



Jerusalem 4:44 Toronto 5:28

Commentary...

More Democracy Please

By Caroline Glick

I'm an elitist. Eighty percent of the critical decisions affecting Israel are shaped by maybe 100 or 200 people, 300. These are my clients.

Thus spaketh Prof. Yehezkel Dror, the resident blabbermouth in the Winograd Commission, which Prime Minister Ehud Olmert appointed in the wake of the 2006 war with Hizbullah. Dror made this statement in his interview with the Jerusalem Post last week.

In a separate op-ed in Haaretz, Dror expanded on his theme. He explained that of these 300 decision makers who make life and death decisions in Israel, "less than thirty" are elected officials. So as Dror sees it, less than 10 percent of the people who determine the direction of the country on the greatest issues of the day are accountable to the public. And that's okay by him.

In his interview with the Post, Dror explained that while he wouldn't mind if the nation as a whole read the Winograd report, the 300, overwhelmingly unelected decision-makers "are the people I want to read the report and discuss it. The other people, I also want them to read it, but I'm more interested in those few hundred. Because a few can make a difference."

Given Dror's open prejudices, it is clear that when he told Ma'ariv that in his view advancing the diplomatic process with the Palestinians is more important than ousting Olmert and his colleagues from office for their incompetence, it is clear that he wasn't addressing the general public which opposes the Olmert-Livni-Barak government's policies towards the Palestinians. He was talking to his fellow, unelected elitists who run the country and support their policies.

Dror said, "We must think of the consequences [of forcing Olmert from office]. What do you prefer? A government led by Olmert and [Defense Minister Ehud] Barak or new elections that will give rise to a government led by [opposition leader and Likud Chairman Binyamin] Netanyahu?"

The "We," he referred to was not, "We the people of the State of Israel." It was "We, the unelected leftists who run the country."

The Winograd report went into rhetorical and logical contortions to defend Olmert's handling of the last stages of the war. Its central assertion was the dubious, poorly argued claim that Olmert's decision to launch a 60-hour ground offensive in Lebanon after the UN Security Council had unanimously adopted resolution 1701 which set the terms of the cease-fire was not only reasonable but unavoidable. Thirty-three soldiers died in that offensive which the commission acknowledged served no military purpose. The report's conclusion all but silenced the reservists and bereaved families demanding the government's resignation and new elections.

GIVEN DROR'S conviction that he, like the other members of the Winograd Commission are members of Israel's governing elite, it is important to discuss the wisdom of its members' views and perceptions of reality, as they are informed by their leftist political bias. Dror asserted that Olmert's embrace of the so-called peace process "is a serious consideration" when determining whether Olmert should be permitted to remain in office in spite of his obvious failure in leading the country in war in 2006. He further claimed that it is his rich professional experience, rather than his ideological prejudices that lead him to reach this conclusion. But do the facts back up his claim? And what do the facts tell us about the desirability of being led by "professionals" rather than "politicians?" Today Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni are conducting "secret" negotiations with the leaders of Fatah towards the establishment of a Palestinian state. In the course of their negotiations they are discussing the transfer of the overwhelming majority of Judea and Samaria as well as neighborhoods in eastern, northern and southern Jerusalem to Fatah control. Fatah leaders, including Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas are embraced by Olmert, Livni and their colleagues as peace partners who have made the decision to work to live at peace with Israel.

And yet, Fatah was among the groups taking credit for the suicide bombing in Dimona last week. Fatah-run media outlets glorified the bombers in Dimona as martyrs. Fatah forces in Gaza have integrated in large numbers into Hamas's

ISRAEL NEWS

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terror forces. Fatah forces are responsible for a plurality of the rocket, missile and mortar attacks against the Western Negev. Most of the IDF's operations in Judea and Samaria target Fatah terror cells, many of which are directed by Iran through Hizbullah. Even the US, which seeks to rebuild Fatah forces into a counter-terror gendarmerie, believes that rebuilding them into counter-terror forces will cost \$4.2 billion to \$7 billion over five years.

Is it reasonable to support a diplomatic process with Fatah which would transfer control over large swathes of Jerusalem, and the majority of Judea and Samaria to terrorists openly engaged in acts of war against Israel and openly in league with Israel's sworn enemies? Olmert exhibits the same incompetence he displayed towards Hizbullah in 2006 in his treatment of the bombardment of southern Israel from Gaza today. Does the fact that he supports this diplomatic process with Fatah render him competent to continue to lead the country?

Then there is the Israeli elite's view of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. As the representative of that elite, the Winograd Commission heaped praise on the government for the resolution which set the terms for the cease-fire. Yet it is far from clear why 1701 is praiseworthy.

Under 1701, Hizbullah has reasserted its control over South Lebanon. Under the nose of the UNIFIL forces which 1701 supposedly empowered, Hizbullah has deployed a massive arsenal of anti-tank missiles in the south to counter any future IDF ground offensive. It has also deployed missiles and missile launchers in the south. Posing as journalists, Hizbullah operatives carry out daily reconnaissance missions along the border to assess IDF troop levels, fortifications and positions. And under 1701, Israel is prohibited from taking action to mitigate this growing threat. All it can do is complain to UNIFIL, which in turn, does nothing.

So is it reasonable to applaud the Olmert-Livni-Barak government which now seeks to negotiate a similar agreement for the deployment of foreign forces in Gaza? Is it "professional" to support the government in its quest to see Fatah reassert its control over Gaza's border with Egypt? Does it make "professional" sense to block new elections to protect a government that seeks to reinforce Egyptian troop strength along the border when the Egyptian military - like the Lebanese military deployed in South Lebanon next to Hizbullah - at best does nothing and at worst collaborates with Hamas and its fellow terrorists as they infiltrate Gaza with advanced weapons supplied from Iran?

If the intuitive answer to these questions is no, then this tells us something deeply disturbing about the quality of Israel's elites, which like the members of the Winograd Commission, have rallied around Olmert because he is committed to giving Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem to Fatah in exchange for an empty promise of peace which no one actually believes.

DROR NOTED rightly that many of the governance problems that Israel faces today are a consequence of the country's youth. More than 60 years are required for a nation to get things right.

But the fact is that Israel's surrender of governing authority to unelected, unwise elitists is not unique. In the US, the publication of the National Intelligence Estimate on Iran last December has been characterized by the Wall Street Journal and others as an assault on presidential authority by unaccountable, unelected career State Department officials on loan to the office of the Director of National Intelligence. These officials - Thomas Fingar, Vann Van Diepen and Kenneth Brill - are reputedly deeply partisan and hostile to President George W. Bush's foreign policy goals and skeptical of the threat posed to US national security by Iran's nuclear program.

Last week, the Admiral Michael McConnell, the Director of National Intelligence, tried to mitigate the damage the NIE did to US efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The NIE's blatantly politically motivated opening line, which asserted that Iran suspended its nuclear weapons program in 2003 empowered Iran and sent US efforts to build an international coalition against Iran into a tailspin from which they has not recovered.

As reports emerged about Iran's installation of advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium at its national plant, McConnell testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee and claimed that the Iranians may acquire a nuclear bomb by 2009. Yet his testimony was no match for the "professional" work done by his unelected underlings. It received but a fraction of the news

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coverage the NIE enjoyed. And it is not clear that his statement will affect the chances of ratifying a new, watered-down sanctions resolution against Iran in the Security Council.

WHAT ISRAEL'S experience with the Winograd Commission and its unelected elites, and the US's experience with the NIE and its unelected elites, show quite clearly is that contrary to the assertions of Dror and his elitist colleagues, it is not the presence or absence of "professionals" at decision-making levels that determine whether or not wise policies are adopted. What determines whether or not good policies are adopted is whether the ideologies held by leaders concur with reality or clash with it and whether leaders are men and women of intellectual and personal integrity.

Beyond that, the experiences of both countries show that time after time, the public is far quicker to abandon failed ideologies than the elitists who lead while shirking accountability in the name of professionalism.

With all due respect to Dror and his colleagues in Israel and counterparts in America, we need less rather than more "professionals" forcing their ideological agendas on us in the name of "professionalism." We need to ensure that those making the decisions which determine matters of life and death are accountable to us, and not to unelected, generally unwise elitists. (Jerusalem Post Feb 11)

Uniquely Bizarre By Barry Rubin

The Arab-Israeli conflict definitely holds the record for the most bizarrely treated issue in modern history. It is easy to forget just how strange this situation is, and the extent to which it is understood and handled so totally different from other, more rationally perceived problems.

Let's take a very simple example and examine the surrealistic, bizarre way in which normally sensible people and institutions respond.

On February 4, 2008, two terrorists attacked the quiet town of Dimona in southern Israel. One blew himself up near a toy store in a marketplace, killing an elderly woman and wounding forty people. The other was injured in the first blast and, before he could detonate his own bomb, was killed by a policeman.

At first, some Fatah officials claimed that one of the men was theirs, from that group's Al-Aqsa Brigades; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) said the second belonged to them. Such are the bare facts. But from here it gets far stranger.

Apparently, Fatah and the PFLP did dispatch a two-man terrorist team, but they were apparently caught before crossing into Israel. At the exact same time, Hamas sent another duo, and they succeeded in reaching Dimona.

Thus, through no fault of their own, Fatah and the PFLP did not actually commit the attack. But they tried and would have preferred to have carried out the terrorist assault. From here, a number of conclusions should be obvious: *The Nature of Fatah.*

Why is Fatah, the organization routinely described as "moderate" by Western governments and media, involved in constant terrorism attempts - and sometimes successes - against Israel?

The Al-Aqsa Brigades are an integral part of Fatah. The Brigades' founder and leader is Marwan Barghouti, who has been head of Fatah on the West Bank. Many of the Brigades' gunmen are on the Fatah payroll in various ways, often as members of security forces that are supposed to prevent... terrorism.

Of course, the leader of the Palestinian Authority (PA) and, in effect, Fatah chief, Mahmoud Abbas, "condemned" the attack. That is, he said he didn't like it. But no member of Fatah has ever been expelled from the organization or fired from the security forces for involvement in terrorism. The PA's media regularly broadcasts incitement to commit terrorism. It does not transmit television, radio and newspaper demands on its members not to attack Israeli civilians.

So, is Fatah a terrorist organization?

Well, apparently not. Granted, Abbas personally would prefer these attacks not occur. In the Fatah spectrum, he is at the moderate end. Nevertheless, he presides over a group that is terrorist and which regards itself as fighting a war against Israel in which the main tactic is deliberately murdering civilians. It uses its funds for this purpose and encourages such behavior through program and propaganda. A Reuters' dispatch about the attack, when it was thought to be perpetrated by Fatah, said it was a challenge for Abbas to control "rebels within his own Fatah faction." The point, however, is that they aren't rebels at all, but rather members in good standing who probably have more support in Fatah than does Abbas himself.

International policy toward Fatah.

Therefore, if Fatah, and the PA, should not be shunned, at least they should be subjected to serious international pressure, right? If only for their own good, since presumably the world believes that they are better off if they abandon terrorism. Again, apparently not. Fatah is the group being given about \$7 billion by international donors. And there are no strings attached to that aid: no measure of whether Fatah uses or advocates terrorism whatsoever. It gets the money no matter what it does. There are good reasons for the West to work with, and even aid, the PA and Fatah, but there are no good reasons for that support and aid to be unconditional.

Motive.

Fatah officials said the reason for the attack was to protest Israeli "aggression" against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. To begin with, of course, Israel is merely responding to rocket and mortar attacks on its territory. If these were to cease, Israel would never attack the Gaza Strip and continue to supply it - directly and indirectly - with its electricity. But if Israel were never to attack the Gaza Strip, then the Hamas regime and its junior partners in the Gaza Strip would continue to attack Israel. By definition, then, they are the ones who are aggressive.

Incidentally, there are no sanctions whatsoever against the West Bank, which Fatah rules. Thus, Fatah is at war with Israel while Israel, despite periodic raids against individuals directly involved in terrorism, treats Fatah as a partner and urges countries to give it financial aid.

But there's more. Fatah is essentially coming to the aid of a Hamas regime that threw it out of Gaza, and that killed, sometimes in cold blood, and represses its own people. Why? Because Fatah and the PA are competing for Palestinian popular support in the Gaza Strip; and the way that one does this is to murder Israeli civilians. This is a very telling definition of Palestinian politics, ideology and public opinion.

The other terrorist killed was initially claimed by the PFLP, a radical Arab nationalist group, which also tried to kill Israeli civilians on that day. Recently, the founder and long-time head of the PFLP, George Habash, died. Habash was a veteran terrorist who practically invented airplane hijacking and international terrorism. Habash was lauded by the PA and Fatah at his funeral as a great hero of the movement.

Riyad Al-Malki, the Minister of Information and Foreign Affairs of the "moderate" PA, is a PFLP member and ran the organization on the West Bank for many years. So, when Western politicians and diplomats deal with the "moderate" PA, they are talking directly to a man who played a leading role in a terrorist group that continues to carry out - and proudly claim responsibility for - terrorist attacks. Arab members of Israel's parliament went to the funeral and joined in the accolades for a terrorist whose group continues to murder their fellow citizens.

When the second terrorist fell as a result of the first explosion, Israeli medical personnel did not hesitate from rushing to help a man they thought was an Arab victim of the attack. Then, the nurse saw the explosives' belt and realized the man she was trying to save was about to murder her. She had to run for her life, pulling along another wounded person, and yell for help from the police.

To summarize: Fatah acts as a terrorist group; the PA facilitates terrorism and includes people leading terrorist groups; Fatah views itself as an ally of a group that attacks it and murders its own members; the West aids Fatah and the PA with no attempt to discourage their behavior; Israeli Arab politicians side with terrorism; and Israelis, at the risk of their lives, try to save Arab lives, and would like to have a two-state solution if the other side is ever able to make and implement such a deal.

Oh, yes, and guess who much of the world blames for the conflict. As I said, uniquely bizarre. (IsraelNationalNews Feb 14)

The Palestinian Census - Smoke & Mirrors By Yoram Ettinger

The Feb. 9, 2008 Palestinian census is not a cause for fatalism. In contrast with the census, the accurate number of Judea & Samaria Arabs is 1.5 million, and not 2.3 million, and the number of Gaza Arabs is 1.1 million, and not 1.5 million.

The Palestinian census is refuted by Palestinian, Israeli and international documentation of birth, death, migration, first-graders and eligible voter registration in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, which has been systematically conducted by the Bennett Zimmerman-led "American-Israeli Demographic Research Group" (AIDRG).

While the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) contends a 30% population growth during the last 10 years, the World Bank documents a substantial erosion of the Palestinian fertility rate and a significant escalation of emigration from Judea, Samaria and Gaza. The World Bank documents a 32% gap between the number of first graders per PCBS projections (24% increase) and per Palestinian Ministry of Education documentation (8% decrease).

A strange co-incidence has produced similarity between the 2007 census and the PCBS 1997 projection toward 2007, in spite of dramatic volatility in the areas of security, economics and politics, which has occurred since 1997, and which has caused a boost in Palestinian emigration and decline in fertility. For example, terrorism and counter-terrorism, the Hamas-Fatah war, unprecedented (over 30%) unemployment, the rise in the price of oil and a corresponding rise in demand for manpower in the Arab oil producing countries, intensive UNRAW and PCBS-led family planning, an unprecedented reduction of teen-pregnancy, a swift urbanization process, an all-time-high Palestinian divorce rate, an impressive expansion of the education system and the increase in Palestinian median wedding-age. The 1997 PCBS projections have been refuted annually by the documentation produced by the Palestinian Ministries of Health and Education and Election

Commission, as well as by Israel's Border Police and European observers, monitoring exists and entries through Israel's, Judea, Samaria and Gaza's international passages.

While the 2007 census ignores the bolstered emigration phenomenon, Israel's Border Police and the European Observers have documented net-emigration of 12,000 in 2004, 16,000 in 2005 and 25,000 in 2006, with expectation of a significant rise in the scope of 2007 net-emigration. The extent of 1997-2003 average annual net-emigration was over 10,000, which has characterized the entire period since 1950!

According to the PCBS website, the 2007 census was based on the 1997 census, which was inflated by 30%, growing exponentially by the year. Thus, in contrast with internationally accepted demographic standards, the 1997 census included 325,000 residents, who stayed abroad for over a year, as well as students, who studied overseas, irrespective of their study period. Israel subtracts from its census Israelis who are away for over a year, and restores them following 90 days of stay in Israel. The 1997 census included 210,000 Israeli Arabs, bearing Israeli I.D. cards, who were doubly-counted: as Israeli Arabs by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics and as West Bank Arabs by the PCBS.

In summation, the 2007 census for Judea & Samaria was inflated by 53%, and the Jewish-Arab proportion west of the Jordan River - without Gaza - documents a robust Jewish majority of 67%, compared with a 33% Jewish minority in 1947, including Gaza. The most effective symptom of the transformation - from Arab to Jewish demographic momentum - has been the absolute annual number of Jewish and Arab births within Israel's "Green Line." While the number of annual Arab births stagnated at 39,000 between 1995-2007, the number of annual Jewish births catapulted by 40% from 80,400 in 1995 to 112,000 in 2007.

There is a demographic problem, but it is not lethal, there is no demographic machete at Israel's throat, and the demographic tailwind is Jewish, not Arab. In fact, documented births, deaths and migration clarify that Jewish demography has become a strategic asset and not a liability. Hence, awareness of demographic reality could enhance the security, political, strategic, diplomatic and economic options of Israeli Doves and Hawks alike. (Ynet Feb 10)

A Farewell to Indignation By Michael Freund

Did things have to come to this? This past Saturday night, a Kassam rocket fired by a Palestinian terrorist in Gaza slammed into a pedestrian street in the Israeli town of Sderot, tearing the leg off of an eight-year old Jewish child.

The boy, Osher Twito, remains under heavy sedation as physicians battle to save his remaining leg from the threat of possible amputation.

And so, while our politicians dilly-dally, and prattle on about how strong and powerful we are, Jewish children in southern Israel can not walk the streets safely for fear of being struck down by enemy rockets. So much for promises of peace and security.

"I don't know how my son will live without a leg," Osher's grief-stricken mother told reporters, noting that his dream had been to play soccer. "He doesn't understand a thing yet, and he will have to understand that. Why does it have to be like this?" she said.

The sad fact is that it didn't have to be like this. Young Osher will now struggle to walk for the rest of his life because of the iniquity of the terrorists, but also due to the scandalous passivity of those charged with protecting us.

Something is wrong - terribly, terribly wrong - with how accustomed we have become to the violence being inflicted upon the southern part of the country by the Palestinians. It is almost as if we have said farewell to our sense of indignation, replacing it instead with static indifference.

Remember the suicide bombing in Dimona a few days ago? It came and went, leaving an elderly woman dead in its wake. The blood was cleaned up, the wounded were taken away, and the country just couldn't wait to put it behind us as if nothing had happened.

Some might view this as a healthy approach, but I beg to differ. The fact is that we as a society have become numb to the cry of Sderot and the south. The outrage we should all be feeling over the relentless rocket attacks has failed to materialize, and the government exploits this to avoid taking action.

Indeed, it seems our leaders believe there to be two Israels - one that matters, and one that doesn't. How else can one explain their unwillingness to put an end to the daily, ongoing assaults against Sderot? Sure, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has repeatedly taken a tough verbal stand against the rocket barrages, vowing to do his utmost to stop them. As the Post reported, "Olmert promised that Israel would take harsher measures than ever against any parties responsible for launching Kassams. No one has immunity, no matter what he does or what group he's associated with." But that was back on June 21, 2006. And the rockets kept coming....

FAST FORWARD to May 17, 2007, when the attacks intensified. At a meeting with her German counterpart, Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni vowed that Israel would "bring an end to the attacks." She later said, "We need to send a message to the Palestinians that terrorism has a price." But still the rockets came....

Five months ago, in September 2007 on the second day of the school year, the Palestinians intentionally fired Kassams at Sderot, timing them to hit when Israeli parents would be dropping their children off at school in the morning.

The Prime Minister responded by promising that the terrorists would "pay a heavy price." Speaking at a press conference with the Austrian Chancellor, Olmert declared, "We will not compromise on this issue and we will hit at those who operate these systems and the chain of command. We will not hesitate to get to everyone who threatens the citizens of the south, whoever it is, wherever they are." Strong words. Too bad they were not followed up by strong actions.

Does anyone doubt what the reaction would be if, God forbid, a rocket fired from Kalkilya were to strike Tel Aviv? Would the empty promises then proffered by our leaders still be deemed sufficient? And yet, somehow, when it comes to places like Sderot, another standard seems to apply, one that calls for restraint and self-control.

Comfortably ensconced in our homes, we all think it couldn't possibly happen to us. The headlines from the south seem taken from some far away place, off in the distance. After all, the government would never abandon us, would it? But if we accept our leaders' decision to snub Sderot, abandon Ashkelon and neglect Netiv Ha'asara, then we are essentially lining ourselves up to become potential prey too.

Were all Israelis created equal? As far as this government is concerned, the answer seems to be no. Sadly, it appears that some are considered more "expendable" than others. Which category do you think we fall under? Just hope and pray that we never have to find out. (Jerusalem Post Feb 13)

Sacrificing Democracy on the Altar of Peace By Evelyn Gordon

Reactions to the Winograd report once again laid bare a chronic ill of both Israeli democracy and the "peace process": the pervasive belief among members of Israel's self-described "peace camp" that what the public thinks about talks with the Palestinians is irrelevant; enlightened leaders must pursue an agreement regardless of the public's views - and in service of this lofty goal, any perversion of democracy is acceptable.

Prior to the report's publication, leftist politicians and columnists argued almost monolithically that however culpable it found Ehud Olmert for the Second Lebanon War's failures, new elections must be avoided, because the polls predict victory for Binyamin Netanyahu, a peace process skeptic. As Meretz chairman Yossi Beilin explained, the Right "wants to stop talks with Fatah, and believes, according to the polls, that this is the chance of a lifetime. That is exactly why I have no interest in supporting such a move." Beilin advocated replacing Olmert from within the cabinet, but most of his fellow leftists dispensed even with that nicety.

Haaretz's star columnist, Yoel Marcus, for instance, repeatedly argued that Olmert must stay, since his ouster might lead to elections, and the Left cannot risk the election of a premier opposed to final-status talks.

Following the report's publication, Winograd Commission member Yehezkel Dror echoed this reasoning, telling Ma'ariv that "a peace process, if successful, will save so many lives that it is a weighty consideration," and therefore, "we must think about the consequences. What do you prefer, a government with Olmert and [Ehud] Barak, or new elections that will put Netanyahu in power?"

Even if, as Dror claims, this represented guidance to voters on how to decide rather than his personal opinion, the bottom line is the same: Far from deeming public support essential for such fateful negotiations, Dror, like Marcus and Beilin, views the voters' seeming preference for an opponent of the talks as justification for thwarting their choice by retaining a failed premier.

THIS HAS been the Left's attitude toward the "peace process" from its inception. When Yitzhak Rabin lacked a Knesset majority for the Oslo-2 accord, for instance, he solved the problem by buying the votes of two legislators from a far-Right party that vehemently opposed Oslo. Specifically, he promised them a ministry and deputy ministry, with all the attendant financial perks. This was blatantly illegal, as the Supreme Court subsequently ruled. But Rabin and his successor, Shimon Peres, solved that problem by amending the law, retroactively. And rather than condemning this perversion of democracy, the entire Left lauded it, deeming any means kosher to advance the peace process.

Ariel Sharon's disengagement also demonstrated contempt for democracy. Despite having been elected on an explicit pledge not to quit Gaza unilaterally, he declined to seek the public's consent to his U-turn via either new elections or a referendum. He did call a referendum in his own party, but ignored the results when he lost 60-40.

This is hardly standard democratic practice: When, for instance, Charles de Gaulle wanted to break a campaign promise to remain in Algeria, he did call a referendum (and won resoundingly). Yet Sharon's refusal to seek a new public mandate won plaudits from the Left.

This trampling of democratic norms for the sake of the peace process, with the Left's almost unanimous support, has been devastating to Israel's

democracy. It is no accident that the worst blow Israeli democracy ever suffered, Rabin's assassination, occurred a mere month after the Oslo-2 vote: When democratic processes are subverted by open vote-buying, with enthusiastic support from politicians and the media, extremists can easily convince themselves that the lack of a democratic alternative justifies resorting to violence.

IT IS also no accident that right-wing violence reached new heights following the disengagement - for instance, during the Amona evacuation six months later. For two years, rightists did everything good democrats are supposed to do. They worked to elect an anti-withdrawal candidate in 2003, and won. They went door-to-door to convince Likud members to defeat disengagement in the party referendum, and won again. But their victories proved worthless: Sharon simply ignored them, to widespread applause from politicians and the media. The obvious conclusion was that democratic efforts are pointless, so violence is the only alternative.

Nor is it an accident that voter turnout reached an all-time low in the first election following the disengagement. If a politician can renounce his entire platform after winning, refuse to seek a new mandate, and be applauded for it, what is the point of voting? But if the peace uber alles attitude has been devastating to democracy, it has, ironically, been equally detrimental to prospects for peace. Few would deny that ongoing Palestinian terror hinders these prospects. And one reason this terror persists is that none of the relevant parties deem widespread Israeli support for the peace process essential.

If the Palestinian Authority thought future withdrawals depended on such support, it might feel constrained to win over Israelis by abandoning terror. If the international community thought withdrawals depended on such support, it might feel constrained to pressure the PA into fighting terror. But why should either go to the trouble if Israeli governments are willing instead to subvert the democratic process, making public opinion irrelevant?

The problem is that Israel is still a democracy, however flawed - and therefore, peace will ultimately not be possible without public support. As successive withdrawals bring Palestinian terror closer to major population centers, the extent and intensity of the opposition to withdrawal will grow. And eventually, it will become too great to circumvent through anti-democratic tactics. Buying two Knesset votes is easy. Buying 20 is much harder.

Thus by collaborating in the subversion of democracy for the sake of peace, the Left has undermined both of its proclaimed flagship ideals. Not only has it increased the likelihood of anti-democratic violence by eroding the public's faith in democratic processes, it has also eroded public support for the peace process by reducing the PA's incentive to combat terror.

Unfortunately, it is not the Left alone that suffers for this blindness. All of Israel is paying the price. (Jerusalem Post Feb 13)

Schmoozing with Terrorists By Lori Lowenthal Marcus

Book review of Schmoozing with Terrorists by Aaron Klein (WND Books)

The people who kill Jews and other westerners for a living would seem to be a bit hard for nice Jewish boy to sit down and chat with about why they do what they do. But in *Schmoozing with Terrorists*, Aaron Klein -- Jerusalem bureau chief for World Net Daily -- shares the wide-ranging conversations he has had with many of the top Arab Palestinian terrorist leaders in Israel about exactly that topic.

Klein's conversations covered the gamut from why Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades endorse the use of homicide bombing in light of the Koranic ban on suicide; to the way in which the terrorist leaders nakedly reject documented archeological and historical connections between Jews and Israel; to the ongoing persecution of Christians by Muslims in Bethlehem, Gaza and other cities.

Klein's style is conversational and personal: he never hides his own perspective or the fact that he is an Orthodox Jew (albeit the brawny, deeply-tanned twenty-something year old pictured on the book jacket inside cover does not fit the typical stereotype in this country). And yet those whom he interviews, although occasionally bridle at some of Klein's questions, are perfectly comfortable meeting with him and articulating their views and goals.

The Arab Palestinian leaders with whom Klein spoke are very candid about their dreams not only to wipe out Israel, but to establish a worldwide caliphate. Their plans for American society should awaken anyone who thinks the Arab terrorists are only Israel's problem. And it should also smack awake all the moral relativists who equate Israel's security measures with hegemonic brutality.

A deputy commander of Fatah's al Aqsa Martyrs Bridade, Nasser Abu Azziz, explained to Klein that when sharia law is imposed in Western countries, "these sick people [homosexuals] will be treated in a very tough way," explaining that the Islamic leadership will "prevent social and physical diseases like homosexuality." All the terrorists whom Klein interviewed agreed that homosexuality would not be tolerated in the US once Islam rules.

And homosexuality is not all they condemn. The failure of western women to conform to Islamic standards of dress will reap harsh responses including, if necessary, torture. Sheik Hamad, a Hamas cleric, said those women who refuse to cover themselves in conformity with Islamic values would be

punished either by imprisonment, whipping or stoning. And we aren't just talking about Madonna's bustiers: under the standard described by Klein's interviewees, even Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg -- who does in fact wear a robe -- would be a target for stoning. She's omitted the head covering.

Given the opportunity to explain the source of Arab Palestinian terrorism, Klein's subjects contradict standard lore. Klein was told by Abu Ayman, the commander of Islamic Jihad in Jenin, that Muslims are strictly forbidden from becoming suicide bombers if they are motivated by anything -- including desperate poverty or revenge for Israeli wrongdoing to this individual -- other than love of Allah. When Klein pointed out to a young man in training to become a "martyr" CNN's claim that suicide bombing was motivated by poverty and despair, Abu Ahmed was visibly affronted and called it "Israeli propaganda."

The most bizarre and brazen interview Klein describes is with Sheikh Taysir Tamimi, the chief Palestinian Justice and one of the most important clerics in the Middle East. Tamimi lectured Klein that "there is no Jewish historic connection whatsoever to the Temple Mount or Jerusalem," and that the "Jews came to the [Temple area] in 1967 and not before."

Tamimi responded to Klein's recitation of archeological findings and historical connections: "These archeological things you cite are lies." Tamimi simply erases Judaism's connection to the Holy Land by ignoring irrefutable and concrete evidence of inconvenient facts. Such distortions are particularly troubling because Tamimi is an enormously influential Imam whose view of history is eagerly imbibed by his followers. Echoing Tamimi is Nasser Abu Aziz whose rhetoric, while perhaps inelegant, was crystal clear: "We are fed up with this crap nonsense of the Temple Mount."

Klein's interviews show that Palestinian leaders have also, and repeatedly, perpetrated a vile hoax on their acolytes. The myth of the seventy-two virgins in paradise who await each martyr is a theme echoed and believed by those who extol and consider suicide bombing an option. Klein's subjects do not explain how the appetite for virgins fits with the love of Allah as an incentive for becoming a suicide bomber.

When asked about the source for the promise of the seventy-two virgins, Ala Senakhreh, West Bank chief of Fatah's Martyrs Brigade, insisted such a promise was made in the Koran. When pressed about where exactly that promise could be located, neither Senakhreh nor any of his dozen henchmen clerics present could find such a passage. After much anxious searching, the Sheik became increasingly hostile and Klein quickly left. He had apparently discovered the point at which the terrorists' hospitality collided with their refusal to be questioned closely about their ideological weapons.

I worry that this enlightening and highly readable book may not reach as many readers as it should because its name and title undercut its serious subject. The word "schmoozing" is known by and appeals to a rather limited audience. The cover picture shows a large grenade seated on a leather armchair. Perhaps the picture is easy shorthand for what he did, but there is something lighthearted about it that undercuts the gravity of Klein's book.

Nonetheless, and in addition to the glimpses Klein provides, at least two overarching questions are raised by this book.

First, Aaron Klein, a product of Philadelphia suburban Jewish religious schools, moved to Israel and within a few years was able to gain audiences -- as an identified Jew and a journalist -- with the most senior Arab Palestinian terrorists, who spoke to him frankly about their plans and their views. This forces us to ask: where is the rest of the press corps? If these murder merchants happily speak at length about their desire to murder and torture those who don't fit their religious profiles, why are the rest of the hundreds of journalists who call Israel their beat unable to obtain the same information? Do they prefer to stick with the standard mendacious narrative, either because they believe it or because they are too afraid to approach the terrorist leadership? Neither answer says anything favorable about the press corps.

Second, why are all those on the political left, those who identify themselves as advocates for minorities, so convinced that Israel is the villain and the Arab Palestinians are the victim? Anyone who claims to favor women's rights, gay rights, ideological tolerance, freedom of the press, of speech, of association, of religion, in fact, nearly all of the icons of the political left, should logically support the Israeli narrative. Instead, most of those in this country who fit the profile of the left support the Arab Palestinian narrative. Yet Klein's interviewees freely articulate their categorical rejection of the ideas these groups hold dear. And when these people categorically reject an idea, we're not talking polite disagreement over cocktails: we're talking beheading in the town square, as Klein's interviewees state in plain English. Yet these groups -- QUIT (Queers Undermining Israeli Terror) is my own personal favorite -- continue to support terrorists who would happily slaughter their western advocates if they attained the power they seek.

While Klein's book doesn't answer these questions, it provides the necessary proof that willful ignorance and cowardice play a strong role in the current widespread distribution of sympathy for the Arab Palestinian narrative. (American Thinker Feb 11)