

First They Came for the Jews

By Dorothy Rabinowitz The Wall Street Journal April 2, 2007

Early in June 2004, an employee of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC -- better known by its media tag, "the powerful Israeli lobby" -- received an urgent phone call. Pentagon analyst Lawrence Franklin, a specialist on Iran, informed AIPAC lobbyist Keith Weissman that they had better meet because he had news of the most important kind to disclose. Mr. Weissman not surprisingly agreed to the rendezvous, held in Pentagon City, Va., where he was told about an imminent, Iran-directed assault on American troops and Israeli agents in Iraq. First, though, Mr. Franklin delivered a warning whose purpose would be clear only later. What he was about to tell him was highly classified, "Agency stuff," and having it could get him into trouble, he informed Mr. Weissman.

Impelled by the urgency of the message, the lobbyist nonetheless quickly shared it with his senior colleague, Steve Rosen, director of foreign policy issues for AIPAC. Hoping to raise the alarm about the imperiled Americans and Israelis, the two then contacted a Washington Post reporter (who filed no story on the matter) and an Israeli embassy officer.

Mr. Weissman didn't know for some time that his trusted Pentagon informant -- a man he and his AIPAC colleague had met with several times before -- had, at this particular meeting, been wearing a wire for the FBI. Or that his warning that he was sharing highly classified stuff had been spelled out for the purpose of evidence gathering. Neither of the AIPAC lobbyists knew, then, that they had been entrapped in a sting, to lead ultimately to a remarkable legal show. Their trial, which begins this June, marks the first ever attempt by government prosecutors to convict private citizens under the 1919 Espionage Act. Nor did Larry Franklin have any idea, either, of the trap in which he was himself now ensnared.

Mr. Franklin's problem began when he was spotted lunching with Steve Rosen, for some time the object of FBI surveillance. The Iran specialist had first met with Messrs. Rosen and Weissman in February 2003, meetings repeated on at least three other occasions. The two AIPAC employees had reason to see in Mr. Franklin, a reserve Colonel in the U.S. Air Force, a staunch patriot who held values and geopolitical views much like their own. Mr. Franklin's driving concern -- the danger posed by a terrorist Iran, and the need for vigorous countermeasures by the U.S. -- played no small role

in their discussions. The centerpiece of the indictment to come concerned his disclosures to Steve Rosen about an internal policy document on Iran, which, the government alleged, was classified.

The sympathetic bond (characterized as a conspiracy in the government's indictment) between the Pentagon analyst and the AIPAC employees abruptly unraveled when FBI agents paid Mr. Franklin a home visit on June 30, 2004. Appealing to his patriotism, they persuaded him to cooperate, telling him that the two lobbyists were up to no good, and might be endangering American interests. Perhaps even more persuasive was the FBI's discovery in his house of 83 classified documents -- material he had taken to work on at home, as he had done repeatedly despite warnings from his Pentagon supervisors that this was impermissible.

He was to enjoy nothing of the good fortune of Sandy Berger, former National Security Adviser for President Clinton, who pleaded guilty in 2004 to making off with highly classified documents related to that administration's policy on terrorism -- papers he was observed stuffing into his pockets while sitting in the secure reading room of the National Archives. Mr. Berger was charged with a misdemeanor and paid a \$10,000 fine. Former CIA director John Deutch, who also faced charges of mishandling government documents, was pardoned on Mr. Clinton's last day in office.

Anguished, his wife ill, and faced with loss of his job -- now a likely possibility, as the FBI informed him -- Mr. Franklin agreed to help gather evidence on Messrs. Rosen and Weissman.

By Aug. 27, FBI agents apparently felt they'd gathered enough -- enough, at least, to go public, via a leak to CBS's Lesley Stahl, about the Pentagon mole they had succeeded in unmasking. FBI investigators soon after informed a stunned Larry Franklin, who had cooperated with them without receiving any promise of consideration about those classified materials, that he now faced serious prison time. He would have been still more stunned had he known of the elaborately detailed indictment to come, charging him, among other allegations, with conspiracy to gather and unlawfully transmit national defense information. He had yet to appreciate what it meant that his alleged co-conspirators were lobbyists for AIPAC.

The tone of the CBS News story (Aug. 27, 2004) provided more than a few clues on this point.

In a higher than usual state of excitement, Ms. Stahl announced that the FBI was, in agent terminology, about to "roll up" a suspected spy who had given classified information to Israel, and "at the heart of this, two people who work at AIPAC, the powerful pro-Israeli lobby." The investigators had "concerns," we learned: "Did Israel also use the analyst to try to influence U.S. policy on the war in Iraq?" The analyst, furthermore, had "ties to top Pentagon officials Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith."

The entire investigation, with wiretaps, surveillance and photography, Ms. Stahl announced, had been headed up by the FBI's David Szady. It was a name she had reason to know well. This FBI luminary was the same agent who had headed another investigation -- the subject, just two years earlier, of her own scathing "60 Minutes" report about the FBI's obsessive, confident, willfully blind pursuit of CIA counterintelligence agent Brian Kelley, whom the bureau suspected of being a Soviet mole in the late '90s.

While Mr. Szady and his agents persisted in pursuing an innocent man for three and a half years, solemnly citing evidence for their charges that would have done Inspector Clouseau proud (a hand-drawn map supposedly of the mole's site of operation turned out to be a map of Mr. Kelley's jogging routes through a park), the real mole continued to turn vital intelligence over to his KGB handlers. That mole was the FBI's very own Robert Hanssen, who had gone undetected thanks to Mr. Szady's insistence that his agents had the goods on Brian Kelley.

None of this history got a mention in Ms. Stahl's report on the new Szady investigation she'd been privileged to disclose, unlike the innuendo about the alleged spy's ties to those Pentagon officials, Messrs. Wolfowitz and Feith.

It was a mere hint of things to come. News of the spy story, it was clear, had brought new life to the obsessed. From quarters of the left and right, and not infrequently the mainstream media came, now, daily rumblings about the spy for Israel, his ties to neoconservatives in the administration, the influence and machinations of the neocons, their effort to push the war in Iraq. More than a few of these meditations on Israel, AIPAC and the power of the neocons bore a strong resemblance to a kind of letter that occasionally shows up in journalists' mailboxes. The sort that bring punctiliously drawn diagrams, cosmic in scope, with endless tiny boxes, and tinier labels, handprinted with a concentration only the deranged can summon, all intended to illustrate the sinister interconnectedness among certain institutions and persons -- the president, the Pope, CIA, World Bank, the Association for Dental Implants and so on.

Steven Rosen, 63 at the time of his indictment in August of 2005, and Keith Weissman, age 53,

both shortly thereafter lost their jobs at AIPAC, whose leadership was clearly alert to the disastrous potential in this case. AIPAC itself was not threatened with indictment, though suggestions of the behavior it would do well to follow were plain enough, as when government attorneys pointedly and repeatedly asked AIPAC's lawyer if the lobbyists still were employed there, and if the agency was still paying their health insurance and their legal fees. Not long after, the answer to all three was no. Mr. Rosen's attorney, Abbe Lowell, and Mr. Weissman's -- John Nassikas and Baruch Weiss -- are carrying their clients, who have by now racked up millions in legal fees.

In October 2005, with pro bono attorney Plato Cacheris at his side, Lawrence Franklin pleaded guilty -- a decision he could not avoid making, given the indisputable proof of offense -- to keeping classified documents at his home. His indictment charged much more -- conspiring to communicate national defense information to persons not entitled to receive it, meetings with representatives of foreign nation A (Israel), and Messrs. Rosen and Weissman, cited as furtherance of a conspiracy. The former desk officer for Iran stood charged with conspiracy to "advance his own personal foreign policy agenda" and influence people in government. One Washington insider, hearing this, tartly noted that if all government officials who leaked material to effect policy changes were charged and convicted, the prisons would soon be packed.

The guilty plea brought a sentence of 12 years, seven months -- not a light one. Mr. Franklin's hope for reducing it hinges on the cooperation he gives government prosecutors in the trial of the lobbyists. The role assigned him has from the beginning been noteworthy -- a reversal of norms. Government officials don't normally get to take part in stings of ordinary citizens. But Mr. Franklin, an official with top security clearance, sworn to protect classified information, is the one asked to wear a wire to amass evidence against the two men with whom he has allegedly conspired. It usually goes the other way around. There is a reason that the government official caught taking a bribe is the object of the law's pursuit, rather than the citizen who has tried to pay him off -- and why it is the citizen, crooked as he may be, who wears the wire and gets the possibility of a deal. That reason, of course, is the higher standard expected of those sworn to uphold their offices. If nothing else, the role assigned Mr. Franklin testifies to the government's singular focus on nailing the AIPAC lobbyists.

Even so it remains to be seen what help Mr. Franklin will give the prosecutors at the forthcoming trial of Messrs. Rosen and Mr. Weissman. In the course of his guilty plea, the otherwise respectful Mr. Franklin forcefully objected to the government's characterization of the self-typed paper about Iran

he'd faxed to Mr. Rosen -- a document at the heart of one of the significant charges against the lobbyist -- as "classified."

"It was unclassified," Lawrence Franklin told the court, "and it is unclassified."

The government would "prove that it was classified," announced the U.S. attorney.

Mr. Franklin: "Not a chance."

What chance the defendants -- who asked no one for classified information -- have of acquittal and the avoidance of prison remains to be seen. Though Judge T. S. Ellis rejected defense motions to dismiss the charges on constitutional grounds, his early rulings have so far shown a keen appreciation of the meaning of this case. In this he stands in sharp contrast to the nation's leading civil rights guardians, these days busy filing lawsuits against the government and fulminating on behalf of the rights of captured terrorists in Guantanamo and elsewhere, while accusing the U.S. of failing to provide open trials and assurances that the accused have the right to view the evidence against them. As of this day neither the ACLU nor the Center for Constitutional Rights has shown the smallest interest in this prosecution so bound up with First Amendment implications. Nor has most of the media, whose daily work includes receiving "leaks" from government officials far more damaging to national security than anything alleged in this case. In this as in the Scooter Libby matter, the desire to see Bush Administration officials nailed apparently counts for more than First Amendment principle.

The government has also moved (in the interest of protecting classified information) to impose strict limits during the trial, on the testimony the public and press will be allowed to hear. If the proposal is allowed, significant portions of the testimony will be available only in the form of summaries. Witnesses, furthermore, would not be allowed to deliver certain testimony directly to jurors, who would instead be told to look at secret documents. It will be, as a member of the Reporters Committee For Freedom of the Press, now opposing the government efforts, describes it, "a secret trial within a public trial." (Dow Jones, publisher of this newspaper, has joined the Reporters Committee in filing an objection.)

The prosecutors may in fact need all the help they can get in this trial, which, the judge has noted,

concerns actions that go to the heart of First Amendment guarantees. Above all, the government will have to prove that those charged with disseminating classified information "knew that its disclosure could injure the national defense."

One of the charges against Mr. Rosen was that he enabled Mr. Franklin's illegal transmission of classified material. This occurred, according to the indictment, when Mr. Franklin said he wanted to fax a paper to Mr. Rosen, and asked for his fax number. Mr. Rosen's crime, the charge establishes, was in giving him that fax number. Such is the sort of crime for which he could get upwards of 20 years, and Mr. Weissman, 10. The document, whose classified status the government claimed it could prove, was in fact a single sheet typed by Mr. Franklin, consisting of eight bullet points stating the offenses of which Iran was allegedly guilty.

As Judge Ellis noted, the government didn't allege that the lobbyist ever asked for the document, or that it had any classification markings, or that Mr. Rosen ever even received or viewed the paper.

The consequences of this spectacle -- the indictment of two citizens for activities that go on every day in Washington, and that are clearly protected under the First Amendment -- far exceed any other in the now long list of non-crimes from which government attorneys have constructed major cases, or more precisely, show trials. A category in which we can include the mad prosecutorial pursuit of Mr. Libby.

The government could succeed in this prosecution of two non-government professionals doing what they had every reason to view as their jobs -- talking to government officials and reporters, and transmitting information and opinions. If such activities can be charged, successfully, as a "conspiracy," every professional, every business, every quarter of society -- not to mention members of the press -- will have reason to understand that this is a bell that tolls not just for two AIPAC lobbyists, but also for countless others to face trials in the future, for newly invented crimes unearthed by willing prosecutors.

Ms. Rabinowitz is a member of The Wall Street Journal's editorial board.

Nancy's epiphany on the Damascus road

By Wesley Pruden The Washington Times April 6, 2007

Nancy Pelosi is playing to her natural constituency. Jimmy Carter, the distinguished peanut farmer, and Bashar al-Assad, the murderous dictator of the terrorist government in Damascus, are thrilled. Nearly everybody else sees a lady too big for her pantyhose.

"I was glad she went," said Mr. Jimmy. (Can it possibly be true that this man was once president of

the United States?) "When there is a crisis, the best way to help resolve the crisis is to deal with the people who are instrumental to the problem."

The minister of the Syrian Cabinet was even more thrilled, perhaps because he smokes something weirder than you can find even in San Francisco. "Syria stands for freedom and for peace, and so does Nancy Pelosi."

By the time she got to Saudi Arabia, where a good woman is worth almost as much as a sheep or a goat, her hosts were close to rapture. They let her sit in the speaker's chair at the king's advisory council, where only men were previously allowed. She was particularly pleased that the Saudis didn't stuff her into an abaya, the tentlike black cloak required of Saudi women, and she could wear her pistachio-colored pantsuit.

"Nice view from here," she said. One of the sheiks shot her a glance that suggested that he thought his view was nice, too, as if she still looked young enough and muscular enough to do the heavy lifting around the house.

Another sheik, perhaps a sheik aspiring to be a television reporter, looked at her sitting where a Saudi woman would pay with her life for sitting and asked, "How does it feel?" Nancy couldn't resist taking a shot at her own country with the moral equivalence that a San Francisco Democrat sips with his afternoon chablis. "I am very pleased that after 200-plus years in the United States we finally have a woman speaker. It took us a long time."

Someone else asked about her conversation with King Abdullah, and Nancy went all jiggy inside. "Our discussion with his majesty centered around his initiative." She quickly added that she was talking about "the Saudi initiative for peace in the Middle East."

What she was talking about was the king's sneer earlier in the week that the work of the coalition in Iraq is nothing more than "an illegitimate foreign occupation." She certainly hadn't brought that up. She was more sympathetic to the king's suggestion that if Israel will quietly commit suicide peace will break out across Arabia. The king's "blueprint for peace" offers Israel "normal relations" if it withdraws from "all Arab land" lost in 1967 when

the Israelis made quick work of the massed Arab armies in only six days, resettles the Palestinian refugees in Israeli territory and creates a Palestinian state. There wouldn't be much left of Israel, which is precisely the point of the royal scheme.

"There's a lot of negotiation that must follow," Nancy Pelosi told her awed Saudi hosts, "but we commended him for his leadership on that subject."

Mrs. Pelosi is no doubt a loyal American, as she understands loyalty, but she neither understands nor appreciates the civics lessons she should have been paying attention to in junior high school. The president, Republican or Democrat, and not Congress, conducts foreign policy.

Not only did she demonstrate gross incompetence in pursuit of destructive ignorance, she made more than a little mischief when she told the Syrian despot that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gave her the message to take to Damascus that "Israel is ready to resume the peace process." So mischievous was this lethal fiction that the prime minister issued a rare "clarification." What he had actually told her, he said, was that Israel is always interested in peace but Syria "continues to be part of the Axis of Evil and a force that encourages terror in the entire Middle East."

Maybe the lady, tramping in unfamiliar territory, was jet-lagged. Maybe she was having bad hair days. But maybe she figured that anyone who hates George W. Bush as much as she does can't be bad. She recklessly imagined herself a wise man, traveling the Damascus road in search of an epiphany, and revealed herself to be a dizzy dame playing out of her league.

Wesley Pruden is editor in chief of The Times.

The Trouble With Islam

By Tawfik Hamid The Wall Street Journal

Not many years ago the brilliant Orientalist, Bernard Lewis, published a short history of the Islamic world's decline, entitled "What Went Wrong?" Astonishingly, there was, among many Western "progressives," a vocal dislike for the title. It is a false premise, these critics protested. They ignored Mr. Lewis's implicit statement that things have been, or could be, right.

But indeed, there is much that is clearly wrong with the Islamic world. Women are stoned to death and undergo clitorectomies. Gays hang from the gallows under the approving eyes of the proponents of Shariah, the legal code of Islam. Sunni and Shia massacre each other daily in Iraq. Palestinian mothers teach 3-year-old boys and girls the ideal of

April 3, 2007

martyrdom. One would expect the orthodox Islamic establishment to evade or dismiss these complaints, but less happily, the non-Muslim priests of enlightenment in the West have come, actively and passively, to the Islamists' defense.

These "progressives" frequently cite the need to examine "root causes." In this they are correct: Terrorism is only the manifestation of a disease and not the disease itself. But the root-causes are quite different from what they think. As a former member of Jemaah Islamiya, a group led by al Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, I know firsthand that the inhumane teaching in Islamist ideology can transform a young, benevolent mind into that of a terrorist. Without confronting the ideological roots

of radical Islam it will be impossible to combat it. While there are many ideological "rootlets" of Islamism, the main tap root has a name -- Salafism, or Salafi Islam, a violent, ultra-conservative version of the religion.

It is vital to grasp that traditional and even mainstream Islamic teaching accepts and promotes violence. Shariah, for example, allows apostates to be killed, permits beating women to discipline them, seeks to subjugate non-Muslims to Islam as dhimmis and justifies declaring war to do so. It exhorts good Muslims to exterminate the Jews before the "end of days." The near deafening silence of the Muslim majority against these barbaric practices is evidence enough that there is something fundamentally wrong.

The grave predicament we face in the Islamic world is the virtual lack of approved, theologically rigorous interpretations of Islam that clearly challenge the abusive aspects of Shariah. Unlike Salafism, more liberal branches of Islam, such as Sufism, typically do not provide the essential theological base to nullify the cruel proclamations of their Salafist counterparts. And so, for more than 20 years I have been developing and working to establish a theologically-rigorous Islam that teaches peace.

Yet it is ironic and discouraging that many non-Muslim, Western intellectuals -- who unceasingly claim to support human rights -- have become obstacles to reforming Islam. Political correctness among Westerners obstructs unambiguous criticism of Shariah's inhumanity. They find socioeconomic or political excuses for Islamist terrorism such as poverty, colonialism, discrimination or the existence of Israel. What incentive is there for Muslims to demand reform when Western "progressives" pave the way for Islamist barbarity? Indeed, if the problem is not one of religious beliefs, it leaves one to wonder why Christians who live among Muslims under identical circumstances refrain from contributing to wide-scale, systematic campaigns of terror.

Politicians and scholars in the West have taken up the chant that Islamic extremism is caused by the Arab-Israeli conflict. This analysis cannot convince any rational person that the Islamist murder of over 150,000 innocent people in Algeria -- which happened in the last few decades -- or their slaying of hundreds of Buddhists in Thailand, or the brutal violence between Sunni and Shia in Iraq could have anything to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Western feminists duly fight in their home countries for equal pay and opportunity, but seemingly ignore, under a façade of cultural relativism, that large numbers of women in the Islamic world live under threat of beating, execution

and genital mutilation, or cannot vote, drive cars and dress as they please.

The tendency of many Westerners to restrict themselves to self-criticism further obstructs reformation in Islam. Americans demonstrate against the war in Iraq, yet decline to demonstrate against the terrorists who kidnap innocent people and behead them. Similarly, after the Madrid train bombings, millions of Spanish citizens demonstrated against their separatist organization, ETA. But once the demonstrators realized that Muslims were behind the terror attacks they suspended the demonstrations. This example sent a message to radical Islamists to continue their violent methods.

Western appeasement of their Muslim communities has exacerbated the problem. During the four-month period after the publication of the Muhammad cartoons in a Danish magazine, there were comparatively few violent demonstrations by Muslims. Within a few days of the Danish magazine's formal apology, riots erupted throughout the world. The apology had been perceived by Islamists as weakness and concession.

Worst of all, perhaps, is the anti-Americanism among many Westerners. It is a resentment so strong, so deep-seated, so rooted in personal identity, that it has led many, consciously or unconsciously, to morally support America's enemies.

Progressives need to realize that radical Islam is based on an antiliberal system. They need to awaken to the inhumane policies and practices of Islamists around the world. They need to realize that Islamism spells the death of liberal values. And they must not take for granted the respect for human rights and dignity that we experience in America, and indeed, the West, today.

Well-meaning interfaith dialogues with Muslims have largely been fruitless. Participants must demand -- but so far haven't -- that Muslim organizations and scholars specifically and unambiguously denounce violent Salafi components in their mosques and in the media. Muslims who do not vocally oppose brutal Shariah decrees should not be considered "moderates."

All of this makes the efforts of Muslim reformers more difficult. When Westerners make politically-correct excuses for Islamism, it actually endangers the lives of reformers and in many cases has the effect of suppressing their voices.

Tolerance does not mean toleration of atrocities under the umbrella of relativism. It is time for all of us in the free world to face the reality of Salafi Islam or the reality of radical Islam will continue to face us.

Dr. Hamid, a onetime member of Jemaah Islamiya, an Islamist terrorist group, is a medical doctor and Muslim reformer living in the West.

Why I Am Not Sitting at the Back of the Bus

By Naomi Ragen The Jewish Chronicle (UK) February 23, 2007

In July 2004, after spending too much time sitting behind a computer, I took a walk in downtown Jerusalem. I bought Vanity Fair magazine, and looked forward to reading about the goings on at a famous writers' colony. In this serene state of mind, I boarded the number 40 bus towards my home in the suburb of Ramot.

In an incident which made headlines worldwide, I found myself insulted, humiliated and physically threatened because I refused to be bullied into giving up my seat and moving to the back of the bus. Unbeknown to me, this unmarked bus was part of a mehadrin, or stringent line, in which rabbis, in cooperation with the public bus company Egged, dictate where women can sit - at the back - and what they can wear - only clothing in line with a code of haredi modesty.

Now, two years later, I have joined with the Centre for Jewish Pluralism, part of the Israel Reform Movement, to file suit against Israel's public bus lines, Egged and Dan, and the Israeli Ministry of Transportation, in the name of women who have suffered abuse or who feel that their human rights have been trampled by the public, sex-segregated mehadrin lines. The suit asks that these buses be suspended until a survey is conducted to gauge the true need for them. If such a need can be proven, the suit asks that provisions be made to clearly mark such buses; that rules governing public behaviour on them be openly displayed, and that provisions be made to protect women passengers from verbal and physical abuse. The petition also demands that alternate public bus lines be made available on the same routes and at the same price.

What happened to me on this Israeli bus generated extraordinary interest worldwide. I have been interviewed on BBC four times. There was a front page article in The Times, in New York's Newsday, and America's National Public Radio. I have been filmed for German and Canadian television news programs and interviewed by Der Spiegel, as well as by reporters from Spain, the Netherlands, and France. And now, with this new lawsuit, every day the phone rings with new passengers.

Why has this incident attracted so much media attention? Is it warranted? Or is it just anti-Israel and antisemitic news organisations looking for negative material? If so, why would I, an Orthodox Jewish writer living in Israel who has spent the last 10 years trying to combat media prejudice, cooperate?

The insidious degradation of the faith I was born into, love, and have practiced faithfully all my life by fanatics who pervert its meaning in order to bully women in the name of God, is something I cannot, and will not, abide. First and foremost, because it is a desecration of God's name; second,

because it is limitless. Why is it that in the past no one insisted on segregated buses? When asked, Rav Moshe Feinstein, a major halachik authority, ruled against the idea. And yet now, suddenly, they are an absolute necessity in the religious world. What happened? And what does it mean when long-held Jewish law and custom can be swept away by some religious politician or some macher in the yeshivah world, who can then establish, at will, new rules that oppress women?

Where does it end?

We in Israel have already seen modesty patrol hooligans roaming religious neighborhoods, assaulting people in the name of religion. We have seen paint and bleach thrown at women by men who disapproved of their clothing. We have seen public bonfires of so-called immodest clothing taken in house-to-house searches. We have seen more and more public streets covered with posters warning women how to dress, or else. In the past few weeks we have seen higher education for haredi women abolished overnight, breaking many hearts.

Ten years ago there were two mehadrin bus lines in Bnai Brak. Today there are 30 all over the country, with a new line being added every month. And two-and-a-half years after my experience on the Egged bus, Miriam Shear, a religious woman on her way to pray at the Kotel, was spat at, then punched, and finally beaten to the floor by four male passengers because she refused to move to the back of the bus. The bus she was on was not part of the mehadrin line.

Ayaan Hirsan Ali, the brave Somali woman who is still under a death threat for making a movie in the Netherlands depicting the brutal treatment of Muslim women (her director, Theo Van Gogh, was murdered), recently said that 20 years ago, none of the women in Somalia wore veils. Then a few men forced the issue, and now all of the women are in veils. What she said holds true for all of us: "We are not fighting for freedom for its own sake but from a life of repression, subordination and violence," she declared.

Today, it's just a seat on a bus. But there is no telling what it will be tomorrow. I hate bad publicity about Israel. But what I hate even more is the idea that the beautiful spirit of Judaism I have spent my life cultivating and passing on; the Jewish State I love, and have spent my life building and defending, will be changed, incrementally, beyond recognition.

We need to draw a red line and defend it so that does not happen. The fact that I and other women have done so is, ultimately, the best possible news about Israel, and the best publicity for the Jewish people.

The Saudi fig leaf By Anshel Pfeffer **The Jerusalem Post** March 12, 2007

Much has changed in the five years since the Saudi initiative first emerged, but two principles have remained sacrosanct. The Palestinians, backed by the Arab leaders, have adamantly refused to back down from the demand for the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees. All Israeli governments continue to oppose any concession on the issue, reflecting the consensus that allowing the refugees back would amount to suicide of the Jewish state.

So how was Prime Minister Ehud Olmert suddenly saying to the cabinet that he was ready to "treat seriously" the taboo initiative, already rejected out of hand by his predecessor and patron, Ariel Sharon? And how was such a statement greeted with barely a peep from the other ministers, or even from the opposition?

Olmert's announcement was preceded by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's interview with an Arab newspaper, in which she said parts of the Saudi initiative were acceptable, but not the "right of return."

But can Israel pick and choose?

Even if we accept that with some creative wordplay the sides can solve the refugee problem, there still is a minefield of other problems: settlements, Jerusalem, demilitarization, water rights, release of terrorists and recognition of Israel, to name a few. Neither the Olmert administration nor Mahmoud Abbas's shaky Palestinian Authority have the necessary public backing to sign, let alone implement, an agreement on any of these issues. So why is everyone wasting the Saudis' time?

Nobody really believes - including the Saudis - that there is a chance of reaching a comprehensive peace treaty on the basis of the initiative any time soon. And still, over the last few months there have been a number of high-level meetings between Israeli politicians and senior members of the Saudi royal family. Olmert reportedly met with Prince Bandar bin Sultan, secretary-general of the Saudi national security council.

These meetings were happening months before Olmert and Livni exhumed the Saudi initiative. Despite there being no official relations between the two countries, and despite the Saudi record of

financing Palestinian terrorism and religious incitement against Israel, they now have little choice but to cooperate - at least behind the scenes.

The success of Hamas in the last PA elections, the ascendancy of Hizbullah in Lebanon, the ongoing chaos in Iraq and the Iranian nuclear program have the Saudis hanging on for dear life. In addition, the Bush administration is proving more hesitant than in the past to bail the House of Saud out of all of its security problems.

More than any other country in the region, the Saudis desperately need stability to ensure their oil fortunes and, by extension, the survival of their despotism. Out of sheer necessity, they have realized that Israel is a crucial partner in their campaign for maintaining the status quo, since Israel can do a lot to ruin their cherished stability.

Establishing diplomatic relations with Israel would bring the kingdom down in a storm of rioting. But the dealings surrounding the initiative can provide a pretext for meeting. The Saudis are, of course, only looking out for the Palestinians' interests.

So what's in it for Israel? Mainly appearances, but right now that's about all the government can hope for. The appearance of an ongoing diplomatic process gives the public a feeling that something's happening and makes it easier for Labor to remain in the coalition. Next time the EU envoys ask for more concessions to the Hamas-dominated PA, the government can point to the Saudi initiative and promise progress. It's just like Sunday's meeting between Olmert and Abbas - neither side has any real hope for a breakthrough, but it's important to keep up appearances.

And most importantly, the Americans are all for it. The establishment of a coalition of "moderate states," recently replaced by the formulation "responsible states," has long been the dearest wish of the US State Department. The Saudi initiative will never hatch a realistic peace plan. But if talking about it is going to make US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice happy when she comes for another one of her "maintenance trips," the Israelis and Saudis will play along.

Dealing with Islam

By Tulin Daloglu **The Washington Times** **March 13, 2007**

It's impossible to know for sure whether the next big thing in Iraq will be a full-scale civil war or a security buildup, but one thing is certain: The United States faces an enormous challenge in communicating effectively with the Muslim world. Westerners are constantly exposed to stories of violence in the Middle East, from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to Lebanon to Iraq. In this trap of conflicts, it would be

easy for non-Muslims to assume that the teachings of Islam encourage behavior that is uncivilized and immoderate -- to say the least. When violent unrest and injustice becomes the lasting credo of Muslim streets, reactionaries prevail.

Jordan's King Abdullah II told a joint congressional meeting last week that Arabs and Muslims often ask "whether the West really means

what it says about equality and respect and equal justice." He ignored the question of whether Arab Muslim leaders are ensuring justice for their own people.

As it works through the complicated issues of how to reach out to Muslims, the United States must realize which tacks are useful and which are dead-ends. As a target audience, the radicals are already lost. Even if God comes down on earth, Osama bin Laden will not abandon his destructive ideology. So, American policy-makers must focus on the Muslim audience with whom they have a chance: the "mainstream" majority of Muslims who have no interest in violence.

Shortly after September 11, President Bush said: "The terrorists are traitors to their own faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself." He was right. Unfortunately, he clouded his message by insisting on using troubling words like "crusade" or "Islamofascists" when talking about the global war on terror. That once again put the focus on extremists -- and offended mainstream Muslims in the process.

If the war on terror is not about Islam, then the focus must be on mainstream Muslims. It will require a long commitment, but in time it will bring about constructive debates about what Islam actually is. However, Muslims must feel secure in their interactions with non-Muslims before those debates can even begin.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali is no doubt a courageous woman. In 2005, Time magazine named her one of the 100 most influential people in the world. She wrote "Submission," a short film about female oppression in the name of Islam that led to the murder of its director, Theo van Gogh. Unfortunately, she will now have to live, as Salman Rushdie has, with radicals threatening her life. She believes Islam is the problem, and is now an outspoken atheist. No one should expect the mainstream Muslims to embrace atheism, though. While she is attaining renown among Western intellectuals, Miss Ali is unable to make a difference among Muslims. She chose the wrong audience.

As the West considers how to create a productive dialogue, there should not be room for either bin Laden's ideology goading people into a battle between Islam and the West or Samuel

Huntington's infamous "clash of civilizations" theory. "The legitimization of radical Islam has gone too far, and we've let it go too far," David Forte, a law professor from Cleveland, says. "This reaction is bringing to the fore what most Muslims believe: That's not us. The point has to be that these people are a threat to all of mankind."

Words and how they are chosen do matter. Ali Aslan, the Washington correspondent for Zaman, a conservative Turkish newspaper, thinks it's time to retire the notion of "Islamofascists." "I don't even like the term 'Islamist' to describe any Muslim person or movement in the world," Mr. Aslan told me. "They are all making a mistake, because the term turns the religion of Islam into an ideology."

Mr. Aslan notes that the term "Islamist" generally connotes extremism and radicalism. However, he points to Graham Fuller, a senior resident consultant at the RAND Corporation who suggests it's necessary to "have a wide definition of Islamist.... By doing so, that says that not all Islamists are radicals. There are also moderate and reasonable Islamists, which the West should not fear that much from."

When Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was national security adviser, she embraced the current government in Turkey, calling its leader and members "moderate Islamists."

Mr. Aslan's synthesis paves the way for a more thought-provoking argument: If it is wrong to transform religion into an ideology, how can one embrace political Islam, which is nothing but about ideology? If religion as ideology has created such a profound threat in our daily lives, how can the White House help the situation by allying with representatives of political Islam?

If the administration wants to bring about a real debate about Islam, its embrace of political Islam prevents that debate from starting. Alas, the State Department presents the only success story of representatives of political Islam in the current Turkish government, pointing to the fact that they have not yet changed the secular regime. It is time for the United States not to be led by political Islamists, but to lead.

Tulin Daloglu is a freelance writer.

Don't Put the Impossible First By Barry Rubin GLORIA March 22, 2007

Whether or not the Middle East is beyond redemption, it certainly seems to be beyond satire. The attempt to turn radicals into moderates, terrorism into resistance, serial political murderers into negotiating partners, and situations of total anarchy into great opportunities for diplomatic progress never ends.

But here is one of my favorites in this genre, quoted from *Newsweek*--where it was published without any hint of irony:

"The Supreme Leader [of Iran, Sayyid Ali Khomeini] was deeply suspicious of the American government,' says a Khomeini aide whose position does not allow him to be named. 'But [he] was repulsed by these terrorist acts [of September 11] and was truly sad about the loss of the civilian lives in America.' For two weeks, worshipers at Friday prayers even stopped chanting 'Death to America.'"

Two whole weeks! Is that holding out the hand of friendship or what?

At any rate, this reveals one of the main problems of the Middle East at least as far as Western involvement is concerned. Far too much of the quality time of leaders, policymakers, and diplomats is spent on the impossible--or at least highly improbable.

Here are the four things that, aside from Iraq, take up the most time on the agenda of Western leaders regarding the Middle East. All of them are doomed to fail, which makes one wonder about this set of priorities and manner of thinking.

- Making friends with Iran while trying to persuade it, through relatively mild measures, to stop working on nuclear weapons.

The fact is that Iran is not going to abandon this drive to get atomic bombs and the missiles to deliver them on target, certainly not unless subjected to the toughest possible diplomacy. Everyone should know this by now. Yet, the pretense is that watered-down diplomatic wrist-slaps are going to make some difference. This doesn't mean that someone needs to attack Iran--though the threat of attack, even as a bluff, is a key pressure--but it does mean Tehran's leaders have to conclude that the cost of proceeding is too high and dangerous. And that's a long way from happening yet.

As for reconciling Iran, the nature of the regime--not just of the president but of the whole ruling establishment--is just not going to make that possible. On the one hand, there is ideology. Iran's leaders believe what they say and have their own goals of regional hegemony. On the other hand, reinforcing this strategy is what the regime needs to do to survive, which requires having the United States, the West, and Israel as scapegoats for its own failures and justifications for its repression.

- Making friends with Syria to get it to stop supporting terrorism against Iraq and Israel; stop seeking to take over Lebanon also using terrorism. As with the case of Iran, however, the regime in Damascus is not just a blank slate or a government asking for the redress of reasonable grievances. Here, too, there are a whole set of other problems: the nature of the dictatorship as well as its ideology, ambitions, and requirements for survival.

- Consider the tale of night-vision goggles. U.S. forces in Iraq discovered that Syria gave the terrorist insurgents there night-vision goggles. Israeli forces in Lebanon found that Syria gave Hizballah night-vision goggles. European governments are now considering Syrian requests for even more night-

vision goggles, supposedly to be used to block arms-smuggling to its own clients, smuggling which the Syrian government itself is doing.

Here is what a reporter from the Egyptian newspaper *al-Abram*, Dina Ezzat, who investigated the issue, concluded about what Israel would get if it gave the Golan Heights, and if the West gave Lebanon to Syria. Their first alleged reward would be "the stability of the regime" in Damascus. In other words, they would get the pleasure of having President Bashar al-Assad still in power. Second, Damascus would be willing to curtail "its facilitation of the arming of Hizballah while decreasing its assistance and accommodation of Palestinian and Iraqi militant resistance groups." And, third, it would be willing to reduce "its intelligence cooperation with Iran." That's it. Not real peace, just a 20 percent reduction in covert war.

- Trying to moderate Hamas. Like Syria and Iran, Hamas does not want to be moderate. Unlike them, it hardly pretends otherwise. It continues to make clear its virulent anti-Semitism and goal of destroying Israel. To their credit, the Europeans are holding the line. But again, a huge amount of time and energy is going into this dead-end effort.

- Suddenly, at the worst possible moment in history for success, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become the top priority for many governments. Fatah has collapsed; Hamas is extremist and believes time is on its side, every Israeli concession has inspired escalation by the Palestinians and others. Every lesson of the last 14 years has pointed at the intractability of the conflict. True, efforts can be justified by saying, "We have to try" or the belief that pretending to do so will make Arabs and Muslims happy. Yet, now Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is pinning her reputation on making progress. Why tie your future to an inevitable failure?

I could add here two other points--thinking it possible to "solve" the internal situation in Iraq and expecting that radical Islamists can be reconciled to Western interests. What do all these things have in common? Not looking at how the interests and ideas of extremists direct them; wishful thinking that concessions and empathy can resolve real conflicts. And so on.

Now, ask yourself this question: with so much effort going into guaranteed failures, is it surprising that there are so few successes?

U.N. Rights Council vs, Freedom

By Brett D. Schaefer The Washington Times April 2, 2007

The closer one observes the United Nations, the more one notices how disconnected it is from reality -- especially when debating human rights. Its bias and politicization was on full display recently at the fourth session of the U.N. Human Rights Council,

which saw continued attacks on Israel and intolerance of criticism.

In its first year, the HRC has proven just as feckless in confronting human-rights abuses and as prone to politically motivated attacks as its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights.

And the commission's record was so bad, even former Secretary-General Kofi Annan admitted it "cast a shadow on the reputation of the United Nations system as a whole" and called for its replacement.

In a disheartening repeat of one of the old commission's worst failings, the HRC's first "special session" last summer on Israel adopted a one-sided resolution condemning Israel and ignoring provocations by Palestinian-armed groups.

This became a pattern: In its first three sessions, the council adopted 10 resolutions addressing human-rights concerns in specific countries -- eight of which harshly condemned Israel. The council's first three "special sessions" on extraordinary human-rights issues also targeted Israel.

Ongoing repression in Belarus, Burma, China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Zimbabwe is ignored. Only under immense pressure from the media, human-rights groups and Western governments did the HRC address the world's most urgent human-rights crisis, the genocide in Darfur. Even then, a number of member states opposed a "special session" on Sudan and successfully watered down two resolutions regarding the Darfur situation.

The fourth session of the Human Rights Council, under way in Geneva, is following this profoundly disappointing record. The HRC's expert on human rights in the Palestinian territories accused Israel of conducting an apartheid policy against the Palestinians and of extensive human-rights crimes. Three new resolutions condemning Israel are expected.

No other state receives such scrutiny. Indeed, it was a struggle for states concerned about Darfur to even get the HRC to hear a presentation by the council's own "High-Level Mission" established last December to assess the situation in Darfur. Don't hold your breath waiting for the council to act on this report or condemn Sudan for refusing to cooperate with the High-Level Mission.

Such hypocrisy, though, is to be expected from a council that includes Algeria, China, Cuba, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and other states with questionable commitment to human rights. However, one would hope a U.N. body dedicated to promoting human rights would cleave more closely to those ideals during its deliberations. Sadly, this is not the case.

In reaction to the blatant bias against Israel, Hillel Neuer of the nongovernmental organization United Nations Watch in Geneva expressed dismay and challenged the council to live up to the ideals of those who created the original Commission on Human Rights in 1946 and made promoting human rights a central U.N. purpose: "Faced with compelling reports from around the world of torture, persecution, and violence against women, what has the council pronounced, and what has it decided? Nothing. Its response has been silence. Its response has been indifference. Its response has been criminal.

One might say, in Harry Truman's words, that this has become a Do-Nothing, Good-for-Nothing Council. But that would be inaccurate. This council has done something. It has enacted one resolution after another condemning one single state: Israel."

Mr. Neuer criticized the hypocrisy of the Council, noting that "the racist murderers and rapists of Darfur women tell us they care about the rights of Palestinian women; the occupiers of Tibet care about the occupied; and the butchers of Muslims in Chechnya care about Muslims. But do these self-proclaimed defenders truly care about Palestinian rights?" Judging by the council's refusal to condemn Palestinian atrocities, the answer is "no."

One would expect many council members to disagree or object to Mr. Neuer's statement. However, the Council President went further. He chastised Mr. Neuer. In an unprecedented move, he said he would not thank Mr. Neuer for his comments -- a customary measure that follows every statement before the HRC, regardless of merit. He further threatened to strike Mr. Neuer's comments from the record.

Considering the hostile, insulting and dishonest earlier statements by states like Burma, North Korea and Sudan, it is clear that free speech is a privilege denied human-rights groups that confront the council over its poor record -- but strongly protected for regimes that abuse human rights.

So much for dispelling the "shadow" Kofi Annan rightly decried.

Brett D. Schaefer is the Jay Kingham Fellow in Regulatory Affairs in the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom at the Heritage Foundation (heritage.org). He was an observer at the fourth Session of the Human Rights Council.

If anyone would like to receive the Israel newsletter by e-mail, please send a note to sheldonb@rsfchart.com. Each newsletter is archived on the Suburban Orthodox Shul web page at www.suburbanorthodox.org/iacn.php.

Best wishes to all of our readers for a happy joyous and meaningful holiday season. Happy Passover or Happy Easter!