hooded abductors is a big plus, and rounds out any vacation. Abduction Chic!

Also romping in Gaza, where it's every man for himself, were the parents of Rachel Corrie, an ISM (International Solidarity Movement) activist who died so that the intifada might live. Craig and Cindy Corrie were staying with friends in Rafah. They came this close to being abducted by rifle-toting strangers, the Corries did. Masked men on the hunt for "internationals" desired to "relocate" them. They managed to escape, and are still grateful to their hosts, all those "good people" in Gaza. (Fascinating how these types hate Israel, yet this is where they scamper for comfort and safety.)

They are already booked for their Gaza return, Mr. and Mrs. Corrie, but "when it is safer." They never felt threatened, insists Mr. Corrie, as those rifles were never trained directly at them. That certainly is reason for gratitude and jubilation. Who wouldn't register with the local travel agency for a trip right back to Rafah?

Those of us who've seen all those "vacation" movies with Chevy Chase (National Lampoon's "Vegas Vacation" is my favorite) will understand why humanitarians regularly seek out Gaza to find Wallyworld. Now that the place is under new management, all Arab, this is your terrorist theme park if you are a true humanitarian.

Gaza Syndrome is different from Stockholm Syndrome. Gaza revelers know, or should know, that this place is no picnic. Bullets are flying. That should be a hint. So these humanitarian frolickers know what's up, but still they go "to help these poor misunderstood people."

Stockholm was another story. Those captives who turned loyal to their captors, going back to 1973, were bank employees. They were not humanitarians. A man named Nils Bejerot, a psychologist, came up with the phrase "Stockholm Syndrome" to identify people who become attached to their captors.

In a world where terrorists are given equal justification, in this world full of *dhimmis*, that pretty much identifies most of us.

Jack Engelhard's newest novel The Bathsheba Deadline is being serialized on Amazon.com.

Who Is the Real Ehud Olmert

Ruth King

Ehud Olmert

In the late 1980s, Ehud Olmert, then the youngest member of the Knesset, addressed an AFSI national conference. Although the audience was clearly disappointed that the featured speaker, Ariel Sharon, had canceled, Olmert made an inspiring speech. His objections to concessions and withdrawals and outside pressures and his repeated assurances that there would never be another sovereignty between the Jordan River and the 1967 lines heartened the audience which feared that the "old line" had no successors.

Olmert's post Oslo statements and his administration as mayor of Jerusalem were equally gratify-

ing. In 1994 he caused a diplomatic incident when a scheduled visit by President Bill Clinton was canceled as a result of Olmert's insistence that the tour include the Old City. Despite opposition by local Arabs, he completed a tunnel alongside the Temple Mount which sparked the first post Oslo shooting between Israel and Palestinian Arab soldiers including gun battles in Judea, Samaria and Gaza which killed 54 Palestinians and 14 Israeli soldiers. Unfortunately, at then Prime Minister Netanyahu's instructions, the tunnel was opened under cover of night, giving the appearance of something illicit. Olmert vigor-

ously defended the tunnel and reacted forcefully against PLO violence.

In 2002 Olmert was a featured guest at a breakfast of the Christian Coalition's "Road to Victory 2002" convention, attended by prominent ministers, legislators, journalists, and broadcasters. He greeted the participants, saying "God is with us in supporting the State of Israel. You, the great Christians of America, are with us and we will stand firm together against the terrorists. It is hard for us in Israel to live with the sights of terror, to go to sleep with them, to wake up in the morning, to know what you have seen, but don't get it wrong. This is pain, not weakness."

On June 3rd, 2002 he wrote an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* "Israel Can't Do Business With Terrorists." It was a tough article against appeasing terrorism or bowing to US pressure. He even went so far as to suggest targeted assassinations of terrorists.

As David Bedein notes in "The Metamorphosis of Ehud Olmert" (*Arutz Sheva* January 13, 2006) "The change in Olmert began to surface shortly before he left his position of mayor of Jerusalem in late 2002, when he was running again for the Knesset. At the time, it was discovered that the Palestinian Authority schoolbooks -- containing a curriculum that inculcates Palestinian schoolchildren with the conviction that Israel has no right to exist -- had been incorporated into the Jerusalem municipal school system." When Bedein asked Olmert about this, his response was a

terse: "They can teach what they want, and we will teach what we want."

Olmert's metamorphosis was swift. By 2005 he was happily negotiating with Dahlan, Abbas, and just about any terrorist he could find. In a speech touting disengagement from Gaza delivered in New York in June 2005 to the American Israel Policy Forum, Olmert gushed: "It will bring more security, greater safety, much more prosperity, and a lot of joy for all the people that live in the Middle East." Now joy is not something that even simple Shimon predicted. Olmert went on: "We are tired of fighting, we are tired of being courageous, we are tired of winning, we are tired of

defeating our enemies."

Well that sort of explains it. He is suffering from chronic political fatigue syndrome. Israel's old man River...he's just plain tired of fighting, a little surprising since he never served in combat. Can you imagine Olmert negotiating? "Listen I'm tired of winning. I'll give you everything you ask for. Take it or leave it."

Sharon promoted disengagement as a "realistic" alternative to the failed Oslo process, given that there was no possibility of peace partners. But Olmert is still caught up in Oslo-in-Wonderland. Said Olmert in that re-

markable speech: "We want them [the Palestinians] to be our friends, our partners, our good neighbors." Friendship, he said, "is within reach if we will be smart, if we will dare, if we will be prepared to take the risks....And we will spare no effort in order to convince them, not by fighting with them...but by sitting with them, and talking with them, and helping them and cooperating with them and partnering with them...so that the Middle East will indeed become what it was destined to be from the outset, a paradise for all the world."

Now there's a mouthful. Olmert wants to be friends with the neighbors....all the neighbors, except of course for the Jewish settlers of Gaza, Judea and Samaria, Israel's finest citizens with whom he is spoiling for a fight.

Olmert declared leaving Gaza would inaugurate "a new morning of great hope in our part of the world." Did the ensuing actual chaos in Gaza or the rockets fired into Israeli cities, or the buildup of arsenals and terrorist training camps dim his enthusiasm? No way.

Someone who believes the "peace process" is in full flower, at most in need of some extra effort, a soupcon "daring" by Israel, belongs in a psych ward. Instead it looks as if the floridly delusional Olmert will be propelled by a self-deceiving public into the Prime Minister's office.

(Continued from page 2)

As Mercer observes, Israel has responded to these developments by turning its arrows on one of its few remaining friends, Pat Robertson. Interim Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's first act of statesmanship was not a resolution on Iran or Hamas, but a decision to suspend a joint business venture to construct a Christian Heritage Center in the Galilee.



Pat Robertson

Robertson's unforgivable action had been to say that God "has enmity against those who divide [His] land," hinting that the moribund Israeli leader's brain hemorrhage and his evacuation of Jews from Gaza were not random events. As Mercer says, "like them or not, his

theological beliefs include the idea that one will reap God's wrath if one defies His wishes, as Robertson construes them. So what?"

The Robertson episode, says Mercer, "demonstrates that Israel doesn't respond appropriately to its friends or to its enemies. Against the backdrop of Iranian incitement to genocide, with the hard-Left joining that seething cesspool of a Palestinian Street to rejoice in Sharon's fate; at the dawn of the Age of Hamas and insecure borders, and in the context of a world that has defined the Jewish state in much the same terms as Ahmadinejad has ('criminal Zionist entity, colonial occupier') -- Israel still doesn't know Shiite from Shinola."

Jimmy Carter At The Herzliya Conference

In the Presidential election debates of 1980, every time Jimmy Carter raised the issue of a hawkish Ronald Reagan taking America towards war, Reagan cut him off by saying "there he goes again." On January 23, Jimmy Carter addressed the sixth Herzliya

Conference, an annual gathering of influential Israeli and international leaders. And, as expected, there he went again and again and again.

About Hamas? He was quite confident they would turn "despair and frustration into progress."

His vision for "peace"? "An independent Palestinian state with territorial continuity," a "harmonious division of Jerusalem and a resettlement of the Palestinians within their borders."

Settlements? "Some Israeli settlers consider their settlements sacrosanct," he said, adding "You can't have a Palestinian state living in peace and dignity if it is filled with Israeli settlements."

On Arab anti-American sentiment? "There is no doubt that much of the anti-American sentiment in the Middle East is caused by failure to find a solution to the Palestinian problem."

What is incredible is that he received a standing ovation. Those who applauded deserve to be forced to read Jimmy's books.

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