

Tom Lantos's liberal anti-authoritarianism

By Thomas A. Dine The Jerusalem Post February 16, 2008

My first meeting with Tom Lantos occurred when we sat next to each other at an AIPAC dinner in 1978. Tom was working for Senator Joe Biden as an economist, I as a defense and international affairs budget analyst with the Senate Budget Committee. We both opposed the Carter administration's sale of F-15 jets to Saudi Arabia.

We shared many other common interests in foreign policy - a close and strong US relationship with Israel, the promotion of democracy abroad, a contempt for and total opposition to the Soviet Union. We became fast friends; so many of our conversations were conducted over hot tea in the Senate cafeteria; we were both insulin-dependent diabetics.

Three areas of international affairs drove Tom. First was Israel. When he was elected to the US House of Representatives in 1980, as AIPAC's new executive director, I was one of the first to welcome Tom to the "other side" of Capitol Hill. He did not need a pep talk to join the House Foreign Affairs Committee. As he said then and he said until his death, "I am here to defend and strengthen Israel because that defends and strengthens the United States." That mindset is eternally imbued in the outlook of his two daughters, Annette and Katrina, and 17 grandchildren.

Second was human rights about which he was intense and focused on a daily basis. Where the liberties and rights of a sole individual or groups were violated, Tom spoke up. He co-founded the House Human Rights Caucus in the late 1980s; before achieving seniority, this structure provided him a platform from which to point out the absence of rule of law, independent judiciaries, media freedom, freely functioning civil societies around the world. A generation of young people were enticed to come to Washington and intern for the Caucus, learning a value-oriented foreign policy, my daughter Amy being one who worked for the Caucus one summer.

Tom fully supported the democracy-oriented broadcast journalism of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He and his beloved Annette visited the broadcast headquarters in Prague. His speech at the radios' dinner in 2001 commemorating 50 years of broadcasting remains a Web site gem. When the Russians kidnapped RFE/RL's Chechen correspondent Andre Babitsky and hid him in a farmhouse in Dagestan for nearly six weeks, Tom

gladly added his voice to the chorus of pro-democracy advocates around the world urging the award-winning journalist's identification and release.

Finally, because of his Hungarian origins and experiences, he belonged to the school of liberal anti-authoritarians, his life defying Nazi savagery and murder and his professional career defying Communist capture and oppression. To the end, Tom publicly opposed dictators and their regimes - in China, Burma, Putin's Russia, Africa, Saddam's Iraq, Iran, Cuba, and Venezuela, and those that condoned them whenever they existed, even multi-national companies headquartered in his home district. Highly intelligent, highly educated, and highly traveled, Tom seriously studied and analyzed international issues. He knew, for instance, two generations of Hungary's Communist and democratic leaderships.

He knew NATO and EU complicated issues well and the leaders of those international instruments of American foreign policy. He visited Israel and other points in the Middle East frequently. He often expressed to me his disappointment that the ruling clerics never issued him a visa to visit Iran. But in looking back over my 46 years of working in and around Congress, Tom's knowledge and eloquence about happenings abroad were unique in the House of Representatives.

In argument, he did not mince words. Just four months ago, I was with him in his private office when he received former president Jimmy Carter. Carter came to brief him and a few other House Members about a newly formed group of leaders with international reputations. The purpose of "The Elders," he said, is resolving regional conflicts such as Darfur, Burma, and the Palestinian question. When the former president finished his presentation, Tom told Carter that he had read his new book on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict three times. He said he had underlined particular passages; he pointed out substantive differences between the hard cover and paperback editions, objectionable items not being in the latter except for the word "Apartheid" still in the title. He let loose, telling the author that he "sided" with the Palestinians, that he possessed a "subconscious and blinding hostility toward Israel." And because of this "venom," Lantos said, Carter "had totally forfeited" his role as an objective participant in reconciling differences between the two parties to the conflict. Only under heated

questioning did Carter admit, albeit hesitatingly, that Hamas was an anti-Jewish and terrorist group. The meeting ended on a cool note.

Tom Lantos was my special friend. I thought he had the talent to be secretary of state, but he was content to be chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He was a champion of the cutting edge issues of the post-World War II, post-Communist world. He did his best to never let dictators feel content behind their criminal walls; everyday he sided with reformers and democrats in the streets marching on behalf of freedom and

A Bitter Irony By Eugene Kontorovich

In the wake of President Bush's recent trip to Israel, the administration has put great emphasis on the issue of Israeli settlements. Most controversial are the "unauthorized settlements." Mr. Bush declared that the "illegal outposts ... must go."

Unauthorized settlements are communities that have been created against the wishes of the Israeli government. They may violate Israel's building or zoning rules, and thus are sometimes called "illegal" settlements. One might think from the controversy that these communities represent a gross affront to international norms. The opposite is true: whatever one may think of the legal status of Jewish communities in the West Bank in general, the "unauthorized" settlements raise no issues under international law.

The international law said by Israel's critics to prohibit Jewish settlement activity in the West Bank is the Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The article provides that "the occupying power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own population into the territories it occupies." The dispute over the legality of Israel's West Bank settlements mostly turns on the interpretation of this provision.

"Occupation," as used in the treaty, seems to mean seizing territory belonging to another country. The West Bank, however, was not part of Jordan's territory when Israel took it in 1967. At the time, the area was not the recognized as the territory of any nation. Regardless of these arguments, what is clear is that the Convention specifically bars action only by the "occupying power" — in other words, the government and public authorities of the country. It does not apply to the movements and real estate decisions of private individuals. Various other parts of the Convention distinguish between "nationals of the occupying Power" and "the occupying power" itself; the prohibitions of Article 49 fall exclusively on the latter.

This makes sense given the convention's purposes and background. The Geneva Conventions are treaties between nations outlining their legal responsibilities during war and its aftermath. The obligations they create apply only to nations and individuals exercising public power.

democracy; his values and views and identity drew him to Israel and its safety and security and future as a legitimate and successful part of the global community of nations.

The writer, now a senior policy adviser to the Israel Policy Forum, headed AIPAC, 1980-1993, and was president of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 1997-2005.

Tom Lantos (D-CA), a great friend of Israel, died on February 11, 2008. (ed)

The New York Sun February 13, 2008

No one has ever suggested that the U.S. occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan banned American citizens from moving there.

Certainly the Geneva Convention is not a zoning law, or a Jim Crow ordinance preventing people of a certain nationality from living where they choose. Sixty years ago, in *Shelley v. Kramer*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the government could not participate in any way in racial discrimination in housing. Yet in Mr. Bush's interpretation, if an American Jew with Israeli citizenship were to buy a house from an Arab in a voluntary transaction, it would be an "illegal settlement" since not approved by the Israeli government. Apparently the administration does not feel the philosophy of *Shelley* has general applicability.

The "illegal" Jewish outposts exist despite the government's best efforts, not because of them. They were created by private individuals, with the government often repeatedly destroying or threatening their homes or blocking their access. Residents continue to live in trailers and even send their children to classrooms built in the backs of trucks because the government would demolish permanent homes.

It is puzzling that international opposition to settlements begins with those that are illegal if at all, only under Israeli law. The international community is an unlikely champion of Israel's complex housing code — it certainly does not complain of the extensive illegal Arab construction.

Perhaps it is because the unauthorized communities represent the persistence of Jewish efforts to live in the area regardless of the government's plans. The Palestinian Authority insists that the price of any deal be not only the withdrawal of Israeli sovereign force, but also the expulsion of all Jews from the area. Thus the outposts challenge the vision of a Jew-free state.

The Geneva Convention was designed to protect against governmental efforts to forcibly change the ethnic make-up of an area, efforts of the kind that occurred in World War II. It would be a bitter irony if it were misread as requiring that any territory be kept free of Jews, or any ethnic group.

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he teaches international and constitutional law.

In West Bank, Fatah Loses Favor By Cam Simpson The Wall Street Journal

February 8, 2008

The popularity of the U.S.-backed Palestinian government here is eroding for the first time since it was established following the Islamist group Hamas's takeover of the Gaza Strip, according to a poll.

the latest poll from 50% in December. Survey participants were asked if they were satisfied with Mr. Abbas and were given four choices: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied and not satisfied at all.

Perhaps more disconcerting for the Bush administration and Israel: Hamas's popularity, while still lower than that of the more secular Fatah party, is on the rise, reversing a nearly two-year slide as the Islamist group has begun to reassert itself.

The drop comes after months of sustained gains for Mr. Abbas following the Hamas takeover in Gaza. The popularity of the Fatah political movement headed by Mr. Abbas slipped as well, falling about three percentage points, to 46%, since December among all Palestinians. That decline was steeper in Gaza, where Fatah's popularity fell six percentage points, also to 46%. Conversely, Hamas's popularity is up three percentage points among all Palestinians, reaching 34%. In Gaza, Hamas is up six percentage points, to 39%.

President Bush and the Israeli government have been banking that by flooding the West Bank's Western-backed, Fatah-led government with diplomatic and economic support, they could persuade Palestinians in both territories to embrace Fatah and isolate Hamas.

Hamas won Palestinian elections in January 2006, prompting the Israeli government and the Bush administration to lead a world-wide boycott of the Palestinian Authority. After the Hamas-controlled government was seated, popular support for the Islamist group began slipping -- about one percentage point every quarter, according to Mr. Shikaki.

The polling data of Palestinian sentiment in both enclaves, collected by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, an independent think tank, suggest the gambit could be failing. The institution's survey work has been used by Bush administration officials to make the case that their strategy was working.

The decline accelerated after June 2007, when tensions between Hamas and Fatah boiled over and the Islamists routed their rivals in a military sweep of Gaza, killing dozens of fellow Palestinians in street fighting. Following the violence, Hamas lost six percentage points of support in one quarter, according to Mr. Shikaki.

West Bank leaders, particularly Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, are crucial to the White House's broader Middle East strategy, which envisions stabilizing the region through an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord.

The polling data suggest an abiding skepticism among Palestinians about Mr. Bush's peace process. "I think the administration, the Israelis and [Mr. Abbas] need to re-evaluate," said Khalil Shikaki, head of the survey group.

"Hamas is recovering from its worst mistake and is probably on its way to regaining its full level of support," Mr. Shikaki said yesterday. His poll, of 3,430 Palestinian adults, was conducted from Jan. 23 to Feb. 3 in face-to-face interviews in the West Bank and Gaza.

The turnaround in sentiment is just one in a string of recent setbacks for Mr. Abbas and his West Bank government, headed by Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, a Texas-educated economist.

Discontent with Messrs. Abbas and Fayyad was apparent this week across the West Bank, even before the poll was released. Palestinian Authority workers and teachers shut down the West Bank government for two days, outraged over a decision by Mr. Fayyad to begin collecting unpaid utility bills from civil servants by docking their government checks.

After months of relative silence, Hamas is reasserting itself, helping bolster its popularity, according to Mr. Shikaki and other Palestinian analysts. Islamist militants used blowtorches, explosives and bulldozers to bring down huge swaths of an iron wall along the border with Egypt last month, symbolically ending a blockade of Gaza. Palestinians in Gaza celebrated, flocking to buy goods in Egypt after months of privation.

"It's a very serious injustice," said Nasim Yusef Hamayil, the 52-year-old headmaster of a secondary school in Abu Fallah, a small West Bank village northeast of Ramallah. "We were hopeful when [Mr. Fayyad] started," said Mr. Hamayil. "But now we believe he is a failed leader." Mr. Fayyad also has stirred anger by paring back Palestinian Authority payrolls, the leading source of income in the occupied territories, by more than 30,000 workers, or 16%. A ban on demonstrations also has

In another sign of its assertiveness, Hamas this week claimed credit for its first suicide attack inside Israel in more than three years. The bombing at a crowded shopping mall in Dimona killed a 73-year-old Israeli woman. The attack was carried out after the poll was conducted.

Overall satisfaction with Mr. Abbas among all Palestinians fell four percentage points, to 46% in

Palestinians seething. Recently, a group of veteran Palestinian leaders who have fought against Israel stood up against Mr. Fayyad's government.

"I think they are in a very critical situation," said Hani Masri, a Palestinian political analyst. "After Annapolis, they are clearly losing."

Mr. Fayyad didn't respond to requests for interviews made to his office.

There has been little tangible improvement on the ground for Palestinians since peace talks began. That is weakening Mr. Abbas and his allies, said political analysts. At the same time, Israel has stepped up its attacks on militants in Gaza, creating a fresh wave of Palestinian anger. Mr. Abbas's image suffered recently when he appeared on television

with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert on the same day that Israeli forces killed 19 Palestinians in Gaza in response to rocket attacks.

Other factors also are weighing on the popularity of Mr. Bush's allies. This has been one of the coldest winters in the region since 1992 as frost devastates Palestinian farmers, a crisis to which Mr. Fayyad's government has been slow to respond. According to Firas Badran, a Palestinian agronomist, as much as 90% of Palestinian crops in the fields have been wiped out, while as much as 50% of the crops in hothouses also face ruin. In addition, food prices have risen roughly 3.4% since just after the Hamas takeover of Gaza, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Restraint is not possible By Haaretz Editorial February 11, 2008

The firing of Qassam rockets against Sderot and the nearby kibbutzim is not stopping and is extracting a heavy price in terms of fear and blood. Responsibility for the shooting from the Gaza Strip, which has been going on for seven years - both before and after the disengagement from the Strip - falls on the Palestinians. Were it not for the shooting, Israel would not respond.

For the past eight months Hamas has ruled the Gaza Strip alone, and it is no longer possible to explain away the shooting as due to a lack of control over rogue organizations. The time has come for the Palestinians to ask themselves and their leadership about the direction they are heading. Are the West Bank and the Gaza Strip still one entity, aspiring to establish an independent state alongside Israel? Is it possible that in all situations, Israel will hold negotiations for the establishment of such a state while Hamas is shooting at it? Has Hamas decided to foil a peace agreement and chosen for its people the option of continuous war?

Israel left the Gaza Strip in the summer 2005 to signal the start of an end to the occupation. Kadima was set up after leading figures in Likud, with Ariel Sharon at their head, decided to withdraw from the Greater Land of Israel to more secure and limited borders. The party's political platform also included a withdrawal from the West Bank, dividing the land into two states for two peoples and an evacuation of settlements. In order to show the seriousness of its intentions, settlements from Gush Katif and northern Samaria were evacuated without an agreement.

The ball passed to the Palestinian court, where it has been stuck after the Palestinians elected Hamas, which opposes a peace agreement with Israel. Instead of Gaza becoming the cornerstone for a Palestinian state, it has become a hostile entity under siege.

The disengagement was not a mistake, but a necessary move of vision and hope. Hamas undermined the hope for a shared future and opted

to preserve, as its declared policy, its "resistance" to the existence of the State of Israel, and by extension continue its path of violence. While Israel is trying to correct its historic error of settling in the heart of the Palestinian population by converging into old-new borders of a more ethical democracy, the Palestinians elected Hamas, which is not willing to compromise. The Qassam attacks are not proof that the disengagement failed, but that the Hamas rule is leading the Palestinians into a new round of an unnecessary war. While Mahmoud Abbas is trying to preserve, with the skin of his teeth, a channel of dialogue with Israel, one that will lead to an agreement, Hamas and the other groups are making great efforts to foil any chance for a solution.

If the limited military actions Israel is undertaking in an effort to bring an end to the Qassam rockets will not bring an end to the shooting; if the moderate states, and first and foremost Egypt and Jordan fail to contain Hamas - Israel will have no option but to embark on a broad military operation.

The Israel Defense Forces *raison d'etre* is to protect the country's citizens from attack. Even if the success of a military operation is not guaranteed, that concern must not prevent the government from doing what is necessary in order to protect the lives of its citizens and the state's border. The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is political, and should always be pursued. At the same time, Israel must prove that the blood of its citizens cannot be forfeited - so that in the future, its neighbors will abide by the agreements to which they have committed.

All of the newsletter archives can be found on the Suburban Orthodox webpage (Israel Action section) at www.SuburbanOrthodox.org/iacn.php.

Familiar Mideast mania

By Paul Greenberg The Washington Times January 24, 2008

It has become tradition that no American president may leave office without not making peace between Israelis and Palestinians, always to great fanfare but less and less prospect of success. The rhetoric tends to be produced in inverse ratio to anything actually achieved.

Sometimes the show is put on at Camp David with attendant walks in the woods, last-minute breakdowns, and general, overwrought drama. At other times, like now, the performance involves a grand presidential progress through the Middle East to no apparent effect.

Exaggerated expectations became an essential part of the rite that marked the last year of both the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. If there's a Hillary Clinton administration, one suspects the same pageant will be re-enacted with ever-declining prospects for real peace.

It just may be too much to expect that, in the last, declining year of an American presidency, and in the midst of the usual election-year hurly-burly, presidents would give up their addiction to over-optimistic assessments and hyped rhetoric.

Jaw-jaw is better, as Winston Churchill once observed, than war-war. By all means, let these three-way negotiations in the Mideast proceed. Maybe indefinitely. But why bring in the Big Names and bigger dreams without having laid the groundwork for any realistic understanding?

The cause of peace would be better served by lowering both expectations and the volume. The wilder the promises — this time an American president has spoken of an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty by the end of the year — the greater the disappointment when no peace materializes. Let's keep hope alive, but let's face the considerable obstacles that stand in the way.

To achieve peace requires strong leaders who can count on the support of their people for unpalatable sacrifices. Menachem Begin was able to meet all of Egypt's territorial demands in return for a cold peace that, whatever its defects, is far better than war. But have there ever been weaker leaders than today's on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides of the table?

Israel's Ehud Olmert may be the most distrusted leader in the Jewish state's history, having presided over at least a moral defeat for his country in the latest war in Lebanon. Now he may lose whatever peace remains on the West Bank if he agrees to remove the Israeli troops there and make way for a terrorist state nestled against Israel's long, exposed flank.

It is a familiar pattern by now: When the Israelis decamped from Lebanon, Hezbollah filled the vacuum, and war came. The Israelis uprooted their

settlements in the Gaza Strip, but instead of their departure leading to peace, they succeeded mainly in moving the war zone a few miles across the Israeli border. The rockets no longer fall on Israeli settlements in Gaza — there aren't any left — but on border towns like Sderot and, thanks to Iranian-supplied rockets, on Ashkelon even further up the coast.

As for Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians' proto-state leader, he doesn't even control all of his own proto-state, having lost Gaza to Hamas in a bloody uprising that could indicate the fate of the West Bank, too, once the Israelis depart. He heads a state that has failed even before it became a state.

It's not that there isn't light at the end of the tunnel, there's always been. There's just no tunnel. The happy vision of two states, Jewish and Arab, living in peace, security and economic and political cooperation goes way back — at least to the Peel Commission's report of 1937. One can almost trace the history of Arab-Israeli relations by the times such a solution has been proposed but never came to fruition.

There was the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946; the partition of the British mandate approved by the United Nations in 1947; the Madrid Conference of 1991 and all its failed progeny, from the Oslo Declaration of Principles in 1993 to the Camp David Summit of 2000 and the Bush Road Map of 2003. And that's to mention only some of the wreckage along the road to peace that, again and again, has led to war.

Now we're in the middle of still another empty diplomatic exercise, which promises to produce a paper peace at best. To borrow a phrase from Israel's Abba Eban, who had a gift for pithy sayings, Palestinian leaders from Haj Amin al-Husseini to Yasser Arafat never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

There comes a time to recognize that, however bleak the prospects for a happy ending to this long, long conflict, things could be worse, and have been. Regularly. See the Six-Day War of 1967 and the Yom Kippur War of 1973, both of which dragged in the entire Arab world and, to an alarming extent, the great powers, too, with their nuclear arsenals.

If the goal were more modest in the Mideast, like just containing the current brush fires, it might be achievable. Instead, we get talk of a comprehensive peace treaty by the end of 2008. But the lower the expectations, the more real the achievements might be.

Yes, such counsel sounds almost un-American. For when we Americans perceive a problem, our first impulse is to fix it — now, completely and forever, at least on paper. When it would really be a

great step forward just to ameliorate the danger of war.

Conclusion: Instead of unrealistic promises and Cloud-cuckoo timetables, a little understatement, even a little salutary neglect, would not be out of

order. There are worse things than the status quo, unsatisfying as it is. For there is nothing so bad it couldn't be made worse by the kind of airy speechifying that has no basis in reality — and leads only to more disappointment and more distrust.

Rocketing Toward War

By Richard Cohen The Washington Post

Rockets launched from the nearby Gaza Strip fall here almost daily. These Qassams are crude devices that hardly ever kill people, although they have, and hardly ever wound anyone, although recently a boy lost part of a leg. They hit with unpredictable regularity, taking a roof here, a piece of a wall there and demolishing the peace of mind of every resident. Bit by bit, Sderot is going crazy.

The next Middle East war may start over Sderot. To many Israelis, the daily rain of Qassam rockets is reason enough to go back into Gaza and eradicate the rocket-makers, the rocket launchers and the entire Hamas leadership that now runs Gaza. The call for action superficially makes a certain amount of sense. But memory rebukes: Didn't Israel just pull out of Gaza?

Yes, it did. It withdrew most of its military and all of its settlements and turned the wretched area, populated by 1.2 million mostly poor Palestinian refugees, over to the moderate Palestinian Authority. Then the PA lost an election to Hamas and the militants have been in charge ever since, permitting the incessant rocketing of Sderot and its environs. The Qassams are lofted over the high border wall, and whether they hit a school or a hospital or a cat basking in the sun is of no concern to Hamas.

In Europe and elsewhere, where activists are just plain dizzy from their own moral virtue, Israel is denounced for inflicting suffering on Gaza. But the protesters say nothing about the Qassams raining from the sky -- sometimes as many as 40 a day. The adjectives for the Qassams are innocuous: crude, inaccurate. Yes, but they have killed 13 in the past seven years, and they make life here almost unbearable. The bus stops have been converted to bomb shelters, and a tarpaulin of steel has been thrown over a school to protect it. Question a resident and you will not get bluster. "I'm scared," says Anatoly Ahurov, 25, formerly of the former Soviet Union.

Behind police headquarters, the casings of hundreds of spent Qassams are stacked like cordwood before a Vermont winter. Three landed within two hours of my hitting town. One forced me into a shelter. I was safe, protected by a cement ceiling and the law of averages. Still, my heart got a three-latte jolt. I would not want to live here.

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Actually, almost no one wants to live here anymore. But many of the residents are poor, distant immigrants from Morocco or more recent ones from the former Soviet Union. The value of their homes has plummeted. Many want to sell. No one wants to buy. So they stay. So they wait.

The residents suffer in other ways as well. Many have psychological ailments or the physical ailments brought on by the psychological ones -- heart trouble, for instance, or hysteria or sudden fits of violence. When I mentioned this later to a resident of Haifa, he nodded. This veteran of a war that took one of his eyes said that for all he had seen in combat, he has yet to recover from the rocketing of Haifa during the 2006 war with Hezbollah. When the battlefield is your house, there is no going home.

Sderot represents the metastasized insanity of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle -- rockets sent to kill anyone, it doesn't matter whom. The tempting solution is to respond in kind. But this has been done. In Gaza. In Lebanon. Now the northern border is -- fingers crossed -- quiet. Some sort of deal, arrangement, accommodation, understanding has been reached with Hezbollah. Maybe nothing more than a wink. Maybe just a breathing spell.

Something like this has to be done with Hamas as well. Israel has the armed might to maul Hamas. But inevitably, the rockets will return, sooner or later reaching Ashkelon, the major port not all that far away. (Nothing in Israel is all that far away.) Gaza is a pitiless trap.

Israelis don't trust Hamas, and why should they? It wishes Israel nothing but death. But some accommodation has to be reached. There are ways. Any agreement, though, would undercut Israel's moderate Palestinian ally, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah organization. Israel could do nothing, but nothing is demeaning, dangerous -- and, anyway, nothing is not what Israel does.

Sderot is a town, real enough and in pain. But it is also a metaphor. Its residents are trapped. So is Israel. Sooner or later, if nothing is done, a rocket will hit kids on the playground or mothers strolling the street, and Israel will have to respond -- another nasty, little war. That much is clear. This too: Absolutely nothing else is.

Who's Making These Nazi-like Statements?

By Alan M. Dershowitz FrontPage Magazine.com February 5, 2008

Here is a multiple choice quiz:

1. Who made the following statement? "We have created a culture of violence (Israel and the Jews are the biggest players) and that culture of violence is eventually going to destroy humanity."

- A) A person named "Hitler",
- B) A person named "Stalin"
- C) A person named "Gandhi"?

2. Who described the establishment of the state of Israel as a "historical, moral, political calamity," blames the existence of Israel for putting the entire world in "peril" and condemns "American Jews" for the "shame" of failing to denounce Israel?

- A) Mahmoud Ahmadinejad
- B) The Hamas Charter
- C) Award-winning American playwright Tony Kushner.

3. Who has said that Israel may eventually cause the "end of the human race" by means of global warming?

- A) American losing politician Ralph Nader
- B) American losing politician Pat Buchanan
- C) Former minister in the Blair government, Clare Short.

The answer to the first question is Arun Gandhi, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, and himself the former head of the MK Gandhi Institute for Non-Violence at the University of Rochester, who recently wrote those Nazi-like words in a widely circulated blog. He subsequently apologized for including "all Jewish people," implying that it is only Israel and most Jewish people who are "the biggest players" in the culture of violence that is eventually going to destroy humanity. Not Islamic terrorists, not nuclear sabre-rattling Iran – but "the Jews!" If you answered Hitler, that is understandable since Hitler made very similar accusations. Hitler, like Gandhi, accused the Jews of causing all the problems in the world.

The answer to the second question is Tony Kushner, who is thoroughly ignorant about the

history, morality and politics of Israel's establishment as the result of the United Nations division of the contested area into two states: one for the Palestinians and one for the Jews. The Jews accepted the two-state solution and declared statehood. The Arab nations rejected the two-state solution and declared a genocidal war against the Jewish state. But you wouldn't know that by listening to Kushner. If you mistakenly believed that the correct answer was Iran or the Hamas Charter, that too is understandable, because both have made the same point.

The answer to the third question is Clare Short, former Secretary of State for International Development in the UK Labor government, who has said that Israel will cause the end of the human race because it diverts the world's attention from the problem of global warming. Not China, the United States or other large polluters, but tiny Israel, which is one of the most environmental-friendly nations of the world!

These are highly regarded individuals who have large followings around the world. Yet they mimic the most despised group in modern history – the Nazi Party – in blaming the world's ills on "the Jews," the Jewish state and "American Jews." If this were not so dangerous and tragic, its patent ignorance would almost be humorous. It reminds me of the old joke about Hitler making an harangue in Nuremberg, during which he shouted out his favorite rhetorical question: "Who is causing all the problems of the world?" A voice from the back of the crowd shouted out, "the bicycle riders." A shocked Hitler asked "Why the bicycle riders?" The voice responded, "why the Jews?"

It's easy to scapegoat "the Jews" or the Jewish state for all the world's problems. One would expect, however, that in light of the history of Nazism, people like Gandhi, Kushner, and Short would reflect more deeply before issuing this modern day version of the Blood Libel. Shame on them.

Apartheid Label Is Grossly Misapplied to Israel

By Gary Levelev The Daily Californian (Berkeley) February 8, 2008

Let's talk about the central aim of this week-to demonize the state of Israel by employing a rhetorical comparison of its policies and those implemented by the racist South African regime. Anyone with even remote knowledge of either case should be appalled by the absurdity of this comparison.

The South African regime promoted a policy of ethnic cleansing, forcefully expelled millions of black citizens, and prohibited interracial marriage and intercourse within its borders. To compare such atrocious policies with those of the Middle East's only democracy is irresponsible and offensive.

One need only look at the demographic make-up of Israel and its government in order to

understand the ludicrousness of the apartheid claim. A full quarter of Israel's population is not Jewish and includes 1.3 million Arabs. Arabs make up one-tenth of the members in Israel's parliament, hold high government positions, and have even served on the Israeli Supreme Court. All citizens of Israel, including Arabs, enjoy the same civil rights and liberties. Israel is, ironically, the only country in the Middle East in which Arabs can freely petition their own government. In light of the facts, the apartheid label simply does not stick. Obviously, the most contentious of Israel's current policies is its construction of the so-called "apartheid wall." Many critics have exaggerated its physical properties to the point of creating the image of a second Berlin Wall.

The reality is that 97 percent of the security barrier consists of multilayered chain-link fencing. The remaining 3 percent had to be constructed out of concrete because of its location in a region that had previously been vulnerable to sniper attacks. The fence is, first and foremost, a security measure—a response to the Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israel that began in 2000 and that have resulted in almost 500 Israeli civilian deaths to date.

The fence is neither a political boundary nor an indication of a desire for territorial expansion. Of course, as with security issue, the fence presents obstacles and the Israeli government is working to expedite the process of traveling between Israel and the West Bank. However, these concerns do not undermine Israel's right to maintain the security of its citizens in the same way that any other sovereign democracy would if faced with comparable threats. The fact that the fence has prevented over 90 percent of attempted terrorist attacks since its construction validates its existence

International Israeli Apartheid Week is one of many symptoms of the unjust double standard that the international community has applied to Israel since its birth. Critics target Israel's Law of Return for Jews as an "apartheid" policy while almost identical citizenship laws in countries like Germany and Ireland go unnoticed.

Almost no one criticizes Jordan for its law barring Jews from becoming citizens. And can anyone remember the last time that the United Nations passed a resolution condemning blatant human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia or Syria? No? That is fascinating, considering the fact that the UN has issued over 300 condemnations of Israel in the last 40 years. This double standard can only be explained by outrageous ignorance or bigotry.

The Israeli apartheid label is a fallacious and offensive attempt to delegitimize Israel. This irresponsible use of "apartheid" dilutes the power of the word, hinders efforts at peace, and leads to ignorance of other glaring cases of injustice, both in the Middle East and worldwide.

Palestinian Christians live in constant fear

By Father Raymond DeSouza The National Post (Canada) February 19, 2008

Here with an item from last week's news that you might not have heard about: Unidentified gunmen blew up the YMCA library in the Gaza Strip on Friday morning. While no one was hurt, two guards were temporarily kidnapped while the offices were looted, a vehicle stolen and all 8,000 books destroyed. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, although Fatah accused Hamas of being behind it. Hamas, for its part, strongly denied any responsibility and condemned the attack. Meanwhile, confidential sources in Gaza told the Jerusalem Post that the attack was in response to the reprinting of the Muhammad cartoons in Danish newspapers last week.

The supposed motivation for the attack, and the fact that it was not big news, illustrates the dire situation faced by many Christians living in the Palestinian territories.

There are only some 3,500 Christians, mostly Greek Orthodox, in Gaza. Over the past two years, al-Qaeda-affiliated groups have claimed responsibility for attacks against Christian figures and institutions with the stated goal of driving Christians out of Gaza.

If indeed the attack on the YMCA was motivated by the latest wave of violence in Denmark over the cartoon controversy, it shows how precarious the Christian position is. The Young Men's Christian Association in Gaza is open to Muslims and includes a school, sports club and community hall. It is not a centre of Christian proselytism. But if events in Denmark which have nothing to do with Christianity can produce anti-

Christian violence in Gaza, then it is clear that there is nothing Christians can do to avoid such violence.

The problem is not their behaviour but, in the eyes of the violent Islamist jihadists, their very presence. They must simply live in hope that some faraway event does not inflame the anti-Christian wrath of their neighbours. Is it any wonder that Christians in such situations desire to emigrate? Could anyone judge harshly the few thousand Christians in Gaza if they were to leave entirely?

A second noteworthy dimension of the Gaza YMCA bombing is, well, how un-noteworthy it was. It was treated in the Israeli press as a sort of news brief. After all, there was the continuing story of the assassination in Damascus of Hezbollah's chief of terror operations, Imad Mughniyeh. And just hours after the YMCA attack, eight Palestinians in Gaza were killed in an explosion at the home of Ayman Fayad, a senior Islamic Jihad official. All Palestinian organizations blamed the Israeli Defence Forces for the blast; Israel denied any involvement.

So how can the destruction of a library, or the firebombing of a school, or the desecration of a church be reported against the daily toll of political violence elsewhere, to say nothing of the international stories? On the same weekend, the French foreign minister arrived for a visit, and a German newspaper reported that Israel was preparing to declare dead the two soldiers who were kidnapped in 2006, the incident which gave rise to the Second Lebanon War.

Even then, who would do the reporting? There is no free press in Gaza. Outside reporters, whether

Israeli or foreign, cannot move about freely and pursue such stories. Foreign reporters in particular need extensive handlers, as they do not know the local language, the local geography or the local leaders. It is much easier to stay in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem and rewrite press statements about the visit of the latest foreign dignitary.

Even if the reporters came, what would they be told? It is well known that Christian Palestinians who have been subject to firebombings, seizures of homes and businesses, assaults and death threats still tell foreign visitors that they have excellent relations with their Muslim neighbours. After the foreigners

go home, these Christians must remain, and are loath to give any reason for jihadist extremists to think that they are stirring up trouble.

And so it goes -- news trickles out about one outrage or another, but it gets lost if it gets noticed at all. Meanwhile, Christians in Gaza and the West Bank try to live quietly, never knowing whether a newspaper in Denmark or a papal speech in Germany or nothing in particular might be the pretext for violence coming to their doors.

It is an awful way to live. It is more awful still that so few know, or care about it.

A Death in Damascus

By Michael Young Slate Magazine February 19, 2008

After the assassination of Imad Mughniyah, Hezbollah finds itself squeezed between Syria and Iran. We still don't know who assassinated senior Hezbollah commander Imad Mughniyah in Damascus, Syria, last week. The incident was only the latest setback for the Shiite party as it faces rising anger in Lebanon for perpetuating a domestic political crisis that has lasted for months.

Opponents of President Bashar Assad's regime quickly blamed Syria for the bombing that killed Mughniyah. Because it occurred in a high-security area, they argued, the operation must have been an inside job. Why would the Syrians do this? To cut a deal with the United States amid mounting international pressure against Damascus—including the establishment of a tribunal to judge suspects in the 2005 murder of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, which was almost certainly a Syrian hit. Allegedly, Mughniyah's elimination is proof of Syria's goodwill. Director of U.S. National Intelligence Mike McConnell was thinking along the same lines when he declared on Sunday: "There's some evidence that it may have been internal Hezbollah. It may have been Syria. We don't know yet, and we're trying to sort that out."

However, such explanations could be efforts to deepen the mistrust of Syria's regime among its allies rather than statements of fact. Although everything is possible with the Assads, and participation by individual Syrians cannot be ruled out, Mughniyah stood at the nexus point of Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah. It would be remarkable for Damascus to have sacrificed such a figure without an explicit quid pro quo while potentially jeopardizing its ties with Hezbollah and Tehran. Mughniyah was more the icing on a prospective deal than an opening offer.

Whoever was behind Mughniyah's death, and some Israeli intelligence sources are saying it was Mossad, Syria's reputation is taking a beating. People offering condolences to Hezbollah reported that its sympathizers expressed suspicion of the Assad regime. Syrian trustworthiness was not helped when

sources in Damascus denied that Syrian, Hezbollah, and Iranian investigators were jointly looking into the bombing, even though an Iranian official had confirmed this.

The Syrians also insisted that Mughniyah arrived in Damascus the day before his assassination without their knowledge. This was plainly nonsense. Syria's intelligence services keep close tabs on anybody of note entering their frontiers. In clumsily trying to shift the blame elsewhere, the Syrians looked as if they were covering something up. Anti-Syrian Arab newspapers added fuel to the fire. For example, the Kuwaiti daily *Al-Siyassa*, which sometimes has good Saudi intelligence information, reported that Mughniyah was living in a Damascus apartment owned by a business partner of the powerful cousin of President Bashar Assad.

Hezbollah finds itself in a bind because of Mughniyah. The party blames Israel for the bombing, but it is also peddling a more complex plotline that includes Arab involvement. A source close to Hezbollah told another Kuwaiti daily that the assassination was "Palestinian-Israeli," used American technology, and was financed by an unidentified Gulf Arab official. A Lebanese daily close to Hezbollah and a Syrian newspaper owned by Assad's cousin also mentioned an Arab angle. This account could be politically motivated, allowing Syria to later hit out in many directions against its regional foes, particularly in Lebanon.

With so much contradictory information circulating, what can Hezbollah's secretary-general, Hassan Nasrallah, do? At Mughniyah's funeral, he threatened to engage in open war against Israel, indicating that Hezbollah would respond outside the geographical parameters of the conflict. This implies an attack against Israeli targets or Jewish centers worldwide. But things are not that simple. Hezbollah has spent years successfully burnishing its international image—one reason it remains off the EU list of terrorist groups. Giving that up just to avenge Mughniyah would be costly. Besides, every

intelligence agency in the world now expects Hezbollah to retaliate, so the party will not find it easy to do so.

Add to that Hezbollah's ruinous behavior inside Lebanon since the end of the summer 2006 war against Israel. Many Lebanese blamed the party for provoking that destructive conflict. Things have improved little since the end of the war, because Hezbollah has collaborated with Syria's efforts to reimpose its hegemony over Lebanon after its army's withdrawal three years ago. The party has blocked the election of a Lebanese president, part of a Syrian strategy to impose its conditions on any new officeholder. The ensuing stalemate has greatly discredited Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Arab world. But the situation in Beirut is only a symptom of a larger dilemma Hezbollah has faced since 2000, when Israel withdrew its army from Lebanon: Without open-ended conflict, the party cannot justify retaining its weapons; but without weapons, Hezbollah cannot exist. Its leadership knows that political normalization in a Lebanon free of Syrian

interference would lead to the party's disarmament, since most Lebanese want their government to have a monopoly over the use of violence. To ward off this eventuality, Hezbollah favors a decisive return of Syrian domination over Lebanon, knowing that Assad will necessarily have to rely on Hezbollah's weapons as leverage before he can consider resuming negotiations with Israel.

That's why the Mughniyah affair won't shake the foundations of the Syrian-Iranian-Hezbollah triangle. Mutual confidence is not high, but all three partners need one another. Iran requires Hezbollah to deter an Israeli attack on its nuclear facilities, and Tehran can only arm the party through Syria. Caught between Iran's and Syria's welfare on the one hand and domestic disapproval on the other, Hezbollah faces a bumpy ride ahead.

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Jerusalem stateless in International Monopoly

By Michal Lando The Jerusalem Post February 21, 2008

The battle for Jerusalem took a new direction this week, when a reference to Israel was removed from an on-line poll to select the cities to be featured in the international version of the popular Monopoly board game. As Jerusalem climbed the ranks, making it to fourth place in an Internet vote to determine the 10 cities out of a list of 68 to be featured on the new version of the game, it lost an essential component: its country.

From Tuesday until Wednesday afternoon, Jerusalem was the only city to be listed without a location. Unlike Paris, France; Montreal, Canada; and Riga, Latvia; Jerusalem stood on its own as a city with no homeland. However, following complaints, all country names were removed from the list on Wednesday.

The Israeli Consulate expressed satisfaction with Hasbro's decision to remove all country references, and even took credit for the change. When Israel was the only country name missing from the list, Assaf Shariv, the consul-general in New York, had said his office was working with Hasbro to return Israel to the Monopoly running. "We are weighing all options available to us, including legal action," he said. According to a Hasbro Company spokesman Wayne Charness, Israel was removed from the list by a mid-level employee following a slew of e-mails from angry Palestinians, when no one in upper management was there to handle the situation.

"As I understand it, that mid-level employee made a regrettable decision without talking to anybody before it," Charness said.

In a statement released on Tuesday afternoon, Hasbro said its Parker Brothers subsidiary had never intended to print any country names on the final boards, and that all on-line tags were used as "geographic reference" points.

"We would never want to enter into any political debate," the statement said. "We apologize for any upset this has caused our Monopoly fans and hope that they continue to support their favorite cities."

The campaign to get Jerusalem on the Monopoly board is being run primarily by the consulate in Manhattan. But also making an effort in this direction is One Jerusalem - the group set up seven years ago to promote retaining Israeli sovereignty over every part of the city and to counter any deal with the Palestinians that would do otherwise.

Yehiel Leiter, One Jerusalem's director-general (and a former bureau chief to Binyamin Netanyahu), told the BBC this week that his organization was supporting the Global Monopoly campaign because it "puts Jerusalem on the table. It has people not avoid Jerusalem because it's contested."

To vote for your favorite city go to http://www.hasbro.com/games/en_GB/ki-d-games/monopoly. Log in, register and vote -once a day through February 28.

If anyone would like to receive this newsletter by a weekly e-mail, please drop us a line at sheldonb@rsfchart.com and we will be glad to add you to our growing list of subscribers.