

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 4:07:00 PM EEST

Job Number: 223445402

Documents (100)

1. [Oh, what a lovely war](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

2. [SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF
RADICAL CLERIC](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

3. [Worldview: Everyone should agree on this Iraq program](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

4. [Education: Higher: Learn about your enemy: A masters degree in Israeli studies is proving popular among
students at a Palestinian university](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Sep 30, 2008

5. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

6. [*Gaza power play*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

7. [*On Eve of Passover, Bread Stirs Deep Thoughts in Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

8. [*The little Torah that could*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

9. [*Want the best president for Israel?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

10. [*Pathological culture kills*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

11. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

12. [Empowering Iran 's regime](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

13. [The Wrap: Double whammy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

14. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

15. [Palestinian issues land on global agenda](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

16. [Palestinian issues land on global agenda](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

17. [Comment & Debate: Bush's trip, without principle or plan, had one big winner: In talking war and being feted by autocrats in the Gulf, the US president just drummed up more support for Ahmadinejad](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

18. [Abroad, fresh image of U.S.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

19. [To be charitable, this commission is warped The Charity Commission's ruling on private schools exposes its political bias and loss of direction. It should get back to basics, writes Alasdair Palmer](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
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20. [YEAR'S END](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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21. [Clouds gather over economy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

22. [The Wrap: Clouds gather over economy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

23. [US democracy push in Pakistan is just wrong The attempt is doomed to fail given the country's make-up and the current realpolitik](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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24. [Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

25. [There is no defence against these children of death](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2008

26. [The Best Boekes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

27. [A father's plea for the prisoner Israel forgot. Beduin languishes for 8 years in Egypt](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

28. [Obama struggles to move beyond the sound bite](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

29. [Mahmoud Darwish, 67, Leading Palestinian Poet](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

30. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

31. [Put them to death](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

32. [Obama risks falling into the gulf between image and political reality](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

33. [Shape of vote to come; Obama Vs. McCain](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

34. [Bin Laden And The Hookah](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

35. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by
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36. [Israelis adopt besieged Sderot Zionists and allies rally to town living under storm of rockets](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2008

37. [Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss - Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
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Sep 30, 2008

38. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

39. [Silenced by the men in white socks](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

40. [A terror tour of Israel](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
Sep 30, 2008

41. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

42. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

43. [Double whammy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

44. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

45. [Islamic reasoning, with loopholes](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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46. [Palestinian Christians lament treatment Evangelicals visiting from the U.S. accused of shunning Arab followers of Jesus in his homeland while keeping allegiance to Israeli Jews.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

47. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

48. [OFM: Bombs, bullets & our daily bread: Tonight, over four million Palestinians, and more than eight million others across the world, will eat supper as refugees. For this special report, Alex Renton visits Gaza, where every day brings a new struggle against hunger. And Rebecca Seal looks at refugee diets from Darfur to Bangladesh](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

49. [Guardian Weekly: Books: A deadly embrace: Fawaz A Gerges reads three books that consider how past US policy haunts Iraq 's present: The Strategy and Ideology Of Martyrdom by Mohammed M Hafez US Institute of Peace 285pp \\$17.50 A Poisonous Affair: America , Iraq , and the Gassing of Halabja by Joost R Hiltermann Cambridge University 314pp \\$29 Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes, and the Man Who Makes War Possible by Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun Wiley 308pp \\$25.95](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

50. [Observer Magazine: Special investigation: When al-Qaeda was formed 20 years ago, Dr Fad was its spiritual leader. His writings justified global terror. Last year, he denounced the use of violence- in a stroke undermining the entire intellectual basis of jihad. So can Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri fight the rebellion in its ranks?: Part Three](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

51. [*David Horowitz Awareness*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

52. [*Mr Myers has hit brand new low*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

53. [*One road, two lives*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

54. [*Before 8/8/08, here are our favorite eights*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

55. [*Hypocrisy over Libertas funding*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

56. [*Comment & Debate: McCain's attack lines against Obama have already been written by Clinton: Now the phoney war is over. The election that counts has only just begun - and it will hinge on a battle of definition*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

57. [*Meaningful messaging; Souktel is using cellphones to deliver crucial communications*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

58. [*Israelis Transfixed and Confused by Obama*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

59. [*Katsav and the media: A reckoning*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

60. [*Envoy Blair welcomes Palestinian 'progress' during first walkabout*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

61. [*Soldiers of Allah*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

62. [*G2: 'I'm wildly emotional - in a very quiet way': Yisrael Campbell is not your average Orthodox Jewish comedian - he was born a Catholic, for a start. Now starring in the Guardian's new Sounds Jewish podcast, he talks to Tanya Gold about booze, finding God and his four circumcisions*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

63. [*Opinion: In the public interest: Why the prosecution of this man should be dropped*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

64. [*Johns Hopkins students, faculty react to Md. peace talks*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

65. [*Hollywood Goes To War*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

66. [*This is apartheid?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

67. [*Letters from the people*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

68. [*THEY ALL PRAY IN CITY OF STRIFE*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

69. [*The neocon hand in Obama 's victory*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

70. [*Is Tzipi Livni man enough to be prime minister?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

71. [*LETTERS FROM READERS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
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72. [*The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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73. [*Under a 7-year attack, Israeli town's identity is formed*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

74. [*A Town Under Fire Becomes a Symbol for Israel*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

75. [*Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

76. [*Christians Anonymous*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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77. [*Party Like It's 2008*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

78. [*Iranians raise the spectre of Hitler*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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79. [*The winner*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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80. [*World Report*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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81. [*World Report*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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82. [*The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCCARTHY reports*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Sep 30, 2008

83. [*Saturday: 22.12.07: 'He is very much alive': He was the warrior who discovered pragmatism, but two years ago he fell into a coma, leaving his people without a leader. Is Israel still waiting for Ariel Sharon to wake up?: 'He is very much alive'*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to
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84. [*Letters to the Editor*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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85. [*INSIDE THE TIMES: May 18, 2008*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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86. [*Rezko judge is a big punch in small package Judicial standout is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court , her colleagues and others speculate.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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87. [And the hits keep coming ...: Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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88. [All hail the mystic President](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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89. [Embracing Islam gives Ken new election hope Claiming to be able to deliver up to 200,000 votes to re-elect the Mayor, the radicals behind Muslims 4 Ken have launched a war of words smearing his rival Boris Johnson as a Muslim hater](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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90. [Inside The Times](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

91. [letters@independent.co.uk](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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92. [Inside The Times](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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93. [His final salute](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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94. [Rewind 2007 - February](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

95. [Recognition the key to success - and peace ANNAPOLIS SUMMIT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

96. [The man below is a religious Israeli who served in the army. Now he runs guided tours highlighting the abuse of Palestinians. It's controversial and dangerous work - so why does he do it? Donald MacIntyre finds out on a unique tragical history tour HEBRON](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

97. [INSIDE THE TIMES: June 13, 2008](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Content Type
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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

98. [INSIDE THE TIMES: May 23, 2008](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

99. [Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq ? And, are you dyeing your hair? You ask the questions ...
David Miliband, Foreign Secretary](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Sep 30, 2007 to Sep 30, 2008

100. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Oh, what a lovely war

The Sunday Times (London)

June 15, 2008

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Section: FEATURES; Culture; Pg.18

Length: 1135 words

Byline: Waldemar Januszczak

Body

Mona Hatoum's shock tactics combine the deceptively pretty with the distinctly unnerving

In the Chapman brothers' staggeringly good re-creation of hell at White Cube - if you haven't seen it yet, consider yourself spanked by head teacher Januszczak - there's a strange and sad little figure living in a cabin on a hilltop outside all the action. He's some sort of backwoodsman or forest crackpot, pottering along merrily in an unreality of his own making, completely oblivious to the mayhem and murder that surrounds him. In fact, he represents the Chapmans' idea of a typical artist. With his goofy hat and his fondness for nudes, this fool on a hill is probably showing his work in a gallery near you, right now.

The brothers are being extremely unfair, as you'd expect from this thoroughly unreasonable pairing. There are, indeed, artists out there who live in a parallel universe, like the lonely goofball, but there are plenty of others who get involved. Who care. Who stand up. Among those I would single out Mona Hatoum, whose work manages to combine accusation and poetry with a masterly deftness. Hatoum turns **Hamas** slogans into lullabies. The gentleness of her work lulls you into quiet drifts and daydreams - until you realise with a start what is actually being said. The Chapmans attack cultural innocence by guffawing at it like a pair of cocky schoolboys. Hatoum sits at the back of the class and dreams up sticky cultural traps that entangle you like a spider's web.

She's really good at addressing your nerve ends before she addresses you. Let me explain. Nerve ends don't think. They just respond. Put something in front of them that they recognise and they will invade your consciousness with appropriate responses. Listen to chalk being scraped on a blackboard and you can't help but feel your teeth on edge. Pick up a photo of a departed loved one and you will invariably go gooey and warm. Different sounds, different textures, different smells impact differently on the nervous system. Lots of art tries to sneak in through those channels. Little of it succeeds. Hatoum usually does.

For instance, in the Barbican's ridiculous recent attempt to create a "Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art", Hatoum stole the show with a tiny piece of fetishistic jewellery: an unsettling necklace in which every pearl-shaped bead was actually a ball of **female** hair. Something in this eerie sight intrigued, worried and enticed the nerves. Memories of a lover's hairbrush? Of a bathtub after a soak? Hair has a long history, in art, of triggering unsettling sensuous responses. Not for nothing did so many Renaissance artists paint so many Venuses combing their cascades.

Oh, what a lovely war

Locketts, meanwhile, were invented chiefly to carry the curl of your beloved. Our conscious selves may have forgotten all that, but the nerves cannot and never will. Hatoum's cannibalistic jewellery spoke the same language as those Islamic reliquaries that are claimed to contain strands of Mohammed's beard. Sensuous truths were spreading rational lies.

That's how she operates. Her art worms its way under your cultural defences and proceeds to toy with your opinions. A new show at the elegant Parasol Unit, featuring work from the past decade or so, adds up to a mini-retrospective. It seems on first entry to be a quiet selection, containing nothing as scary or impactful as Hatoum's unforgettable contribution to the 1995 Turner prize: remember the glistening video journey she arranged for you down the middle of the human reproductive system? This show releases its secrets more delicately. It takes a fair bit of looking and fretting to recognise the forlorn lament on the state of the world that has been mounted here.

Hatoum was born in Beirut in 1952 and marooned in London by the civil war that broke out in Lebanon in 1975. You wouldn't expect her to be a cheeky monkey after a story like that, and her melancholy sculptures and doomy installations can be characterised as a sob for the Middle East, a tear for the dispossessed. It's most obvious in *Mobile Home*, a rather clunky installation made of two large safety barriers between which washing lines have been hung with an assortment of domestic oddments - a kid's chair, some home embroidery, a suitcase, a table. Clever mechanics hidden inside the metal barriers keep these objects constantly moving up and down the washing lines. The plight of the international refugee has been imagined and precised in sculptural form.

Mobile Home is untypically literal. I preferred the broody steel menace of what appears to be a set of prison bars, bent and curved into the shape of a geography globe. The crude, earth-shaped cage that results could hold an angry rhinoceros. *Present Tense*, made in Jerusalem in 1996, is another piece of poetic agitprop. Hundreds of squares of soap have been marked with a busy pattern of beads. Each pretty little patch, and there are uncountable numbers of them, represents a Palestinian village or territory granted self-rule by Oslo II, the Israeli-Palestinian agreement backed by Clinton in 1995. Oslo II tried to design a nation on a model better suited to a selection of confetti. No wonder it led to nothing.

I liked the show more when it eschewed obvious moments in international politics. An engrossing piece called *Static* consists of a grubby chair across which a giant spider has woven a huge red web. The web is too large to be the result of shoddy housekeeping or historical neglect. Its strange and insistent presence seems somehow to stand in for the chair's missing occupant. Hatoum has explained that she made the piece in response to those immovable old men you find dotted about the edges of eastern bazaars, sitting there all day, doing nothing. The sculpture seems to accuse them of plotting and scheming, but that could just be me. Because *Static* disguises its true ambitions as mysteriously and worryingly as a coded phone call to Al-Jazeera.

A favourite trick of Hatoum's is to compare terror with beauty, the sinister with the gorgeous. On closer inspection, the red spider's web turns out to have been delicately fashioned from strings of tiny red beads. At the other end of the room, a creepy, brutal hospital bed, made of harsh grey steel, is covered with glowing pieces of coloured glass, like a hardware store decorated with fairy lights. Examine the multicoloured baubles more carefully, however, and you soon recognise a sinister assortment of pretty glass grenades.

All this is smuggled into you with immense sculptural cunning. Nothing is blurted out. Everything is implied, whispered and hinted at. It's a masterclass in political insinuation by the Mata Hari of contemporary sculpture.

Waldemar Januszczak

Mona Hatoum at Parasol Unit, 14 Wharf Road, N1, until August 8

Load-Date: June 15, 2008

SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN; IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF RADICAL CLERIC

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

June 15, 2008 Sunday

TWO STAR EDITION

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A-4

Length: 1035 words

Byline: Andrew E. Krammer, The New York Times

Dateline: BAGHDAD

Body

Aiming at a power base of a rival Shiite leader, Prime Minister Nouri Kamal al-Maliki sent troops into the southern city of Amara yesterday.

The operation in Amara, a city that is dominated politically by the radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, was the fourth initiative this year in which Mr. Maliki has sent troops into a city dominated by Shiite or Sunni militias.

The launch of the operation came a day after Mr. Sadr announced that he was reorganizing his Shiite movement.

In a statement read by aides during Friday prayers, Mr. Sadr said the movement would be divided into two branches. One group will remain armed and operate as an underground force, continuing to oppose the presence of American troops. The other branch would concentrate on politics and providing social services to Iraqis.

The armed wing, he said, will be drawn from experienced Mahdi Army fighters and be limited in size. Mr. Sadr said that fighters would have to have his written permission to carry weapons.

Mr. Sadr is a mercurial figure who leads a movement that is at once a guerrilla group fighting Americans and an important political force in the parliamentary democracy that the United States hopes to help create as a lasting government in Iraq.

The decision to divide the Mahdi Army into political and armed wings recalled similar evolutions in movements like **Hamas** in the Palestinian territories and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In Amara, residents awoke yesterday to helicopters thudding overhead, dropping leaflets that told them to stay indoors and to cooperate with Iraqi soldiers who would be arriving shortly.

Amara is the capital of Maysan province, the only province in Iraq where the local government is run by politicians aligned with Mr. Sadr, whose movement competes with other Shiite parties.

The military operation, planned for weeks, did not appear related to Mr. Sadr's decision to remake his organization. But both actions reflected less tolerance in Iraq for the mixture of politics and guns outside a better trained military.

SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF RADICAL CLERIC

For months, Mr. Maliki has been cracking down on what he calls "criminal elements," many of which have ties to Mr. Sadr, but it is not clear if he is working against Mr. Sadr himself.

Several experts speculated that Mr. Sadr was acting to formally separate his political movement from the militias in anticipation of electoral laws likely to ban parties from having armed wings.

An Iraqi general said the operation in Amara would unfold along the lines of an initiative this year against Shiite militias in the nearby city of Basra. There, Iraqi soldiers entered but relied on air support from the American military and small teams of American advisers.

Then, as now, commanders took pains to clarify they were targeting rogue elements of the Mahdi Army rather than Mr. Sadr's supporters in the general population.

With a population of about 350,000, Amara is smaller than Basra and the sites of other operations initiated by Mr. Maliki: the predominantly Shiite neighborhood of Sadr City in Baghdad, and Mosul. But Amara is tactically important as a suspected conduit for weapons smuggled across marshlands along the border with Iran.

The Iraqi soldiers assembled at an airport six miles to the northeast of Amara, and at a local stadium, a local police official said.

By early evening, the troops had fanned out in the city center. The district police chief said security forces raided 68 homes in the province and found ammunition and explosives.

In the early months after the United States invaded Iraq, rival militant groups engaged in frequent gun battles in Amara, sometime overrunning government buildings. The militias seized control of the city, over which the central government in Baghdad had limited control.

Gen. Hameed Nabeel, the commander of the Iraqi army 1st Brigade, which is garrisoned in Maysan province, said in an interview that the purpose of the operation was to serve court-issued arrest warrants.

He said soldiers would try to detain militants who had fled north to Amara from the earlier fighting in Basra.

"This operation will be just like the operations in Basra and Mosul," Gen. Nabeel said.

But a senior Sadr official, Luaa Smaiem, the head of the movement's political commission, said he believed the operation would go beyond targeting militia fighters. He said it would be used to weaken the Sadrists politically before provincial elections in the fall.

"Unfortunately, the executive system is used by political parties to strike the Sadr movement," he said.

In violence yesterday, a **female** suicide bomber blew herself up in a village market in Diyala province, where people had gathered to watch the Iraqi national soccer team defeat China 2-1 in a World Cup qualifying match.

At least 25 people were wounded, 12 of them critically, a police official said.

Insurgents have been turning increasingly to the use of **female** suicide bombers. Because police officers and soldiers are reluctant to search **women**, **female** suicide bombers have succeeded in slipping into gatherings where male bombers might have been stopped.

Also yesterday, President Bush expressed confidence that the United States and Iraq would agree on a new security arrangement this year, even though Mr. Maliki, his strongest ally in Iraq, declared the negotiations at an impasse the previous day.

Speaking in Paris during a European trip that has been dominated by discussions of Iran, not Iraq, Mr. Bush sought to play down remarks by Mr. Maliki suggesting that the United States was making unacceptable demands on Iraq's sovereignty.

SADR CHALLENGED AGAIN IRAQI TROOPS INVADE AMARA, A POLITICAL STRONGHOLD OF RADICAL CLERIC

Mr. Maliki's remarks, along with increasingly vociferous protests in Baghdad and opposition in the U.S. Congress, have cast doubts on the prospect for extending the legal authority for U.S. forces to remain in Iraq after a U.N. mandate expires at the end of the year.

Mr. Bush said his administration respected Iraq's sovereignty and its leaders' political goals, adding that his administration would "accommodate their desires" and negotiate "in a way the elected government is comfortable."

"If I were a betting man, we'll reach an agreement with the Iraqis," Mr. Bush said, speaking at the Elysee Palace during a news conference with the French president, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Graphic

PHOTO: Kim Gamel/Associated Press: U.S. troops examine a poster of Muqtada al-Sadr and other religious propaganda discovered during a raid in Basra on Monday, evidence of continued support for the anti-American cleric and his Mahdi Army militia.

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Worldview: Everyone should agree on this Iraq program

The Philadelphia Inquirer

June 1, 2008 Sunday

CITY-D Edition

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Section: CURRENTS; Inq Col Trudy Rubin; Pg. C01

Length: 1039 words

Byline: By Trudy Rubin

Inquirer Columnist

Body

No matter the divide between presidential candidates on Iraq, here's an idea they all can endorse.

It's a wise, very relevant Iraqi proposal that cuts across U.S. debates about stay or leave and beams in on Iraq's future. Moreover, it's doable.

It needs U.S. support, but it won't cost Americans a cent.

The Iraqi government has proposed using oil revenue to send 10,000 high school graduates a year to study abroad for the next five years. The students would go to the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia, with the bulk of them headed here. Then they would be required to return home.

This plan is a winner - for both Iraqis and us.

Iraq has been bleeding human capital for three decades, in the 1980s from Saddam's Iran-Iraq war, in the 1990s from sanctions, and since 2003 from postwar chaos.

Without skilled manpower, Iraq cannot pull itself back together, even if the civil war ends, al-Qaeda in Iraq disappears, and U.S. troops leave. Oil money can keep the country afloat, but it won't develop into a modern nation without a solid educational base.

Yet the present situation for Iraqi education is desperate. "Iraq used to be the best in the Middle East" in education, recalls Zuhair Humadi, a senior Iraqi official who is working on the education plan; he holds a doctorate from Southern Illinois University. "But in the past 30 years the whole system has been going down."

Iraq once had excellent university programs in science and produced many women engineers, but its universities are now going through multiple traumas. In the last five years, university buildings and libraries have been degraded by looting, and hundreds of faculty members have been murdered. Students have been blown up by car bombs and kidnapped by militias.

Worldview: Everyone should agree on this Iraq program

Under these circumstances, the Iraqi middle class has been fleeing, including academics and promising students. Humadi said some reports indicated the number of faculty with doctorates at Iraqi universities had declined to 35 percent.

The Iraqi Education Initiative, announced in parliament May 11 by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, is a long-range program aimed at reversing the hemorrhaging. Maliki will ask the Iraqi parliament to budget \$1 billion a year for the foreign scholarships along with a plan to upgrade schools and curriculum inside his country. It may be his most important proposal yet.

"The idea is a simple one," Humadi said. "We need to put more emphasis on education, not only in sending students abroad but also at home. An investment in human resources is the best investment any government can make."

The program would pay all expenses for the students, not just for bachelor's or doctoral degrees but also for two-year technical degrees leading to such jobs as lab assistant or administrator. For high school graduates who have fallen behind because of the violence, the program would provide extra tutoring. "Iraq definitely needs this type of education to rebuild capacity," Humadi said.

Of course, the implementation of the program would be as important as the concept. In recent years, Iraqi ministries have become spoils in the battle between sectarian factions and militias. Things got so bad that 150 staff and visitors were kidnapped in 2006 from a Ministry of Higher Education building.

Humadi said, however, that the scholarship program could surmount sectarian tensions. Candidates for study abroad would be picked from each province according to their grade levels, not by sect. "We can devise methods," he said, "that will not discriminate against anyone."

But the program cannot succeed without critical input from the United States.

"The most important thing we require from the U.S. government is to help with the visas," Humadi said. "Iraqi students are still having a very difficult time getting visas, including those with Fulbright grants."

You have probably read about the U.S. visa delays that still block the entry of thousands of Iraqis under death threat for working with U.S. military and civilian officials. The same infuriating delays also block Iraqi students.

According to a recent article in the Chronicle of Higher Education, of 400 Iraqi graduate students who have already been awarded scholarships to study in the United States, only 25 have received visas. To make matters worse, Iraqis cannot get their visas processed in Baghdad but have to make dangerous trips to neighboring countries such as Jordan or Syria. In a perfect Catch-22, it has become difficult or impossible for young Iraqis to enter those countries, which are overwhelmed by the influx of Iraq refugees.

This is nuts. We've invested billions to "stabilize Iraq," yet we won't facilitate the training of the generation whose education will determine Iraq's future. Those students are crucial to America's future, too.

Middle Eastern youths who study here provide a bridge between their countries and ours; they are more likely to understand U.S. thinking and advocate for warmer relations. President Bush's longtime adviser Karen Hughes rightly called foreign students "the single most important public diplomacy tool of the last 50 years."

In the post-9/11 panic, the number of U.S. visas for foreign students was sharply reduced, especially for Arabs. That trend has reversed. Saudi Arabia sent 10,000 scholarship students to U.S. colleges and universities in 2006-07. Our embassy in Riyadh now fast-tracks their visa process.

Is it possible we would do less for Iraqis? Conceivable that our Baghdad embassy won't fast-track visas so Iraq can train its coming generation?

Even in these crazy times, I can't believe it. Maliki's Iraq Education Initiative must get Washington's full support.

Worldview: Everyone should agree on this Iraq program

Worldview:

In the Department of Nuttiness, here is a related item: The State Department has just revoked all Fulbright grants to Gaza students because Israel won't grant them permission to leave Gaza. These are the very people necessary to pull Gaza toward modernity and away from **Hamas**. Some Israeli lawmakers are upset by this decision. Can't the State Department persuade Israel's government to let these students out? - *Trudy Rubin*

Contact columnist Trudy Rubin at 215-854-5823 or trubin@phillynews.com. Read her recent work at <http://go.philly.com/trudyrubin>.

Graphic

Photograph by: Feed Loader

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Education: Higher: Learn about your enemy: A masters degree in Israeli studies is proving popular among students at a Palestinian university

The Guardian - Final Edition

May 6, 2008 Tuesday

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the**guardian**

Section: GUARDIAN EDUCATION PAGES; Pg. 10

Length: 1073 words

Byline: Nathan Jeffay

Body

Israelis at an exhibit of sand sculptures as part of the 60th anniversary celebrations, while (below) a Palestinian taunts soldiers

"It had nothing, and in a very short period has built this very strong economy. We should be amazed by this," says Azizha Noful. She is talking about Israel, which celebrates its 60th anniversary on Thursday.

You will hear many comments like this on Thursday at the many Israel 60 gatherings taking place across the world. After all, this is a classic observation of Israel's supporters, and one that always dominates discussions at Independence Day events.

What is surprising, though, is that Noful is a Palestinian whose husband is a prisoner in Israel, and she wants an end to the country's existence. So why is she praising Israel's achievements?

The answer is that she one of a growing number of Palestinians who want to study Israel. Noful is a student on the fast-growing Israel studies course at the Palestinian Al-Quds University. Between the university's West Bank and Gaza campuses, the two-year masters degree has more than 100 students - reflecting a year-on-year growth of about 10% since 2005.

At Al-Quds, scholarship and the Palestinian struggle are closely related. For example, one of the law courses involves running human rights clinics in the hope students will "play a role in the struggle for change" in "occupied Palestine".

Peculiar setting

The university fears confiscation of part of its campus for road building by Israel, and in 2002, Israeli forces closed an administration building, confiscating files, academic documents and computers. Student politics tends to be radical, and the university union goes through periods of Hamas control.

Education: Higher: Learn about your enemy: A masters degree in Israeli studies is proving popular among students at a Palestinian university

Professor Mohammed Dajani, director of Al-Quds's Area Studies Institute, which runs the Israel studies course, admits his university is a peculiar setting for this subject. He point out that Palestinian identity has largely been synonymous with "a general Arab policy to shut Israel out of Arab memory" and ignore its existence as far as possible.

However, he says, this has been changing since the start of the occupation in 1967. "Before the 1967 war, Palestinians, like the rest of the Arab world, knew nothing about Israel and Judaism. Then in June 1967, Israeli occupation brought a dramatic shift and Palestinians were shocked to find out how much Israelis knew about the Arab world and how little they knew about them. Though Arab interest in Israel grew tremendously, only a few Arab institutions and publishers reflected objectivity in dealing with the topic." The few courses and books that did deal with Israel were polemics that viewed Israel as an aggressor.

The Al-Quds course set out to remedy this. Every student takes an in-depth course in Zionist thought and history, and Hebrew language is compulsory, as is studying the Israeli political system, the economy and social structure. Electives and dissertations involve detailed study of niche issues in Israeli society, including women's issues, ethnicity, divisions between Jews of eastern and western origins, the judicial system, the Israel Defence Forces and the status of Palestinian Arabs.

Given that it is covering new ground for the Arab world, the course faces a lack of Arabic-language texts and so uses Israeli scholarship in Hebrew or in English translation. Perhaps surprisingly, students haven't objected to the use of Israeli texts, says Dajani.

Teaching Zionism presents one of the course's biggest challenges, says Professor Mohammad Massalha, who is charged with this task. "We are dealing with people who, on a daily basis, face the result of Zionism. It is very difficult to teach about Zionism academically. But my job is to make as much of an artificial separation between the personal level and the academic level as possible."

Massalha begins by studying the theory of ideologies as a general subject, and then moves on to considering how Zionism fits and breaks the mould of other ideologies. "This way, we have a model for trying to understand Zionism with some objectivity." As for why students want to reach this kind of objectivity about Zionism and Israel, motivations vary. More than half are officials in the Palestinian Authority. They range from relatively junior officials to the top-ranking Jibril Rajoub and they all believe that increased knowledge will help their work.

For some, like Noful, it is about acquiring knowledge as power. She says: "Every Palestinian has to know about them (Israelis) - it is important to know about our enemy. As my mother says, if you want to face your enemy, know his language."

Learning process

She also believes that Palestinians will eventually set up their own state and will do so more effectively if they learn from Israel's successes. "Israelis are great developers and we can learn from everything they are doing," she says.

However, she insists that this learning process must take place from a safe distance and shuns dialogue. "We have to know about Israel but not forget they are our enemy. I can't be on good relations with my enemy."

Others, like 32-year-old Ramallah resident Sameh Khader, assistant to the secretary of the PLO executive committee, take the opposite view, and hope that their studies will facilitate coexistence and help bring peace. "For me it's not about knowing the enemy. I want to live peacefully with our neighbours and believe that to do that we need to understand them," says Khader.

Israeli academic Mordechai Kedar, an Arabic-speaking political scientist at the Israeli Bar Ilan University, says that the success of the course shows a thirst for knowledge about Israel across the Arab world. He is in demand as an Israeli guest on al-Jazeera and other Arabic TV stations and as a writer on Arabic websites. He recently received an offer of a two-year visiting professorship in the Gulf to teach about Israel and Judaism.

Education: Higher: Learn about your enemy: A masters degree in Israeli studies is proving popular among students at a Palestinian university

"When I publish articles on Arabic websites, I get at least two or three queries every day, from people wanting to know how Israelis think and what life is really like in Israel," he says.

"While some are trying to convert me to Islam, many don't like Israel, Israelis or Jews but want to know more. I spend an hour or two every day exchanging mails with these people.

"With satellite TV and the web the Arab world is much more open today than it was, and while this has not brought a desire to accept Israel, it has brought a desire to better understand it."

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Letters

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

April 30, 2008 Wednesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 12

Length: 1114 words

Body

How can McCain divide and conquer a groundswell?

Re Gerard Henderson's dismal assessment of the possible American presidential scenario ("Out-of-Touch Obama strays from Rudd manual", April 29), as a visitor to the United States twice in the past six months, I opened my ears and kept my counsel. One could not help but feel the degree of visceral exasperation, from Massachusetts to New Mexico, from Georgia to California, towards the Bush Republican Administration and over the loss of opportunities and international goodwill through inane, incompetent leadership and disastrous policies.

To predict John McCain might divide and conquer in November is to ignore the massive groundswell among the disillusioned and disenfranchised. One only has to read any of the respected broadsheets to see reports of the enormous galvanisation within the American electorate, reflected in huge numbers of new Democrat registrations and volunteers, and in the energy of political discourse. Barack Obama's appeal is also shown in the massive campaign funds his team has been able to accrue without being beholden to any interest group.

The Democrats have two attractive candidates capable of winning office and guiding the US on a new, much-needed course. The Republicans will rely upon policies and apparatchiks inherited from a discredited Administration if McCain achieves the majority popular vote.

Michael Wright Northbridge

Employment on a needs basis

I couldn't agree more with Russell Sweet's view that Aboriginal people should be offered the chance of employment in high-need areas where skills shortages exist (Letters, April 29).

However, if they did move from their communities to benefit the farmers and our economy generally, the grants given to them need not be paid back. We pay doctors, teachers and nurses more to service rural and other communities, we should give the same to our indigenous people.

Anthony van den Broek Erskineville

Tides wait for no man

The CSIRO's climate expert Dr Benjamin Preston identifies Botany Bay municipality as highly susceptible to rising sea levels ("Climate change will hurt poor and elderly most", April 29).

Letters

It won't be just the poor and elderly under threat but critical infrastructure such as the state's biggest shipping port and chemical complex, along with Australia's largest airport.

You would think the authorities would be planning to move this infrastructure to safer areas, but no, the plan is to expand the port and airport.

The main road into the port is already built on a reclaimed area of Botany Bay and the expansion will require more dredging of the bay, making the area even more susceptible to higher tides. But then why should we take any notice of the CSIRO when Sydney Ports Corporation's ultimate boss, Michael Costa, doesn't believe in climate change.

Lynda Newnam La Perouse

Following it to the letter

Change is inevitable, Kevin Rugg, (Letters, April 29) even on the Herald's letters page. A decade ago we had street names attached, the salutation of "Sir", quite rightly, was cut and with the adoption of fax and email, there has been an increased immediacy of communication.

Some writers have managed to adapt while others have been forced into submission, as snail mail communications are often too late to be newsworthy.

Letters of today offer relevancy in their immediacy, something that even most editorials lack. Life is busy, with a greater proportion of the population working, the letters page can no longer be the sole domain of the retiree set. The entire population has a voice if they desire, even if it is only a comment.

Janice Creenaune Austinmer

Kevin Rugg's lament about modern-day letters to the editor reminds me of a Truman Capote quote. When asked what he thought of Jack Kerouac's writing, Capote said, "That's not writing, that's typing."

Ian Waters Surry Hills

Driving parents round bend

Having just spent two hours in a car with my 17-year-old learner-driver daughter, I am left wondering what the powers that be imagined when they sentenced mostly parents to 120 hours of forced "quality time" with their teens.

Much as I appreciate my daughter's company, I cannot conceive how 120 hours of driving at less than 80kmh is going to help eliminate dangerous driving habits. What will help is that she is inherently a sensible young adult who recognises the dangers and risks of driving, something she has learned over a lifetime, and 120 hours behind the wheel is not going to change her.

After 70 hours, she is more than competent. Having had three elder children survive the old 50-hour regime, I am confident she can pass a test. We now seem to place greater emphasis on form filling, which is ripe for rorting. Perhaps we should ask the architects of this idea to sit in a car for 120 hours. Or maybe they can explain where I should go when I am driving around because driving back and forth to the shops is not going to achieve a lot.

Rodney Stone Haberfield

Look at the state we're in

Thank you, Peter Manning, ("Redress the balance on Palestine", April 29) for giving voice to the Palestinian narrative and for highlighting the cold, hard facts underlying the creation of Israel 60 years ago.

My Palestinian grandmother, 98 years old, died in Jordan last Thursday. Her lifelong wish was to return to her birthplace and to be buried beside my grandfather and ancestors. Israel denied her this right.

Letters

The creation of the state of Israel has resulted in the ongoing dispossession and suffering of the Palestinian people.

Randa Abdel-Fattah Quakers Hill

It seems that no matter how successful Israel is as a nation, nor how democratic, innovative and prosperous, the left will never accept it as legitimate until it commits demographic suicide or is wiped out in an Islamist version of the Holocaust.

This is not to argue that Israelis have never breached international standards nor crossed moral boundaries. However, it is necessary to point out that the gross violations of human rights, women's rights, minority rights and others in all of Israel's neighbours appear not to count in the moral ledger.

The primary, but by no means only, cause of misery in the Gaza Strip is the priorities of its Hamas rulers.

Leonard Colquhoun Invermay (Tas)

Inflation of influence

An oil lobby consultant has produced a report citing all kinds of economic nastiness if alternative energy sources are promoted ("Renewables policy under attack", April 29).

Who'd have thought? The polite approach is to accept the report and ignore it. Many of the world's problems, from Iraq to climate change to oil-related inflation, stem from excessive influence by such groups. Screw manners; just shred (and recycle) the bloody thing.

Carl Sparre Eastwood

Graphic

CARTOON: By John Shakespeare

Load-Date: April 29, 2008

Gaza power play

Weekend Australian

April 26, 2008 Saturday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 23

Length: 1105 words

Byline: Sian Powell

Body

A drama about a young American woman crushed by an Israeli bulldozer is sure to cause local controversy, writes Sian Powell

RACHEL Corrie died in Gaza in March 2003, a young American activist whose idealism led her down a dangerous path. Five years later a contentious play based on her writing is soon to open in Sydney.

My Name is Rachel Corrie is a piece of theatre co-edited by renowned British actor Alan Rickman. It won awards in Britain, where Rickman directed the piece, before being summarily cancelled by theatre companies in the US and Canada. It has ignited anger across the world, with seemingly enough written about it -- from all sides -- to paper Gaza.

Clive Davis, of London newspaper The Times, dubbed it "unvarnished propaganda". But, by way of contrast, The New York Times' Ben Brantley saw the play as an "invigoratingly detailed portrait of a passionate political idealist".

Playwright Harold Pinter, among others, wrote to defend the play, while a website called Rachel Corrie Facts has been set up to correct the work's "factual errors and myths".

The play has dipped into that most prickly subject: Middle Eastern politics. Corrie drew derision and admiration during her short life: the play has had the same effect.

The director of the Sydney production, Shannon Murphy, is well aware she has chosen a difficult piece. Scheduled to open at the Belvoir St Theatre in Sydney's Surry Hills on May 14, the play is sure to draw fire.

"But I actually think it's been blown out of proportion in a way," Murphy says. "It's more a coming-of-age story."

The young director knows she is dealing with political dynamite and there are any number of charges that can be levelled against the play. "Of course it's biased," she says. "It's one person's perspective."

Murphy first read the Corrie piece last year and she was so taken with the play -- as a play rather than as political polemic -- that she began to look into how she could put it on.

She had been told the Corrie family was unlikely to grant her the rights, but she wrote an impassioned proposal to their agent and within 24 hours she had a response granting her permission. Perhaps it was because the Corries heard echoes of their daughter's fire in the proposal: a determination to take on the difficult issues.

Gaza power play

Reared in Washington state in the US, Corrie was an imaginative child who felt deeply about many things, and half of the play is devoted to her life at home. As a college student she joined the International Solidarity Movement (dubbed a pro-Palestinian front by critics) and travelled to Gaza in January 2003. In the ensuing months she reportedly attended non-violent resistance training, took part in a mock trial of George W. Bush and burned a paper US flag in a demonstration against war in Iraq.

On March 14, 2003, in an interview with the Middle East Broadcasting Network, she said: "I feel like I'm witnessing the systematic destruction of a people's ability to survive ... Sometimes I sit down to dinner with people and I realise there is a massive military machine surrounding us, trying to kill the people I'm having dinner with."

Two days later she was killed, in hotly disputed circumstances. It is certain, though, that Corrie was trying to prevent an armoured Israeli D9 bulldozer from working in Rafah, in Gaza, where she believed Palestinian houses were at risk. She was killed either by the bulldozer's blade or by rubble and debris moved by the machine. She was 23.

An Israeli Defence Force investigation found that Corrie had not been run over by the dozer and that the driver probably had not been able to see her. Her death made the news across the world.

Murphy believes Corrie's death was accidental, rather than a matter of the young activist playing the hero and standing in front of the bulldozer with her hand raised to halt it -- as the brave Chinese activist did to a tank in Tiananmen Square -- and then being deliberately run over.

"It was undignified," she says. "She slipped and she was trying to scramble up, and it crushed her. It was not expected. It was an accident." Whether the dozer driver was in any way at fault is another matter. "No charges have been laid, that's for sure."

Murphy sees the way Corrie died as a parallel to her political understanding: the activist wasn't deliberately risking her life, she was trying to prevent what she saw as the wanton destruction of Palestinian property. It was a prosaic stance, aligned with her position on Middle East issues, which Murphy says was more a search for understanding than a set-in-stone approach.

"Up until she died she was still trying to grasp what was happening between the Israelis and the Palestinians," Murphy says, adding that Corrie was angrier with US foreign policy than she was with Israel.

Sitting in the theatre's serene rehearsal room, Murphy is cautious about buying into the rights and wrongs of the play's past cancellations. A production directed by Rickman was cancelled by the New York Theatre Workshop in 2006, seemingly for political reasons. The theatre's artistic director James Nicola reportedly admitted the play had been binned.

"In our pre-production planning and our talking around and listening in our communities in New York, what we heard was that after Ariel Sharon's illness and the election of Hamas, we had a very edgy situation," he told The Guardian. "We found that our plan to present a work of art would be seen as us taking a stand in a political conflict that we didn't want to take."

Rickman, perhaps best known for his acting in the Harry Potter films, Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves and Love Actually, in a statement described the cancellation as "censorship born out of fear".

The play was also cancelled by CanStage in Toronto. CanStage board member Jack Rose admitted to the entertainment industry newspaper Variety: "My view was it would provoke a negative reaction in the Jewish community."

Murphy declined to comment on cancellations, but she says she greatly admires Rickman's work. He and Katharine Viner edited Corrie's writings to give the play dramatic structure. But Murphy says every word used was written by the young activist at one time or another.

"It's actually quite humorous, it's not as heavy as people think," Murphy says.

Gaza power play

Carrying a one-woman play is a gruelling task, and Murphy eventually cast seasoned actor Belinda Bromilow. "I saw women from all over the country who flew in wanting this part," Murphy says. Bromilow is older than Corrie was when she died, but the activist, Murphy says, was extremely mature for her age: "She was ordinary and extraordinary."

Load-Date: November 5, 2008

End of Document

On Eve of Passover, Bread Stirs Deep Thoughts in Israel

The New York Times

April 18, 2008 Friday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 985 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel's public debate shifted this week from **Hamas** to hametz. But it remained no less heated.

Hametz is bread and other leavened products that many Jews do not eat for the eight days of Passover, which starts Saturday night. The Bible says that when God freed the Jews from enslavement in Egypt, they left in such a hurry that there was no time for their bread to rise, and to mark that circumstance, consuming leavened bread during the holiday is forbidden.

The focus of the debate here is a ruling by a Jerusalem municipal judge overturning the convictions of four shops and restaurants for having sold pizzas and rolls during the holiday last year despite a law that many thought prohibited businesses from doing so. The judge said the law barred only the public display of hametz, not its sale inside shops.

While most debates about the painstakingly negotiated public role of religion in Israel line up along predictable lines of observant versus secular, this discussion has been different. And it speaks to a palpable anxiety over the need to define and defend the Jewish nature of the state, even as Israel's 60th anniversary approaches next month.

In opinion articles and informal conversations, some nonreligious Israelis said that they liked the eight-day absence of hametz, and that it was a small but potent symbol of a unique collective identity.

The most prominent advocate of this point of view was Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, a thoroughly secular woman, who wrote in the newspaper Maariv that she regretted the judge's decision.

"Ostensibly, the ban on the public display or sale of bread on Passover is a minor and marginal issue, but I believe that this is not the case," she wrote. "In my view, this prohibition is part of the substantive question of how we wish to characterize our identity in the national home for the Jewish people."

Many agreed with her and contended, as she did, that since Israel's Palestinian negotiating partners and their supporters rejected defining Israel as "a Jewish state," it was more important than ever to do so.

"The further we allow ourselves to go from Jewish tradition, the easier it will be for those who reject our legitimacy as a Jewish state," said Sharona Mazalian, who lives outside Tel Aviv, works for a secular, conservative legislator and wants hametz banned during Passover. "We call ourselves a Jewish, democratic state. But the less Jewish we

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are the easier it will be for others to say, 'Why not just be a democratic state for Jews and Arabs to live in together?' "

Amnon Rubinstein, a secular and liberal former minister of education and a former dean of Tel Aviv University's law school, said the Jerusalem judge was right in her ruling because the intent of the law was to avoid offending religious sensibilities by publicly displaying hametz, not to end the sale of hametz entirely.

But he noted: "There is this mood now that we must remain Jewish somehow, some way. Tzipi Livni represents that -- a secular hankering for Jewish ambience."

That seems especially true at Passover. In recent polls, 65 to 70 percent of Israeli Jews say they will avoid hametz next week, although most are not generally religiously observant.

There is something especially meaningful about Passover in Israel. As Liat Collins, a columnist, wrote in The Jerusalem Post, Passover, the festival of freedom, "represents everything we are proud of: survival against the odds; national identity; and a return to the Promised Land. All the things for which we have been admired -- and reviled -- over thousands of years."

But just as many Israeli Jews seek a Jewish feeling from Israel's public life -- they like the way the country slows down on Friday afternoon for Sabbath, the way it follows the Jewish calendar -- they resent the fact that religiously defined parties are the ones setting the agenda.

After the judge handed down her decision, several Orthodox parties declared it a calamity and vowed to pass a law barring all sales of hametz during Passover. When the cabinet declined to take up the issue, the Shas Party threatened a governmental crisis but backed down, saying it would take its case to Parliament.

Moshe Halbertal, a professor of Jewish philosophy at Hebrew University here, said: "What I see going on is a sense of a search for Jewish identity, which I really appreciate. But I think it is wrong to do so through the legal system."

He said his model for Jewish public expression was the way Israel marked Yom Kippur, when, through unwritten convention, no one drives. "There is no law about driving on Yom Kippur, yet everyone respects it," he said.

But Yair Sheleg, an observant Jew who writes for the newspaper Haaretz, made the opposite case in a recent column that supported banning the display and sale of hametz during Passover.

He said a society should use its laws regarding public space to help shape its core values, "and in this regard prohibiting the public display of hametz on Passover is no different in principle from legislating the closure of restaurants and movie theaters on Holocaust Remembrance Day or on Memorial Day."

He noted that some years ago Parliament passed a law to destroy a monument to Baruch Goldstein, the Brooklyn-born Jewish settler who killed 29 Muslims praying in Hebron in 1994. Mr. Sheleg noted that it was hidden from public view and caused little evident harm, but that eliminating it was an appropriate expression of core public values.

Nahum Barnea, a columnist for Yediot Aharonot, said the dispute made him realize how Israel, even as it approached its 60th anniversary, "is still trying to define itself, something most states don't have to do."

"We are still debating our existence, not only in terms of policy but in terms of ideology," he said. "What is Israel? What is a Jewish state? And how can hametz help us find the answer?"

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: **Women** at a bakery near Kiryat Gat kneaded dough for unleavened bread for Passover. A judge has ruled that leavened bread can be sold during Passover.

At the bakery, south of Tel Aviv, an Orthodox Jew oversees the process for making unleavened bread, or matzo.(PHOTOGRAPHS BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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The little Torah that could

The Jerusalem Post

March 7, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 22

Length: 1047 words

Byline: GREER FAY CASHMAN

Highlight: GRAPEVINE

Body

* MANY OBSERVANT Jewish men who work outside their hometowns or cities do not have time to attend synagogue services in the morning, and instead say their prayers during the commute. Most would prefer to have a proper quorum, but this is not always possible on buses. On the train from Jerusalem via Beit Shemesh to Tel Aviv, however, it is a daily occurrence.

There are three such minyanim on this train, at 6:30 a.m., 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. These services are attended by some 150 men.

What was missing, says lawyer David Schapiro, who lives in Beit Shemesh and works in Tel Aviv, was a Torah scroll. After consulting the Beit Shemesh Rabbinate, he was given permission to buy an easily portable Torah scroll, namely one that is only 15 cm. high, which was put to use for the first time this week. Schapiro described it as "a historic occasion." It certainly gives a new fillip to the journey.

* IT WAS much in the nature of a mutual admiration society when leading British historian and Winston Churchill's official biographer Sir Martin Gilbert delivered an appreciation at the Menachem Begin Heritage Center last Friday of the book *The Aaronsohn Saga*, and its prolific author, journalist and historian Shmuel Katz, who is generally regarded as the official biographer of Ze'ev Jabotinsky.

Katz, 93, made aliya from South Africa in 1936, the year Gilbert was born, in London. They met in Jerusalem 32 years ago and have remained friends and admirers of each other's work ever since.

In his latest book, observed Gilbert, Katz writes that Aaron Aaronsohn was ignored by British historians. Gilbert prided himself on being the exception to the rule.

Recommending the book at the launch hosted by Gefen Publishing House, Gilbert said: "It's an extraordinary book. I've read it twice and hope to review it for *The Jerusalem Post*. It really is exceptional, and I take my hat off to him."

Few people are aware that it was information supplied by Aaronsohn that enabled the British to defeat the Turks in Beersheba in 1917. Aaronsohn was also involved with Jabotinsky and Joseph Trumpeldor in creating the Jewish Legion, said Gilbert.

Recalling his first meeting with Gilbert after the publication of his monumental work *Battleground*, Katz said: "When Martin read it and liked it, I realized the book had succeeded."

The little Torah that could

Commenting that he had read a month ago about a man who did not know who Jabotinsky was, other than a name on a street sign, Katz lamented that Aaron and Sara Aaronsohn did not have even that much. Not a single street in Israel is named for them, he said. "The hatred for the Aaronsohn family came down through the ages."

Both Gilbert and Katz received resounding ovations from the largely ultra-right-wing audience. Standing out like a sore thumb was former Labor MK Tamar Eshel, a cousin to Avshalom Feinberg, who together with the Aaronsohns organized the NILI espionage group.

* HOW DOES one spend one's 55th wedding anniversary? Well, if your name is Yehuda Avner and you're a much-in-demand public speaker and writer who has been actively engaged in the development of modern Israel since before its declaration of independence, then you give in to yet another request for a speaking engagement.

Last Saturday night, Avner, who is a member of the board of directors of Jerusalem's Great Synagogue, could hardly refuse. He had been scheduled to speak at an earlier date, and had been prevented by illness from carrying out his commitment. As this was the last in an annual six-months series, it was a matter of noblesse oblige. So he and his wife Mimi duly turned up at the Great Synagogue where he delivered a warmly received fire and brimstone address.

Avner came to Jerusalem in November, 1947, as a 17-year-old volunteer from Britain to fight in the War of Independence. He subsequently helped found Kibbutz Lavi, became a career diplomat and was sent back to England as ambassador to the Court of St. James. He was also ambassador to Australia.

Speaking just after the escalation of hostilities between Gaza and Israel, Avner said that there was a war of attrition raging in the South because Israel's policy toward Gaza was not working.

Repeated air strikes against those deploying rockets had not proved to be a deterrent to Hamas, and finally the government had agreed to budget quarter of a billion dollars for the building of shelters for Sderot and its environs.

"That's unacceptable," thundered Avner. "A country with the most powerful army in the Middle East cannot tell itself that it cannot put a stop to the harassment of its citizens.

"There are better uses for a quarter of a billion dollars than as a sign of our government's impotence," he said.

A rousing ovation by the audience indicated that they were with him all the way.

* WHEN IMMIGRANTS from the former Soviet Union began arriving in great numbers after the fall of Communism, many were adopted by Chabad and other like-minded movements that were interested in giving them a sense of the Jewish heritage that they had been denied.

Among these immigrants were many couples in which both husband and wife were halachically Jewish, but had been married in a civil ceremony because that was generally how things were done in a Communist regime. But once in the Jewish homeland, a significant number wanted to remarry each other in accordance with Jewish law.

As a result there were mass marriages in different parts of the country, with as many as 30 couples at a time rededicating themselves to each other in a traditional Jewish ceremony.

Now, it's happening with the Indian Bnei Menashe, who this week saw 18 couples in their community remarry under a huge bridal canopy at the Jerusalem Great Synagogue, with Rabbi Eliahu Birnbaum performing the honors.

People from all over turned up to wish them well and join in the exuberant dancing in the large entrance hall to the synagogue.

The brides, decked out in high-necked, long-sleeved, full-skirted traditional wedding gowns, sat in a row to the right of the entrance as other women danced in their honor. On the left of the entrance, grooms and other men danced enthusiastically and belted out Carlebach melodies.

The little Torah that could

Bongo drums and tambourines added to the festive atmosphere, and everyone, even the photographers jostling for position, wore happy expressions.

Graphic

2 photos: Martin Gilbert. Eighteen mazal tovs. Bnei Menashe couples are remarried according to Halacha. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski; Courtesy)

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Want the best president for Israel?

The Jerusalem Post

January 30, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 1036 words

Byline: GIL TROY

Highlight: CENTER FIELD. The writer is professor of history at McGill University. The author of, *Why I Am A Zionist: Israel, Jewish Identity, and the Challenges of Today*, and *Hillary Rodham Clinton: Polarizing First Lady*. His next book, *Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents* will be published by Basic Books this spring.

Body

'Super-Duper' Tuesday is looming February 5. Americans will vote in 22 states, including New York, New Jersey and California, all with major Jewish populations. As Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama fight fiercely for the Democratic nomination, many pro-Israel voters are asking, "who is best for Israel"?

Truth is, despite the murmurings about the "Jewish vote" and the "Israel lobby," few American Jews today are such narrow one-issue voters. Amid American Jews' lamentable but growing disinterest in Israel, most American Jews are more multi-dimensional, and frankly, more passionate about other stances such as being pro-choice and anti-Bush. With American support for Israel so widespread and "apple pie," most mainstream candidates make enough pro-Israel noises to satisfy the casually pro-Israel American Jew.

There is also a deeper debate about what kind of candidate is "best for Israel"? Many Israeli and American doves want a president "pro-Israel" enough to pressure Israel. Many hawks consider Bill Clinton a president who genuinely loved Israel, but whose policies intensified Palestinian terrorism against Israel.

Still, the tea leaves gathering around Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama on the Israel issue suggest different readings. Clinton's pro-Israel critics point to her activities in the 1970s leading the New World Foundation, which funded New Left darlings, including the Palestinians. They also note Clinton's infamous 1999 embrace of Yasser Arafat's wife Suha, immediately after she had accused Israel of gassing Palestinian women and children.

Any fair reading of Hillary Clinton's record, however, balances these moments with more compelling evidence of deep ties to Israel. As the First Lady of Arkansas in the 1980s, she proudly imported an Israeli program serving underprivileged youth, HIPPY, the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters. More recently, representing New York, Senator Clinton not only supported Israel enthusiastically, she was a leading Democratic voice opposing terrorism and the Iranian threat.

In fact, Hillary Clinton may feel the terrorist threat, and the need to support Israel, more viscerally than any presidential candidate except New York's former mayor Rudy Giuliani. In addition to visiting Ground Zero when it was still smoldering, as New York's Senator, Hillary Clinton experienced some panicky moments on September 11 when she could not locate her daughter Chelsea, who was in lower Manhattan that day. Mrs. Clinton's initial

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accounts placed her daughter closer to the disaster than Chelsea's account did - psychobiographers can speculate whether that is maternal melodrama or Clintonesque spin.

Less well-known is Hillary Clinton's second heartbreaking window into Israelis' losses from terrorism. In February, 2002, while visiting Israel, Senator Clinton was photographed meeting Yochai Porat, a charming 26-year-old from Kfar Saba who coordinated the Jewish Agency's Foreign Volunteers Program. Barely a week later, on March 3, a Palestinian sniper attacked an army roadblock on the Ramallah-Nablus road. Serving in the reserves as a medic, Porat scrambled to help the wounded and ended up one of the 10 people murdered that morning. Three years later, when visiting Israel to mark Yitzhak Rabin's 10th *yahrzeit*, Senator Clinton met Porat's family. To her credit - and contrary to the Clinton reputation for milking every honest sentiment - she and her campaign have not publicized this firsthand lesson she learned about the horrors of Palestinian terror.

IN THIS REALM, as in so many others, Barack Obama's stance is vaguer. Still, even many who reject the libelous email falsely accusing him of mysterious Muslim ties are worried. Many of his foreign policy advisers, such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, have led the blame-Israel-first crowd for decades. The United Church of Christ to which Obama does belong has taken harsh anti-Israel positions that Obama has not repudiated boldly. More broadly, in appealing to the Democratic Left, Obama is allying with many who have been the most indulgent of Iran, critical of Israel, and skittish about fighting terrorism. And yet, in March 2007, Obama did what he does best - he gave a beautiful speech. At the AIPAC foreign policy forum, he championed Israel as America's special democratic ally while denouncing Hamas, Hizbullah and Iran. Obama's description comparing the American-style suburban idyll he witnessed on a visit to Kiryat Shmona in 2006 and the destruction he then saw from one Katyusha rocket - months before the Second Lebanon War - is typically vivid, empathetic, and moving.

If Obama wants to solidify his foreign policy credentials, and prove that soaring rhetoric can have real impact, he should pick a fight with one of the many anti-Israel leftists who masquerade their anti-Semitism behind anti-Zionism. Stealing a page from the Clinton playbook, remembering how effectively Bill Clinton dressed down an African-American racist, if Obama pulled such a "Sister Souljah" moment, he would prove he can stand up to any ugly elements festering among his own allies. Such a blow would do more for his campaign than the many pro-Israel Obamaniacs currently wandering around assuring everyone they can that Obama's "OK on Israel" and will fight terrorism aggressively.

ULTIMATELY, when it comes to the presidency, and especially regarding Middle East policy, biography is rarely destiny. George W. Bush was presumed to be uninterested in foreign policy. Also, the smart money suggested he would be as hard on Israel as the rest of the George H.W. Bush-James Baker crowd.

Amid all this confusion and speculation, a surprisingly easy answer emerges. The best president for Israel is the best president for America. No - anti-Semitic conspiracy types take note - Israel's and America's needs do not always converge. But Israel most needs a strong effective leader for America, Israel's truest friend, who will jumpstart America's economy, heal its social divisions, combat Islamo-terrorism, ensure victory in Iraq, and restore America's world standing. Ardent pro-Israel voters should pick the best person for that job, trusting that Israel needs a strong America more than a deferential president.

Graphic

Photo: HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON campaigning. Is she a more known quantity than Barack Obama? (Credit: AP)

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Want the best president for Israel?

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Pathological culture kills

The Jerusalem Post

February 28, 2008 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1085 words

Byline: EVELYN GORDON

Highlight: The desire for revenge is a universal emotion, yet few societies have unleashed an onslaught of 'hero' suicide bombers. CIVIL FIGHTS

Body

Yet another study of suicide bombers was published recently, this time by researchers at the University of Toronto. Like almost all its predecessors, the study refuted the theory that such bombers are motivated by poverty and despair; most, it found, were not economically deprived. It also echoed previous studies in concluding that suicide bombers are not psychologically unstable.

But, again like many of its predecessors, it stopped short of the obvious conclusion: that suicide bombings are, overwhelmingly, a product of the surrounding culture.

The study, which focused on Palestinian bombers, concluded that their primary motivation was a desire for personal vengeance against Israel. Yet that begs an obvious question: If so, why do many violent conflicts not produce suicide bombers? The desire for revenge, after all, is a universal emotion, found in every conflict throughout the ages. Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, for instance, were no less eager to avenge the deaths of loved ones than Palestinians are, yet their conflict produced no suicide bombers. The African National Congress produced no suicide bombers in its battle against apartheid, despite a plethora of victims. Wars have killed millions in other non-Islamic African countries without producing a single suicide bombing. Argentina's "dirty war" produced no suicide bombers despite thousands of governmental murders and kidnappings, nor has any other South American conflict. Nor have there been any Jewish suicide bombers, despite thousands of Israeli victims of Arab terror.

The same question applies to those who persist - despite all the studies showing that suicide bombers are typically relatively prosperous and well-educated - in deeming poverty the main motivator. Poverty in much of Africa, for instance, is far worse than in the Palestinian Authority; yet suicide bombings are unknown in non-Islamic parts of that continent.

THE ONLY explanation that consistently fits the data is the social and cultural milieu: Invariably, suicide bombers come from societies that view such bombings as an acceptable and even laudable response to grievance. Societies that deem them unacceptable do not produce suicide bombers.

That explains why most such bombers are Muslims: While an increasingly popular strain of Islam deems suicide bombers "holy martyrs" who merit praise on earth and reward in heaven, they have no such status in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism or animism. Indeed, most religions deem suicide bombings an abomination.

Pathological culture kills

But Islam alone cannot explain this phenomenon: Some Muslim countries, such as Bosnia and Kosovo, produced no suicide bombings despite suffering atrocities, while the predominantly secular Fatah frequently employs such bombings.

In the PA, however, secular society has reproduced the glorification of suicide bombings that Islamic fervor generates in groups like al-Qaida and Hizbullah. As leading Palestinian psychiatrist Eyad Sarraj told the Los Angeles Times in 2002, suicide bombers have "unparalleled" status in Palestinian society. "Their pictures are plastered on public walls, their funerals are emotional celebrations, their families often receive visits from state officials," the paper reported. "They become almost holy, praised by imams at mosques or over loudspeakers at rallies, where children are often dressed as shrouded dead or as pint-sized suicide bombers." "We have here a cultural glorification of martyrs," Sarraj concluded. "If you asked children 20 years ago what they wanted to be when they grew up, they'd say a doctor or an engineer. Now they say they want to be a martyr."

The Shin Bet security service reached an identical conclusion a few years back, based on interviews with would-be bombers who were caught before blowing themselves up. It found that the primary motivation was the desire to be a hero in society's eyes.

How does that square with the new study's finding that the main factor is a desire for revenge? Because while revenge is a universal emotion, its outlet is strongly influenced by culture. If channeling your desire for revenge into a suicide bombing would make you a hero, this becomes an attractive option. If it would make you a pariah, it looks much less attractive.

FAILED BOMBERS' stories illustrate this dynamic. Arin Ahmed, for instance, described how, two months after her boyfriend Jad was killed, she suddenly told some friends that she wanted to avenge him by becoming a suicide bomber. It was a spur-of-the-moment thought, the 20-year-old said in a published 2002 interview; "a moment earlier, I hadn't thought of anything like that."

Four days later, some Fatah operatives arrived and said her bombing was ready. From then on, they never let her alone. "They didn't let me think about it too much," she said. "They pressured me and persuaded me. They told me: You'll gain a very special status among women suicide bombers. You'll be a real heroine. It's for Jad's memory. You'll be reunited with him in heaven. You'll be with him in paradise."

Contrast this with a scene I witnessed at the shiva for a teenage girl killed in a suicide bombing. Her grief-stricken 17-year-old brother screamed that he wanted to avenge her by killing Palestinians. It was a normal teenage reaction, no different from Ahmed's. But his society's response was very different: Rather than being instantly surrounded by people who promised him honor and glory if he acted on this impulse, his father and others present told him unequivocally that this response was unacceptable. And, as in Ahmed's case, societal pressure had an impact: She set off to kill and landed in jail; he worked through his grief and got on with his life.

UNFORTUNATELY, the world largely ignores this all-important cultural factor, deeming anyone who is not a terrorist an "innocent civilian." That is why, for instance, it lambastes Israeli sanctions on Gaza even as Gaza's elected government bombards Israel with rockets: Such sanctions "hurt innocent civilians." Yet Gaza's civilians are not exactly innocent: They elected the terrorist Hamas; they overwhelmingly support attacks on Israeli civilians (as repeated polls show); and they actively participate, as Sarraj noted, in glorifying such attacks, thereby creating the atmosphere in which they flourish.

If the world truly wants to eradicate terror, it must address the culture factor. And that starts with ending the "innocent civilian" myth. Societies that glorify terror must not be given a free pass.

Graphic

Pathological culture kills

Photo: THE MYTH persists that perpetrators of suicide bombings are motivated by poverty and despair. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolinski)

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Letters

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

February 5, 2008 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 10

Length: 1097 words

Body

No word of compensation, just help healing past

I'm so glad Carolyn Wills (Letters, February 4) raised the possibility of Aboriginal people thanking the Government for making our lives happier and more secure.

She undoubtedly came to this conclusion through first-hand discussions with her Aboriginal friends. They must have all shared with her how much better their mental wellbeing, life expectancy, health, close family and community relations, and cultural pride are now. Similarly, I'm sure John Harding heard from his many friends from the stolen generations of the apology devolving into a compensation free-for-all. Funny, but that conflicts with the experiences of all the clients and friends of mine who were removed as children for being Aboriginal, who have never once asked about compensation in my 12 years as a caseworker and researcher into the effects of removal.

What they have sought was help finding and reuniting with the families they were taken from. They also hoped for support to patch up those broken family connections they had missed being a part of all their lives and help to heal the gaping holes in their own hearts.

Wendy Hermeston Clovelly

Sunday night's edition of the SBS series Who Do You Think You Are? featured Cathy Freeman. One of the stories relayed from her family history was that of her mother writing to the authorities to ask to be allowed to spend Christmas with her family. This was Queensland, in the early 1960s. Permission was refused.

I appreciate that this incident and the issue of the stolen generation are slightly different, but I suggest the same policies are the root cause, and those affected deserve similar empathy, sympathy and remorse.

Call a conscience vote, Dr Nelson. Let those who feel that basic injustice deserves no apology stand up in Parliament, and have it documented who they are. Let them explain their small-hearted stance. Do not let them hide behind party-room doors.

Elizabeth Mackson Woollahra

Consumers unprotected

Letters

As Americans we have been appalled at the lack of consumer protection across all segments of Australian business. No "lemon laws" for defective cars. Completely inadequate regulation of the banks. Virtually no class action lawsuits to rectify company wrongs.

Qantas is a case in point ("Frequent fly in Qantas ointment", February 4). In the US, government consumer protection made clear early on that fuel surcharges would not be allowed on frequent flyer redemptions. Fuel is a cost of business. Qantas is ripping off the frequent flyer and the travel agents who get no commission on this large portion of the ticket cost.

Australians routinely decry the litigious nature of the American system, but clear and substantial consumer protection is impossible without it. Why are Australian lawyers not performing their important check on corporate and government mistreatment of the consumer?

Brian and Sandra Ellison Cairns

I feel sorry for frequent flyers, but what about infrequent flyers? Surely an increment of their ticket price subsidises frequent flyers. It is time to squash this expensive, iniquitous scheme.

John Beith Dubbo

Religious equality

Cathy Byrne's letter (February 4) is typical of the confusion surrounding religious education in public schools. In NSW, all children are taught comparative religion, ethics, philosophy and values in regular classes. In addition, all children have the opportunity to have special education in a religion of their choosing. Section 32 of the Education Act authorises this and provides Buddhists with the same rights as Christians.

Nigel Fortescue Naremburn

Breast implant risk

Professor Bernard Stewart may well be right to say that breast implants don't, in themselves, cause cancer ("Report busts the myths on cancer risks", February 4). However, it would have been wise for him to mention that breast implants can conceal a malignant lump until it's way too late.

Candy Lawrence Bungawalbin

Pap test on Medicare

It's great to see many more women having Pap smear tests ("Pap test warning as lesions on rise", February 4). All that needs to be done now is for the Government to allow the ThinPrep test, which is more reliable and carried out in conjunction with the conventional test, to be claimed through Medicare.

Bernadette Scadden Earlwood

Stinky political donations

Aaron Gadiel blames the quick conclusions of cynical individuals for the putrid smell emerging from political donations ("Donations ban is a vote for equality", February 4) .

As he is the most prominent in a growing line of former Labor ministerial staffers now representing developer interests, I guess cynical individuals are an occupational hazard. While I agree with his proposal for a ban on political donations, I do not agree that there is no suggestion of major corruption in the planning system.

If a local councillor takes a donation from a developer then votes in favour of that developer's interests, he or she will rightly be dragged before the Independent Commission Against Corruption and prosecuted.

Letters

The NSW Labor Party, on the other hand, has accepted scores of donations from developers who have directly benefited from decisions by Labor ministers, yet they claim the two are unrelated.

Labor may have convinced itself that this behaviour is acceptable, but most people think it stinks.

Sylvia Hale Greens MLC, Petersham

Silly rent theory

A property investment group claims that if the Reserve Bank raises interest rates, landlords will raise rents by 10 per cent ("Tenants face fallout of further rate rise", February 4). This is one of the silliest claims you have ever published. Interest rates plummeted from Paul Keating's 17 per cent without rents plummeting, so why expect rents to track rates on the way up?

David van der Klauw Roseville

Gaza's desperate voice

I am surprised that Yuval Rotem does not believe the people of Gaza have had the opportunity to tell the world about their plight ("Missing voices from Gaza debate", February 4).

I should have thought that the recent extraordinary scenes of the mass breakout at the border with Egypt - whether to obtain essential supplies, or simply to take in the fresh air of freedom - had drawn global attention to the inhumane conditions of their near-total isolation.

It is difficult to envisage any negotiations leading to a settlement of the Palestinian issue, so long as the siege by Israel continues to drive the 1.5 million people of Gaza to the edge of starvation; and the Palestinian leadership, both Fatah and Hamas, prolongs the punishment by their personal feud and lasting state of hostilities.

Sam Nona Burradoo

Graphic

CARTOON: By John Shakespeare

Load-Date: February 4, 2008

Empowering Iran's regime

Canberra Times (Australia)

January 19, 2008 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. B07

Length: 1065 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Only one man can rescue the embattled Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, from his growing domestic unpopularity. That man is US President George W. Bush.

Ahmadinejad faces elections in March and an increasingly disaffected clergy, but he feeds on Bush's antagonism. This week, Bush duly obliged. He raced around the Middle East drumming up support for his Iranian foe.

Bush has denounced Ahmadinejad at every turn. He has offered to sanction him, embargo him, isolate him, even bomb him. He has portrayed him as a monster of evil and "leading sponsor of terror". He has showered the Saudis and the Gulf states with \$US20billion (\$A23billion) of weapons to confront him "before it is too late". To have the United States as your enemy in these parts is to have every man your friend.

The dwindling raggle-taggle army of neocons is currently trying to portray US strategy in the region as a success after all. This is entirely based on news from Iraq, where General David Petraeus has reduced the death rate of Americans and Iraqis from the astronomical to the merely appalling.

Since this conflict is far too dangerous to report properly, world opinion is reliant on a notional monthly kill rate to measure progress. Petraeus, or at least the exhausted citizens of Iraq, have thus offered the White House a respite from horror.

The tactics are exactly those that Petraeus's predecessors rejected in the past four years of mayhem. He has encouraged and armed local militias, good and bad, to defend their communities. In Anbar province, this has meant backing Sunni sheiks and former Baathist gangsters, styled "the awakening", to face down the al-Qaeda mafia. This was suggested by British MI6 agents in 2003 and rejected by the Pentagon.

In Baghdad, the tactic has meant building fortified and ethnically cleansed ghettos, mostly in Sunni areas, and arming them against the former campaign of slaughter by the Shia militia/police, many of whom work for the Interior Ministry.

Within the ambit of American protection, this has meant a modified return to normality.

Petraeus has proved a wise commander. His men do not kick their way into women's bedrooms, shooting family parties and shelling villages, which was former defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld's way of winning hearts and

Empowering Iran 's regime

minds. There is also a limit to how long any citizenry can remain in a state of medieval siege. Markets will struggle to operate. Schools will try to reopen.

Elsewhere, old habits die hard. Last week, the biggest bombing raid since the invasion was unleashed on a populated area in Diyala, north-east of Baghdad, causing as yet unrecorded devastation. On Monday, one of Iraq's most distinguished judges was left unprotected and was assassinated.

Water and power supplies to the capital are said to be worse than ever.

No effort has been made to stave off the conflict likely to envelop oil-rich Kirkuk, let alone a simmering war on the Kurdish-Turkish border. In other words, it remained unthinkable that Bush's lap of honour round the region last week might include the city he supposedly "liberated".

Sooner or later, the Americans must withdraw from the enclaves they have de facto partitioned. A new, home-grown, home-fought balance of power will be found in Iraq. Petraeus's strategy is certainly the best yet tried by the coalition, but it offers no long-term surety of law and order because it is backed by no political settlement. It is worth noting that civil chaos of Basra, from which British troops withdrew in despair last year, has dropped from the radar. It is strange what happens when alien forces withdraw from occupied lands.

Stripped of its post-September 11, 2001, retribution, bombast and militarism, US policy towards the Muslim world has been to promote democracy as the one sure means to prosperity and peace. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and others declared in 2005 that "the bad old days of favouring stability over democracy are over". Even friends such as the Egyptians and the Saudis were mildly rebuked for turning a deaf ear to this message. As policy, this was noble. If the US (and Britain) were ill-advised to call it a crusade, there are certainly worse causes to promote. Yet Bush and Tony Blair were unaware of how their inevitably "neo-imperial" wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with American support for Israel's expansionism, would render their crusade hopelessly hypocritical. Muslim democracy is a moot concept, but it has made a sort of imprint on Iran, Palestine, Lebanon and even Iraq and Pakistan. Yet it was not these leaders that Bush graced with a visit this past week. He went to Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain, where he was feted with gifts of gold, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. It sure beat a walkabout in downtown Baghdad.

In Pakistan, Bush continues to back dictatorship and must suffer the resulting Taliban "blowback" in Afghanistan. In Palestine he ignores the winner of an election, Hamas. He appeases Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship in Egypt and is craven to the autocrats of Saudi Arabia. His spokesman, Steve Hadley, challenged on what such rulers contribute to democracy, bumbled "these folks are on board with the freedom agenda, and are pursuing it in their own fashion". Stability trumped democracy after all.

Insofar as any strategy lay behind the Bush trip, it was a hope that the monarchs of the Gulf might support the US in military action against Bush's pet hate, Ahmadinejad. Yet if there is one lesson these rulers know, it is to live at peace with the wilder regimes to their north and east.

Indeed, keeping them wild suits them fine. Dubai is built on the region's funk money. The last thing the Gulf intends is help the US to yet another war, least of all with Iran.

Meanwhile, Bush cannot even see the final irony. The one thing that might unseat Ahmadinejad is a poor showing against the moderates in the half-free parliamentary elections in March. If his party does badly, there is a chance of a more reasonable regime taking over, reasonable on anything from Iraq to nuclear weapons. At least it is worth waiting.

Yet Bush does everything to generate the paranoia on which Ahmadinejad bases his electoral appeal. He threatens him with the constraint of war, and thus dilutes the constraint of democracy. Does Bush not realise how attack from outside helps an embattled leader?

Has he forgotten September 11?

Guardian

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End of Document

The Wrap: Double whammy

Guardian.com

January 24, 2008

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theguardian

Length: 1134 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's digest of the day's newspapers

Body

Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's digest of the day's newspapers

RAW ON TWO FRONTS

Labour faces "humiliation" on two fronts, according to the papers. Plans to allow police to hold terror suspects without charge for up to 42 days are likely to be defeated in the Commons, while the chancellor is about to water down his reforms to capital gains tax, which infuriated small businesses. The Times says Alistair Darling will probably halve the proposed flat rate of 18% for the first 750,000 of gains. The concession would cost the government 200m.

"Ministers hope today's move will repair relations with business," says the FT. But "the concession falls short of [a] U-turn" and may not be enough.

The Sun, meanwhile, is outraged at the latest rises in council tax. Bills will rise by an average of 4% in April, almost twice the rate of inflation. "The eye-watering rise means the average charge for a Band D property has DOUBLED since 1997," complains the paper. "Hard-working families are being taxed to death ... daylight robbery ... Town hall chiefs ... throw our cash around like confetti ... Taxes are already sky-high. There is a limit to how long people can keep opening their wallets. That limit has been reached."

Meanwhile, the European Central Bank has indicated that it would not follow the Federal Reserve's lead in cutting interest rates. The ECB president, Jean-Claude Trichet, said fighting inflation was a higher priority in the eurozone.

The Times' Anatole Kaletsky challenges George Soros' pessimistic view of the current financial crunch. "My hunch is that a combination of monetary and fiscal easing, along with some regulatory changes ... will lessen the credit crisis and prevent a world recession," he writes.

As for 42-day detention, the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights has threatened to seek a judicial review if the current 28-day limit is extended. "The commission says the proposal would have a disproportionate impact on Muslims, and suggests that people who are unlawfully detained for the 42 days and lose their livelihoods, homes or families in the process should be entitled to compensation," reports the Guardian. Many backbenchers are not convinced of the need for it either.

The Wrap: Double whammy

* Labour humiliation * FT: Darling bows to pressure * Times: 200m reprieve * Times: Please relax! * Sun: Town hall robbers * Herald Tribune: ECB targets inflation

LIGHT GREEN OR GREEN LIGHT?

Council tax is not the only bill rising over the next few years. "Over the next decade, the price of carbon dioxide may become as familiar to us as the cost of a barrel of crude oil or a litre of petrol," the Times says. "It will become very noticeable as power generators pass on the rising cost of electricity." That cost will rise because the European Commission is determined to increase the proportion of energy generated by renewables to 20%. It also wants a 20% cut in CO2 emissions, both by 2020.

This is all too much "targetitis" for the FT. "With renewables providing just 8.5% of the EU's energy in 2005, it is widely accepted that reaching 20% will be challenging, to put it mildly ... Most damagingly, the privileged status of renewables takes the focus away from energy efficiency, by far the lowest-cost means of reducing emissions ... The best way to reduce emissions is to get the price of carbon right in the EU's trading scheme, and let the market find the most effective ways to deliver the cuts."

"If ever there were a time to invest in wind farms, this is it," counsels the Times. It disapproves of EU plans for a "wholly ill-advised biofuels bonanza" - as does the Guardian, which wanted the targets to be more ambitious. "Taken in isolation, the proposals announced yesterday deserve a cautious welcome. Trouble is, they may not be matched by other parties. Other countries are still dragging their feet over tackling climate change. And business, which was so keen to talk green while the economy boomed, may not be so enthusiastic now it is heading for a slump."

* EU sets 20% target * FT: Too many targets * Times: Green light * Europe goes light green

HOLE-IN-THE-WALL MART

Thousands of Gazans poured into Egypt yesterday to buy "everything from olive oil to mattresses, from cement to computers", the Independent reports. Militants blew a hole in the border fence separating the overcrowded Gaza Strip and Egypt and the population, deprived of goods by an Israeli blockade intended to put a stop to Hamas rocket attacks, took advantage.

One Israeli official told the Herald Tribune that the breach might be a "blessing in disguise" because it would "ease tremendously the pressure on Israel on the humanitarian level ... We don't care if people buy food in Egypt. And terrorists come in anyway." He went on to raise the possibility that Israel would "get out of Gaza and throw away the keys".

* Independent: Freedom for a day * Herald Tribune: Gazans raze wall

NOT GUILTY IN CRETE

The red-tops splash with the Crete jury's acquittal of John Hogan, the man who threw his son from a balcony. His wife is appalled. Her six-year-old son Liam had "lost his young life for nothing", she told reporters. Hogan was found not guilty of murder on the grounds of diminished responsibility and sent to a psychiatric hospital, where he is likely to spend several weeks.

* Sun: A lost life for nothing

SLIM PICKINGS

"Fat people could be paid to lose weight under government plans to tackle obesity," splashes the Mail. Vouchers and cash prizes may be offered to people who manage to shed the pounds. The Telegraph, perhaps surprisingly, favours the idea - "not least because of the tendency of the authorities to resort to coercion when persuasion fails". The Times says the government would be better off introducing more PE, rather than the cookery lessons promised earlier this week.

The Wrap: Double whammy

Meanwhile, research into the fat and calorie content of creamy coffees horrifies the Telegraph. A Starbucks' venti white chocolate mocha with whip contains 628 calories. Starbucks, which also serves the most-expensive espresso on the high street, came bottom in Which?'s survey on taste. Caffe Nero performed best.

* Mail: Fat people paid to slim * Times: Slimmer and smarter * The good, the cheap, and the fattening * Telegraph: A meal in a cup

BEAR NECESSITIES

Troubling news in the Independent: "Knut is a psychopath and will never mate", announces the paper. Yes, the polar bear that broke hearts will never be able to breed.

The description comes from a German zoologist, Peter Arras. "Knut won't manage anything with a **female** bear, I guarantee that," he says. His problems stem from his mother's early rejection and his proximity to human beings.

* Independent: Knut will never mate

TODAY ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED

London market soars French bank SocGen uncovers alleged 3.7bn fraud Police chief killed in Mosul

Load-Date: January 24, 2008

End of Document

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

January 17, 2008 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1170 words

Byline: Fay Dicker, David M. Arlan, Rachel Birati, Isadore Solomons, David Goshen, Ambrogio Manenti, Henry Morris, Maurice Steinhart

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Man from Mars

Sir, - If Gershon Baskin had landed by spaceship from an alien planet he could not have presented a more utterly unattainable Declaration of Principles for a negotiated agreement between Israel and the State of Palestine-to-be ("Peek at an agreement," January 15). Ignoring the fact that Gaza is under the iron rule of Hamas is analogous to ignoring the 800-pound gorilla in the room, whose virulence shows no sign of abating.

The expectation that Israel will agree to "acknowledge that it shares responsibility with other parties for the emergence of [the] refugees' plight" is to engage in an exercise of pure historical revisionism.

Baskin has a penchant for strictly evenhanded advocacy: "The two sides undertake to foster a culture of peace, including the undertaking of curricula review and modification of textbooks" - as if both sides were equally culpable of hateful incitement in schoolbooks, TV programs and the media.

His cavalier expectation of unlimited international funds for "new housing and establishing new cities in Palestine"; "compensation for refugees who wish to remain in their present country of residence"; "compensation for all Palestinian refugees in recognition of years of suffering" - suffering caused by their leaders' deliberate decision to maintain the refugees in camps as political pawns while receiving massive international aid - and, the ultimate obscenity, that "all Palestinians will be able to present property claims to an international commission" indicates a dreamworld mentality.

The article is a compendium of wishful thinking and denial of facts on the ground, predicting another utopia which stands no chance of being realized in the foreseeable future.

FAY DICKER

Lakewood, New Jersey

The three Noes had

something to do with it

Letters

Sir, - "Why didn't Israel make peace in the first 27 years of its occupation..." (between 1967 and 1994)? asks Johannes Zang in "End the occupation" (Letters, January 16). Apparently he is too young to remember the "3 Noes of Khartoum."

Israel returned the keys of the Temple Mount to the Wakf. Israel then offered to talk; to which the Arabs replied: "No recognition, no talks, no peace."

Anyone who believes that the suicide bus bombings were the result of the action of Baruch Goldstein should also believe that Goldstein's action was the result of murders committed by Palestinians against Israelis after the beginning of the "Oslo Peace Process."

Mr. Zang, go out and learn the facts. It seems clear that you know only what you were told during your four years of living among the Palestinians.

DAVID M. ARLAN

Rehovot

Sir, - I have three questions of my own for Johannes Zang: What happened to Gaza after Israel left the region? Are the Palestinians better off? Are the Israelis more secure?

Surely an unbiased journalist would conclude that leaving Gaza, an enormous sacrifice Israel is grappling with to this day, was an unmitigated disaster.

End the occupation, in light of the Gaza experience? You must be joking.

RACHEL BIRATI

Melbourne

Sir, - Johannes Zang says that after living in the West Bank for four years he has encountered little Arab hatred toward Jews, only "sadness and despair that our cousins do not want peace." He obviously has not interviewed any would-be suicide bombers and their proud families, read any Arabic schoolbooks or newspapers, or watched Palestinian TV. Has he interviewed any Jewish terror victims?

All over Israel one sees hospitals, schools and other institutions built with money donated by Jews worldwide. Money donated by Arabs goes to finance suicide bombers and purchase weapons and armaments to continue the war against the Arabs' "cousins."

In the 60 years since the State of Israel was founded, there is no reason why the Arabs of Palestine could not have built up a state equal to Israel's success story. Instead of pontificating, Mr. Zang needs to learn the history of this region.

ISADORE SOLOMONS

Beit Shemesh

He knows the tune,

let him sing the words

Sir, - World-famous conductor and performer Daniel Barenboim is a great champion of Palestinian rights and has very good relations with the Palestinian Authority chairman and all other leading PA figures. He could bring about some basic changes which no Israeli statesman has succeeded in achieving:

* amending of the Palestinian Covenant to remove those clauses that obviate the hope of any peaceful settlement with Israel. These changes were promised by Yasser Arafat and other leaders, but never made.

Letters

* encouraging the Palestinian leadership to bring the terror to an end. No one can handle the problem more efficiently than the Arabs themselves (as king Hussein of Jordan so clearly demonstrated).

* revising the education curriculum to remove the hate-filled propaganda disseminated to young children through adulthood, and via the media.

Some conflicts continue for generations, like the one between Barenboim's homeland, Argentina, and its neighbor, Chile. That ended only after a very long and drawn-out bloody struggle.

Daniel Barenboim can make a real contribution to peace. If he takes advantage of the opportunity, any criticism we may have of him will quickly be forgotten ("Barenboim gets Palestinian citizenship," January 16).

DAVID GOSHEN

Kiryat Ono

Misleading picture

Sir, - On January 14 and 15 your Web site carried an article referring to a discovery by the Israel Airports Authority of two tons of dual-purpose fuel in a humanitarian aid transport vehicle at Kerem Shalom on Monday, January 13 ("Kassam materials caught at border"). The accompanying picture showed a truck transporting WHO humanitarian aid, with clearly visible WHO logos.

This illustration was misleading, suggesting to the reader that the incident was connected to WHO humanitarian aid shipments to Gaza. The World Health Organization would like to clearly express its objection to its use.

We wish to emphasize that our organization is in daily contact with the IDF Coordination and Liaison Administration (CLA) under COGAT at Erez. At no point of time have we had any incident such as the one described in the article. In fact, during a meeting between WHO and CLA last week, it was reconfirmed that the transparency of our organization's shipping procedures is well appreciated by the Israeli authorities. In addition, WHO is solely transporting items for medical purposes.

AMBROGIO MANENTI

Head of Office

WHO West Bank and Gaza

Jerusalem

Wrens reply, please

Sir, - The Jewish Military Museum is designing a panel showing Jews who have served in the Royal Navy. We are in urgent need of photographs and details of women who served in the WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service).

Please reply to Henry Morris, Curator, Jewish Military Museum, Shield House, Harmony Way, Victoria Road, London.

HENRY MORRIS

London

Better choice

Sir, - Instead of your headline "Fit to drive? Fit to serve!" (January 14) I would have preferred "Unfit to serve? Unfit to drive!" That would help improve the road accident statistics, as well as the army recruitment levels.

MAURICE STEINHART , Jerusalem

Letters

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Palestinian issues land on global agenda

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 26, 2008 Saturday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

Length: 1079 words

Byline: Daily Star Staff

Body

"We know when we start a campaign we work for an achievable goal," said Wafa Yassir, the energetic head of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which runs programs for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. "And we know the right of return is not an easy goal. It may not happen in our lifetime. But we have to keep this right for the coming generation.

TYRE: "We know when we start a campaign we work for an achievable goal," said Wafa Yassir, the energetic head of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which runs programs for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

"And we know the right of return is not an easy goal. It may not happen in our lifetime. But we have to keep this right for the coming generation, and after that. And one day we will get it because it's our historic right and we won't give it up."

She added softly: "I cannot give up a country that we had, when I find my father crying when he sees Jaffa on TV. I cannot give this away."

The NPA is set to participate, along with other organizations that help Palestinian refugees, in the World Social Forum's Global Day of Action to be held Saturday in capitals around the world.

The World Social Forum is a worldwide network of anti-globalization activists that holds demonstrations each year to coincide with the meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in an attempt to overshadow the news coverage of the annual forum in the media. Several pro-Palestinian organizations will stage demonstrations on Global Action Day in Occupied Jerusalem to highlight the Palestinian right of return and the 60th anniversary of the Nakba, or "catastrophe," when Palestinians were forced out of the land that became Israel in 1948.

Highlighting the right of return is fundamental, said Ziad Abdel-Samad, the director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) in Beirut.

"Palestinian networks are coordinating to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Nakba," he said. "And the message for Lebanon is socioeconomic rights for Palestinians now - for them to live like human beings - until the implementation of the right of return."

Palestinian issues land on global agenda

Palestinians in Lebanon are some of the worst off, having been displaced up to five times, including during Lebanon's Civil War, since 1948.

Samad believes the Palestinian NGO movement in Lebanon is unique in the Middle East. "It's hard to find independent civil society in Arab countries," he said. "In general, space for civil society is very bad, they don't have the right to exist. And if they do, they are related in one way or another to their governments, or reflect their government's policies and are not independent."

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon was the primary employer and service provider in the Palestinian camps prior to 1982, when it was sent into exile in Tunis. Peripheral local groups like the Ghassan Kanafani Foundation, Najdeh, Beit Atfal Assumoud and the General Union of Palestinian ***Women*** worked to fill the void and gradually expanded, while new NGOs emerged to work alongside United Nation's Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) overstretched services.

Their activities became more urgently needed during the first Gulf War when Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait and other Gulf states and the refugee camps stopped receiving remittances. Then-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's Cabinet responded by increasing the number of licenses it provided for Palestinian-oriented NGOs, including for organizations backed by Islamist groups like ***Hamas***.

However, there are no purely Palestinian-led organizations that are legal in Lebanon.

"There are three types of NGOs for Palestinians," explained Jaber Suleiman, a coordinator for A'idoun, a local group advocating the right of return, and most recently organizer of a conference for Palestinian refugees fleeing Iraq.

"The first are registered as Lebanese NGOs with the Interior Ministry. Because Palestinians cannot form NGOs, the Lebanese agree to cover our activity and work as an administrative committee. The second are international NGOs working in the camps. And the third are local groups with permission only from the Muslim court - some get funding from religious groups, others from the people."

NPA is one of the biggest international NGOs working with Palestinians in Lebanon, getting its start rebuilding the shattered Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut after the brutal Israeli invasion in 1982. Since then the charity has developed local partnerships with an expanding Palestinian civil society network that advocates for the Palestinian right to return. But its immediate fight is for civil rights for Palestinians living in Lebanon.

Because Lebanon's controversial and delicate sectarian-based government was threatened by the large influx of Palestinian refugees, it passed a series of discriminatory laws forbidding Palestinians from taking work in over 70 professions, from owning property, or building inside the camps. These are the laws that NPA and other NGOs are trying to change for the more than 400,000 Palestinians currently registered with UNRWA.

But the space for pro-Palestinian advocacy in Lebanon has become more limited since the fighting last summer between the Lebanese Army and militant group Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon's Northern Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, which deepened local animosity toward Palestinians.

"We were doing advocacy and lobbying to change the property law [for Palestinians], but then Nahr al-Bared happened and we couldn't even talk about it," Yassir said. "Now we are in a difficult situation. If only the current government allowed the right to own property and to work, this would make life so much better and improve living conditions."

Coordinated by ANND, the Palestinian NGO Forum network in Lebanon comprising Palestinian NGOs "fronted" by Lebanese has teamed up with its Arab-Israeli counterpart Ittijad, and the Palestinian NGO network in the West Bank and Gaza to address local issues, with the right of return as the central theme.

"As a network the first objective was to bring Palestinian issues to the global agenda," Samad explained. "When we participated in the World Social Forum, for example, we tried to raise the Palestinian issue from different perspectives. With Lebanon it was the issue of refugees, and socio-economic and human rights. With the West

Palestinian issues land on global agenda

Bank and Gaza, it was about ending the occupation, and the establishment of an independent state. And when it came to Ittijad, it was the struggle for equal rights as a minority."

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Palestinian issues land on global agenda

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

January 26, 2008 Saturday

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TYRE: "We know when we start a campaign we work for an achievable goal," said Wafa Yassir, the energetic head of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which runs programs for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

"And we know the right of return is not an easy goal. It may not happen in our lifetime. But we have to keep this right for the coming generation, and after that. And one day we will get it because it's our historic right and we won't give it up."

She added softly: "I cannot give up a country that we had, when I find my father crying when he sees Jaffa on TV. I cannot give this away."

The NPA is set to participate, along with other organizations that help Palestinian refugees, in the World Social Forum's Global Day of Action to be held Saturday in capitals around the world.

The World Social Forum is a worldwide network of anti-globalization activists that holds demonstrations each year to coincide with the meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in an attempt to overshadow the news coverage of the annual forum in the media. Several pro-Palestinian organizations will stage demonstrations on Global Action Day in Occupied Jerusalem to highlight the Palestinian right of return and the 60th anniversary of the Nakba, or "catastrophe," when Palestinians were forced out of the land that became Israel in 1948.

Highlighting the right of return is fundamental, said Ziad Abdel-Samad, the director of the Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND) in Beirut.

"Palestinian networks are coordinating to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Nakba," he said. "And the message for Lebanon is socioeconomic rights for Palestinians now - for them to live like human beings - until the implementation of the right of return."

Palestinian issues land on global agenda

Palestinians in Lebanon are some of the worst off, having been displaced up to five times, including during Lebanon's Civil War, since 1948.

Samad believes the Palestinian NGO movement in Lebanon is unique in the Middle East. "It's hard to find independent civil society in Arab countries," he said. "In general, space for civil society is very bad, they don't have the right to exist. And if they do, they are related in one way or another to their governments, or reflect their government's policies and are not independent."

The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Lebanon was the primary employer and service provider in the Palestinian camps prior to 1982, when it was sent into exile in Tunis. Peripheral local groups like the Ghassan Kanafani Foundation, Najdeh, Beit Atfal Assumoud and the General Union of Palestinian ***Women*** worked to fill the void and gradually expanded, while new NGOs emerged to work alongside United Nation's Relief and Works Agency's (UNRWA) overstretched services.

Their activities became more urgently needed during the first Gulf War when Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait and other Gulf states and the refugee camps stopped receiving remittances. Then-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's Cabinet responded by increasing the number of licenses it provided for Palestinian-oriented NGOs, including for organizations backed by Islamist groups like ***Hamas***.

However, there are no purely Palestinian-led organizations that are legal in Lebanon.

"There are three types of NGOs for Palestinians," explained Jaber Suleiman, a coordinator for A'idoun, a local group advocating the right of return, and most recently organizer of a conference for Palestinian refugees fleeing Iraq.

"The first are registered as Lebanese NGOs with the Interior Ministry. Because Palestinians cannot form NGOs, the Lebanese agree to cover our activity and work as an administrative committee. The second are international NGOs working in the camps. And the third are local groups with permission only from the Muslim court - some get funding from religious groups, others from the people."

NPA is one of the biggest international NGOs working with Palestinians in Lebanon, getting its start rebuilding the shattered Shatila Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut after the brutal Israeli invasion in 1982. Since then the charity has developed local partnerships with an expanding Palestinian civil society network that advocates for the Palestinian right to return. But its immediate fight is for civil rights for Palestinians living in Lebanon.

Because Lebanon's controversial and delicate sectarian-based government was threatened by the large influx of Palestinian refugees, it passed a series of discriminatory laws forbidding Palestinians from taking work in over 70 professions, from owning property, or building inside the camps. These are the laws that NPA and other NGOs are trying to change for the more than 400,000 Palestinians currently registered with UNRWA.

But the space for pro-Palestinian advocacy in Lebanon has become more limited since the fighting last summer between the Lebanese Army and militant group Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon's Northern Nahr al-Bared refugee camp, which deepened local animosity toward Palestinians.

"We were doing advocacy and lobbying to change the property law [for Palestinians], but then Nahr al-Bared happened and we couldn't even talk about it," Yassir said. "Now we are in a difficult situation. If only the current government allowed the right to own property and to work, this would make life so much better and improve living conditions."

Coordinated by ANND, the Palestinian NGO Forum network in Lebanon comprising Palestinian NGOs "fronted" by Lebanese has teamed up with its Arab-Israeli counterpart Ittijad, and the Palestinian NGO network in the West Bank and Gaza to address local issues, with the right of return as the central theme.

"As a network the first objective was to bring Palestinian issues to the global agenda," Samad explained. "When we participated in the World Social Forum, for example, we tried to raise the Palestinian issue from different perspectives. With Lebanon it was the issue of refugees, and socio-economic and human rights. With the West

Palestinian issues land on global agenda

Bank and Gaza, it was about ending the occupation, and the establishment of an independent state. And when it came to Ittijad, it was the struggle for equal rights as a minority."

Load-Date: October 22, 2008

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Comment & Debate: Bush's trip, without principle or plan, had one big winner: In talking war and being feted by autocrats in the Gulf, the US president just drummed up more support for Ahmadinejad

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 16, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 31

Length: 1082 words

Byline: Simon Jenkins

Body

Only one man can rescue the embattled Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, from his growing domestic unpopularity. That man is George Bush. Ahmadinejad faces elections in March and an increasingly disaffected clergy, but he feeds on Bush's antagonism. This week Bush has duly obliged. He has raced round the Middle East drumming up support for his Iranian foe.

Bush has denounced Ahmadinejad at every turn. He has offered to sanction him, embargo him, isolate him, even bomb him. He has portrayed him as a monster of evil and "leading sponsor of terror". He has showered the Saudis and the Gulf states with \$20bn of weapons to confront him "before it is too late". When Ahmadinejad thanked "divine intervention" for making him president in 2005, he should also have thanked God for having first selected Bush. To have Washington as your enemy in these parts is to have every man your friend.

The dwindling raggle-taggle army of neocons is currently trying to portray US strategy in the region as a success after all. This is entirely based on news from Iraq, where General David Petraeus has reduced the death rate of Americans and Iraqis from the astronomical to the merely appalling. Since this conflict is far too dangerous to report properly, world opinion is reliant on a notional monthly kill rate to measure progress. Petraeus, or at least the exhausted citizens of Iraq, have thus offered the White House a respite from horror.

The tactics are exactly those that Petraeus's predecessors rejected in the past four years of mayhem. He has encouraged and armed local militias, good and bad, to defend their communities. In Anbar province, this has meant backing Sunni sheikhs and former Ba'athist gangsters, styled "the awakening", to face down the al-Qaida mafia. This was suggested by British MI6 agents in 2003 and rejected by the Pentagon. In Baghdad, the tactic has meant building fortified and ethnically cleansed ghettos, mostly in Sunni areas, and arming them against the former campaign of slaughter by the Shia militia/police, many of whom work for the interior ministry.

Within the ambit of American protection, this has meant a modified return to normality. Petraeus has proved a wise commander. His men do not go kicking their way into women's bedrooms, shooting family parties and shelling villages, which was Donald Rumsfeld's way of winning hearts and minds. There is also a limit to how long any citizenry can remain in a state of medieval siege. Markets will struggle to operate. Schools will try to reopen.

Elsewhere, old habits die hard. Last week the biggest bombing raid since the invasion was unleashed on a populated area in Diyala, north-east of Baghdad, causing as yet unrecorded devastation. On Monday one of Iraq's

Comment & Debate: Bush's trip, without principle or plan, had one big winner: In talking war and being feted by autocrats in the Gulf, the US president just dru....

most distinguished judges was left unprotected and was assassinated. Water and power supplies to the capital are said to be worse than ever. No effort has been made to stave off the conflict likely to envelop oil-rich Kirkuk, let alone a simmering war on the Kurdish-Turkish border. In other words, it remained unthinkable that Bush's lap of honour round the region last week might include the city he supposedly "liberated".

Sooner or later the Americans must withdraw from the enclaves they have de facto partitioned. A new, homegrown, home-fought balance of power will be found in Iraq. Petraeus's strategy is certainly the best yet tried by the coalition, but it offers no long-term surety of law and order because it is backed by no political settlement. It is worth noting that Basra, from whose civil chaos British troops withdrew in despair last year, has dropped from the radar. It is strange what happens when alien forces withdraw from occupied lands.

Stripped of its post-9/11 retribution, bombast and militarism, American policy towards the Muslim world has been to promote democracy as the one sure means to prosperity and peace. Condoleezza Rice and others declared in 2005 that "the bad old days of favouring stability over democracy are over". Even friends such as the Egyptians and the Saudis were mildly rebuked for turning a deaf ear to this message. As policy, this was noble. If America (and Britain) were ill-advised to call it a crusade, there are certainly worse causes to promote.

Yet Bush and Tony Blair were unaware of how their inevitably "neo-imperial" wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with American support for Israel's expansionism, would render their crusade hopelessly hypocritical. Muslim democracy is a moot concept, but it has made a sort of imprint on Iran, Palestine, Lebanon and even Iraq and Pakistan. Yet it was not these leaders that Bush graced with a visit this past week. He went to Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain, where he was feted with gifts of gold, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. It sure beat a walkabout in downtown Baghdad.

In Pakistan, Bush continues to back dictatorship and must suffer the resulting Taliban "blowback" in Afghanistan. In Palestine he ignores the winner of an election, **Hamas**. He appeases Hosni Mubarak's dictatorship in Egypt and is craven to the autocrats of Saudi Arabia. His spokesman, Steve Hadley, challenged on what such rulers contribute to democracy, could only bumble that "these folks are on board with the freedom agenda, and are pursuing it in their own fashion". Stability trumped democracy after all.

Insofar as any strategy lay behind the Bush trip, it was a hope that the monarchs of the Gulf might support the US in military action against Bush's pet hate, Ahmadinejad. Yet if there is one lesson these rulers know, it is to live at peace with the wilder regimes to their north and east. Indeed, keeping them wild suits them fine. Dubai is built on the funk money of the region. The last thing the Gulf intends to do is help the US to yet another war, least of all with Iran.

Meanwhile, Bush cannot even see the final irony. The one thing that might unseat Ahmadinejad is a poor showing against the moderates in the half-free parliamentary elections in March. If his party does badly, there is a chance of a more reasonable regime taking over, reasonable on anything from Iraq to nuclear weapons. At least it is worth waiting.

Yet Bush does everything to generate the paranoia on which Ahmadinejad bases his electoral appeal. He threatens him with the constraint of war, and thus dilutes the constraint of democracy. Does Bush not realise how attack from outside helps an embattled leader? Has he forgotten 9/11?

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Abroad, fresh image of U.S.

Christian Science Monitor

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Byline: Robert Marquand Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Paris

Body

Regardless of which Democrat pulls ahead as the candidates race toward Nevada and South Carolina, the rapid political rise of a Harvard-educated Illinois senator with a Kenyan father is bringing ripples and some tides of excitement in the near and far corners of a weary world.

It's clear that the buzz around America's first realistic black candidate has fed the imagination of many non-US observers, who see the controversial superpower as offering something different.

The image of a young, lanky African-American who combines charisma and a sense of nobility vying with a high-powered woman senator for the planet's most powerful office lends a feeling of history and symbolizes the democracy and diversity that many abroad want to see as America's significant contribution.

"Whether it is Hillary or Obama, what the world is seeing is a new America in these candidates," says James Hooper, a former US diplomat now at the Public International Law and Policy Group in Washington.

"[Barack Obama is] what the rest of the world dreams America can be," says JacquesMistral, a transatlantic specialist and director of economic studies at the French Institute for International Relations in Paris. "He looks like a Kennedy type, and that he's black is very new. In Europe, the idea that a woman can win is accepted. But for a black person to win would represent a radical change - for the US, and the world."

It is too early to say that "Obama-mania" is sweeping the planet, particularly after the junior senator's second place showing in New Hampshire. The public in Europe and Asia have only recently focused on Mr. Obama, though in Africa he's been news for some time.

But in a world where nearly every poll shows America's image seriously dragging after the Iraq war onset, and scant interest in Republicans, Obama has made a significant splash, especially among the young. In Germany, which still swoons over JFK, he's been called a "black Kennedy" - though as in much of Europe, German opinion is divided between the "experience" brought by Sen. Hillary Clinton, and the "charisma" of the newcomer who won the Iowa caucus.

A straw vote conducted by the Spanish newspaper El Mundo has Senator Clinton edging Obama 51-49. But in a brief survey of five French and Spanish newspapers, columnists don't enthuse over Clinton, as she is not seen as someone fresh and new. Still she is described favorably as determined and as a consensus builder.

Abroad, fresh image of U.S.

In Japan, where US elections are sometimes taken more seriously than the election of the Japanese prime minister, the rise of Obama is as intriguing a subject as the romance between French President Nicolas Sarkozy and the Italian singer Carla Bruni.

"Obama-san is great," says Azusa Shiraishi, a sophomore at Seinan Gakuin University in Fukuoka. She compares Obama with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and thinks "he could bring different perspectives of the US to us as well as American people. That would be great."

Not surprisingly, in Kenya, where Obama's father started life as a goatherd, the public has followed every twist with a euphoric mixture of pride and envy. Ethnic clashes in the wake of Kenyan presidential elections have forced the US primaries into the background. But many Kenyans believe that Africa would benefit from an Obama presidency, moving the continent up the international agenda as well as promoting a feel-good factor.

"We always feel we are lower-class people," says George Anyango, who works at a shopping mall. "But if someone of Kenyan origin becomes president there, it will make us feel we are on the same level."

Obama is the favorite in the Arab world, not so in Israel, and has not been heard of much at all in China. People in Baghdad also seem to not have had the luxury of knowing much about the first serious candidate to oppose the war there. In Cairo, enthusiasm about the possible success of a black candidate with a Muslim name and a father from a third-world country is often tinged with conspiracy theories.

"I think it would be good for the world and America if an outsider won," says Mahmoud Zahar, a Hamas official in the Gaza Strip. "But surely this won't be allowed - the CIA or someone would assassinate him first."

On the eve of President Bush's visit to Israel Tuesday, a banner headline in the daily Ma'ariv read, "Apprehension in Jerusalem about an Obama presidency." Worry has to do with the uncertainty of Obama's position on the Middle East - in contrast with Clinton's pro-Israel position - and vague unease about a candidate with Muslim antecedents as perhaps siding more strongly with Arabs. (Obama is a professed liberal Protestant.)

In the People's Republic of China, where international news is a state-controlled enterprise, the Internet is a more robust source of foreign news, and Obama's position (since retracted) to ban Chinese-made toys - will not have earned him early high marks in ruling circles. Only one of 21 persons interviewed on the streets of Beijing had even heard of Obama. Clinton, by contrast, is known well as both the former first lady and an advocate for women from the famous Beijing women's summit in 1995.

In Baghdad, a resident named Jassim feels that any US president will be looking mainly to his own country's interests. "I'm focusing on security and peace in my country. The important thing is ending the occupation ... and if this president wants us to live in peace, we will support him. Because when foreign troops leave, peace will spread across the country."

In Germany, despite its zeal for the new face, the Sueddeutsche Zeitung writes that "Hillary Clinton would be the right candidate for that - even if she seems boring compared to Obama."

The day after the New Hampshire primary, Lasse Teubner, a student in Berlin, took the other side.

"I can't really tell you why I sympathize so strongly with Obama. It's just a feeling I have.... I have a feeling he is simply more honest."

Liu Na, the only Chinese person interviewed at random who had an opinion on Obama, commented that, "I have the feeling that he is another bearer of the 'American Dream.'"

* Mariah Blake in Germany, Scott Peterson and Awad al-Tae in Iraq, Dan Murphy in the Gaza Strip, Josh Mitnick in Israel, Robert Crilly in Kenya, and Peter Ford in China contributed.

Abroad, fresh image of U.S.

Load-Date: January 9, 2008

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To be charitable, this commission is warped The Charity Commission's ruling on private schools exposes its political bias and loss of direction. It should get back to basics, writes Alasdair Palmer

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

January 20, 2008 Sunday

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Byline: Alasdair Palmer

Body

The Charity Commission has unveiled its understanding of the new "public benefit test". Introduced by the Charities Act of 2006, the test stipulates that to count as a charity, an organisation must prove that it benefits the public. Last week, the Commission claimed that private schools do not pass it because they benefit only those rich enough to afford the fees. Unless private schools can prove that they also benefit people who are not rich, the commission concluded, they shouldn't have charitable status.

The commission was widely attacked for failing to recognise that relieving the state of the cost of educating 500,000 children counts as a benefit to everyone who pays tax. But the real enormity is the test itself, which is political prejudice masquerading as objective assessment. "Public benefit", as applied to charities, is meaningless. No charity benefits everyone: women's charities benefit women, cancer charities those with cancer, and charities for animals don't benefit people at all. It cannot be an objection to a charity that it benefits only part of the population, for every charity does that. In practice, the question becomes: which parts of the population will be allowed to count as "deserving"?

There are two ways to answer that question. One is to say that they all count equally: it's not the job of the state to decide who should receive charity - citizens can donate their money to whatever group they choose, provided that group is not involved in harming others.

The other is to give an unelected quango the power to decide who counts. I thought that was precisely the result that democracy was supposed to avoid, but evidently not: it's the result that the 2006 Act has produced. The commission's view of who "counts" is inevitably an expression of political prejudice. You can see that by comparing the ways the commission treats private schools and religious charities. Generally, religious charities are far more exclusive than private schools: there is at least a chance that anyone can earn, or win on the Lottery, the money needed to benefit from a fee-charging charity such as a private school. But there is practically no chance that a convinced Protestant will benefit from some Catholic charities, or an Orthodox Jew will benefit from some Islamic ones, or that an atheist will benefit from any religious charity that (as many do) requires conversion as a condition of receiving its largesse.

So will the Charity Commission be looking at religious charities with a view to whether they "benefit the wider public"? Absolutely not. Dame Suzy Leather, the chairperson of the Charity Commission, has insisted that "there will be no modernisation audit" of religious charities. As to whether religions themselves are of public benefit, Dame

To be charitable, this commission is warped The Charity Commission's ruling on private schools exposes its political bias and loss of direction. It should get b....

Suzy maintains that "religion is a really important underpinning of a lot of charitable activity". So is being rich - but she does not think that it makes being rich of general public benefit.

The Charity Commission has already decreed that Odstock, a not-for-profit medical foundation that charges patients for medical treatment, cannot count as a charity: people able to pay the fees don't deserve it. And the commission could soon do something the most aggressive egalitarians have never achieved by democratic means: remove the charitable status of private schools.

And yet, despite its tremendous powers, the Charity Commission does not perform the task that most people still think is its core function: policing the register of charities to make sure that the public is not misled when it gives money to people who say they are collecting for "a registered charity". You can look at the accounts of thousands of charities on the Charity Commission website. You may be shocked by what you find. A surprising number give only a small portion of their income to charity. Take, for example, Hospice UK, a charity that donates equipment to hospices. Less than a third of the pounds 198,000 it raised in 2006, the last year for which its accounts are available, went to the charities it supports. The rest went in "administration costs" - although Hospice UK has only one full-time administrator.

There is nothing illegal in what Hospice UK does: the law says you can spend 99 per cent of your income on "administration" and still be a perfectly good charity. But if the law is incapable of differentiating between a well-run charity and an inefficient one, ordinary people certainly are not: anyone who gives a pound to someone rattling a tin would be extremely angry to discover that only 30p actually goes to charity, let alone that only 1p does.

The commission, however, sees nothing wrong with two-thirds of a charity's income not going to charity. It investigated Wooden Spoon, a charity for "disadvantaged children", after Intelligent Giving, a charity watchdog, noted that it was running events "so inefficient it defies explanation", and was only donating "37p out of every pound" it spent to disadvantaged children. Result? A clean bill of health for Wooden Spoon. "We are satisfied," said the commission, "that there are no issues for us to take forward with Wooden Spoon."

That may tell you more about the commission's investigations than about Wooden Spoon. The commission investigated the charity Interpal, which aims to help Palestinians, twice - and cleared it twice. John Ware, the BBC reporter, then looked at Interpal for Panorama. He alleged that Interpal's donations helped to build up Hamas, an organisation designated "terrorist" by the EU. Interpal claims that all the relevant charities were exclusively concerned with "humanitarian need". Nevertheless, charitable funds are not supposed to benefit any political movement. Made aware of Mr Ware's allegations, the commission admitted that its investigations "had not been in depth", and promised a new one. That was over a year ago. The commission has yet to report its conclusions.

Will the Charity Commission ever reach a decision on the critical issue? I doubt it - it's far too busy working out which portions of the British population earn too much money to benefit from charity. That tells you everything you need to know about the inverted priorities of the commission, and the degree to which they now warp the management of charities in the UK.

Load-Date: January 20, 2008

YEAR'S END

Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia)

December 31, 2007 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. A-12

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Body

Two thousand and seven was a year of blood. President Bush's January decision to reinforce American troops in Iraq would bear fruit by fall - but before then bombings in Baghdad, Bagram, and Qahtaniya would kill and maim several hundred. Between the bookends of the year the coalition government of Palestine fell to fighting in Gaza between the madmen of Hamas and their slightly more sane brethren in Fatah. Mexico City legalized abortion, a tragic necessity. Juntists in Burma butchered Buddhist martyrs marching for democracy and peace. A plot to blow up JFK Airport was foiled. Deranged gunmen went on shooting rampages - most excruciatingly at Virginia Tech, but also in Salt Lake City, Utah; Tuusula, Finland; and Omaha, Neb.

It was a year of fire - in Greece, Latvia, Lake Tahoe, North Carolina, and Southern California. It was a year of flood - in Indonesia, Britain, and Sudan. The I-35W bridge collapsed in Minneapolis. Congress reacted by voting for pork-barrel projects instead of bridge repairs.

And it was a year of firsts: Nancy Pelosi, the first female speaker of the House; Hillary Clinton, the first former first lady to make a competitive run at the presidency; Barack Obama, the first African-American to do the same. Deval Patrick became the second African-American elected governor in America. The Bush administration got its third attorney general, Michael Mukasey, after Alberto Gonzales stepped down. The world received the fourth assessment - and the strongest yet - from the U.N.'s panel on climate change, which later shared a Nobel Prize with Al Gore, who is enjoying canonization in a Jimmy Carter-like second public life.

* * * *

Abroad, it was peaceful transition in Britain, Australia, and France, and tumult elsewhere. Tony Blair turned power over to Gordon Brown, John Howard to Kevin Rudd, and Jacques Chirac to Nicolas Sarkozy - while Pervez Musharaff declared a state of emergency in Pakistan, whose travails included Benazir Bhutto's assassination. Russia's ominous oligarchy locked up chess champion Garry Kasparov for daring to speak well of democracy. Iran ultimately released the British sailors it had seized on a pretext, and exulted in a new U.S. intelligence estimate playing down its nuclear ambitions. China, embarrassed by several product-safety scares, executed the head of its agency in charge of food and drug regulation.

In less threatening realms: Barry Bonds broke Hank Aaron's home-run record, with an asterisk. Track-and-field superstar Marion Jones surrendered her Olympic medals after admitting to cheating; a hefty report on steroids in big-league baseball named names. Bob Barker said goodbye after several centuries of hosting "The Price Is Right," and turned the mic over to Drew Carey. Don Imus got canned for being Don Imus. The final epic in the "Harry Potter" series hit the shelves - and promptly flew off them, selling millions of copies in its first 24 hours. The frenzy

YEAR'S END

was soon eclipsed by the long-anticipated debut of the video game "Halo 3." Hollywood writers went on strike, leaving the laugh tracks on late-night TV sounding even more canned than usual. Third-rate presidential candidates answered asinine questions posted on a popular video Web site.

The world said goodbye to several masters of their crafts: Gian Carlo Menotti, Mstislav Rostropovich, Ingmar Bergman, Tommy Makem, Beverly Sills, Luciano Pavarotti, and Gene Autry. Supermarket tabloids, ever eager to make money by peddling misery to the prurient, published their ten-millionth cover photo of a disintegrating Britney Spears. Somewhere in America the last cultured man discovered the aftertaste of absinthe and cosmoline.

* * * *

Closer to home, 2007 ushered in a new City Council in Richmond, a new Democratic majority in the State Senate, a new report from James Crupi on the state of the region, and a visit from England's queen honoring the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement.

John Warner announced he would retire from the Senate, setting off furious knife-fights in political cloakrooms. Doug Wilder continued to raise holy heck - and some worthy debating points - in his battle to reshape City Hall. William Frawley battled his demons, and lost - and lost too his post as president of Mary Washington after being charged with back-to-back DUIs.

There were serious discussions about issues, as well - from payday lending and transportation (and abusive-driver fees, and Henrico's decals) to universal pre-kindergarten, teenage drinking, and, most vexing of all, the great dilemma of how to treat the mentally ill. The Times-Dispatch shocked the conscience of the community when it shined a flashlight into the snake-pit of the City Jail. Ancient grudges slouched ever onward over the Museum of the Confederacy and a foreign (i.e., Confederate) flag at the State Capitol. Area residents took part in rallies to protest injustice in Jena, La. Blood was spilled also in Richmond, as always. The two most high-profile cases both involved, oddly enough, ice cream. A case of self-defense left a would-be robber of a Baskin-Robbins parlor dead; a case of random savagery left a good-humor man nearly so.

* * * *

Two names, however, dominated local news in 2007: Seung-Hui Cho and Michael Vick. The gunman at Tech and the superstar sadist both did unspeakable things, out of illness or evil or both. It is worth remembering, therefore, the passing this year of Oliver Hill - a towering figure who spent his life trying to alleviate suffering and injustice rather than inflict them. Hill has just been named the Greatest Virginian of the 20th Century in the The Times-Dispatch/Library of Virginia's survey of great Virginians. It is not an honor bestowed by us, but rather a simple acknowledgment of the honor that inhered in him.

This year saw as well the passing of these notable names: Roy Stevens, Molly Ivins, Arthur Schlesinger, Robert Bivens, Jerry Falwell, Richard Rorty, Lady Bird Johnson, Jo Ann Davis, and Philip J. Bagley III.

The concluding year also saw arrivals - of names not yet known. In bassinets and playpens now lie small children who someday will be admired for their own great deeds. Somewhere in this state is a baby boy who could someday break hearts with the richness of his singing - or kindle future poets with his insights into Keats. In another part of the state may be, for all anyone knows, a bundle of wriggles and spit whose scientific genius will beggar Einstein's. A young Tappahannock girl not 10 days old might one day cure cancer; an urchin in Winchester may hold the answer to colonizing space.

That such things have not yet come to pass makes the follies and horrors of the past year seem more bitter. That they could yet come to pass makes them bearable. Here's to brighter days - next year.

Graphic

YEAR'S END

DRAWING

Load-Date: January 5, 2008

End of Document

Clouds gather over economy

Guardian.com

December 5, 2007

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theguardian

Length: 1049 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

Body

CLOUDS GATHER OVER ECONOMY

Why bother with the FT's low-key splash ("Mortgage lenders warned by watchdog") when you can wallow in a bout of real recession-mongering with the Independent? "Banks have stopped lending. Consumers aren't spending. Investors aren't investing. Businesses aren't hiring. Houses aren't selling. IS BRITAIN'S ECONOMY HEADING FOR ..."

[shot of storm clouds hovering over London]

"THE PERFECT STORM?"

"It is one of those rare moments in economics," says the paper's Hamish McRae, "when you know that the next few months will feel quite different to the past few ones." He has changed his mind about interest rates and now thinks the Bank of England should cut them tomorrow. "But is recession really likely? For the US it is quite possible, but I think the balance of probability in the UK is more for two or three years of much slower growth..."

"At the moment our economy is still growing strongly, companies are buoyant, and it always takes quite a while for any slowdown to move through the system. We are not in as big a mess as we were in during the early 1990s."

What, companies buoyant? McRae, have you seen your own employer's front page? What's more, Barnaby Stutter of Brixton Cycles Co-Operative tells the Independent on page three that he is not expecting a "Christmas bonanza". "Realists always sleep well at night," he adds, cryptically.

The Telegraph has a very specific concern: the 1.4 million people on fixed-term mortgage deals that expire next year. These borrowers will "struggle to find an affordable mortgage". Some monthly repayments could rise by 60%, the FT says.

The pink paper is not in favour of cutting rates unless today's Purchasing Managers' Index suggests that tighter credit is likely to push inflation below target next year. Otherwise, the FT says, the Bank should wait until Christmas sales data is available. Tesco disagrees. The supermarket urged the Bank to cut rates yesterday, saying inflation in its own stores was a mere 0.8%.

* Independent: The perfect storm? * Telegraph: Higher mortgages to hit 1.5m * FT: Mortgage lenders warned

UP THE CREEK

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"In recent months there has been a drop in Iran's sponsorship of terrorist activity there, and Washington is unlikely to jeopardise this welcome change at a pivotal moment. That does not hold true of Iran's backing for Hamas and Hezbollah. Israel still sees Iran as a mortal threat."

Indeed, Israeli officials said yesterday they were still convinced that Tehran was trying to build a nuclear weapon. "We cannot allow ourselves to rest just because of an intelligence report from the other side of the earth, even if it is from our greatest friend," said the defence minister Ehud Barak.

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TODAY ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED

More on the arrest of canoe mystery manLatest developments in the Iraq hostage case

Load-Date: December 5, 2007

The Wrap: Clouds gather over economy

Guardian.com

December 5, 2007

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theguardian

Length: 1063 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

Body

Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

CLOUDS GATHER OVER ECONOMY

Why bother with the FT's low-key splash ("Mortgage lenders warned by watchdog") when you can wallow in a bout of real recession-mongering with the Independent? "Banks have stopped lending. Consumers aren't spending. Investors aren't investing. Businesses aren't hiring. Houses aren't selling. IS BRITAIN'S ECONOMY HEADING FOR ..."

[shot of storm clouds hovering over London]

"THE PERFECT STORM?"

"It is one of those rare moments in economics," says the paper's Hamish McRae, "when you know that the next few months will feel quite different to the past few ones." He has changed his mind about interest rates and now thinks the Bank of England should cut them tomorrow. "But is recession really likely? For the US it is quite possible, but I think the balance of probability in the UK is more for two or three years of much slower growth..."

"At the moment our economy is still growing strongly, companies are buoyant, and it always takes quite a while for any slowdown to move through the system. We are not in as big a mess as we were in during the early 1990s."

What, companies buoyant? McRae, have you seen your own employer's front page? What's more, Barnaby Stutter of Brixton Cycles Co-Operative tells the Independent on page three that he is not expecting a "Christmas bonanza". "Realists always sleep well at night," he adds, cryptically.

The Telegraph has a very specific concern: the 1.4 million people on fixed-term mortgage deals that expire next year. These borrowers will "struggle to find an affordable mortgage". Some monthly repayments could rise by 60%, the FT says.

The pink paper is not in favour of cutting rates unless today's Purchasing Managers' Index suggests that tighter credit is likely to push inflation below target next year. Otherwise, the FT says, the Bank should wait until Christmas sales data is available. Tesco disagrees. The supermarket urged the Bank to cut rates yesterday, saying inflation in its own stores was a mere 0.8%.

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Load-Date: December 5, 2007

US democracy push in Pakistan is just wrong; The attempt is doomed to fail given the country's make-up and the current realpolitik

The Business Times Singapore

November 16, 2007 Friday

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Section: VIEWS AND OPINIONS; Opinion

Length: 1122 words

Byline: Leon Hadar Washington Correspondent

Body

AMERICAN thinker George Santayana once observed: 'Those who don't learn from history are doomed to repeat it.' And German political philosopher Karl Marx, who had studied the policy miscalculations made by the European leaders of the 19th century, mused: 'History repeats itself, first as a tragedy, second as a farce.'

The two renowned theorists were hoping that their comments would serve as warning to future policymakers. Unfortunately, when one analyses many of the foreign policy decisions made by the Bush administration, one must conclude that President George W Bush and his aides have treated these cautionary remarks as though they were a set of policy prescriptions instead.

Hence, once it was clear that regime change and democracy promotion seemed to have failed in Iraq (leading to a civil war and the rise to power of Shiite political parties with ties to Iran), the Bush administration decided to promote them in Lebanon (strengthening Hizbollah) and in Palestine (leading Hamas to power).

And as it is becoming clear as the various 'colour revolutions' in places like Ukraine and more recently, Georgia, have exposed those pretending to be local Jeffersonians as failed Machiavellians and ignited domestic political backlash, the Bushies are once again trying to choreograph another political transition of power that would supposedly lead us to another promised land of democracy - this time in Pakistan.

Out of fairness to the current administration, it must be said that Americans of every stripe fervently believes that the US has the right and the obligation to influence and even determine political changes in other countries. This position is not limited to the neoconservatives.

In fact, this idea has been embraced by Republican and Democratic administrations since World War II and it is backed by most members of the US foreign policy establishment.

The opposition by many in Washington to the regime change in Baghdad reflects disagreement with the method (military power) that the Bush administration applied to achieve that goal as well concerns over the cost-effectiveness and management of the operation, not to the self proclaimed duty to act.

Thus, there is therefore no strong disagreement in Congress and elsewhere in the US with the idea that Washington needs to 'do something' in order to force Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf to 'take off' his military uniform and allow free elections in the country.

US democracy push in Pakistan is just wrong The attempt is doomed to fail given the country's make-up and the current realpolitik

Similarly, Republicans and Democrats as well as the media seem to be infatuated with former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto whose current performance suggests that she auditioned to play the role of Corazon Aquino in a Pakistani remake of the Philippines' 'People's Power' extravaganza. And if she succeeds, she will be like Ukraine's Viktor Yushchenko and Georgia's Mikhail Saakashvili and add another colour to US-sponsored democratic revolution, and in the process emerge as a leading opponent of radical Islamic terrorism.

And according to the script written in Washington, the American producer would not only get a woman who is committed to - supposedly! - liberal democratic values elected as prime minister but would even succeed in winning Gen Musharraf's agreement to play the role of supporting actor (as president) in the movie. Pakistan's power military would be co-opted as willing extras.

This all sounds great if you wanted to produce a political fantasy about Pakistan. But if you were doing a documentary about the country - that is, dealing with reality as opposed to wishful thinking - consider the following.

First, like Iraq, Pakistan is not a unified nation-state but a confederation of several ethnic, religious and tribal groups. Indeed, the regime doesn't even control large parts of the country which are dominated by tribal leaders with links to the Taleban.

At the same time, Pakistani politics is a depressing story of military coups, civil wars, assassinations and ethnic and religious bloodbaths - and a lot of corruption; all of which has been tolerated by Washington in exchange for Pakistani support during the Cold War and, lately, in the war on terrorism.

Ms Bhutto and her illustrious family have been very much an integral part of this tragic story. 'Pakistani democracy' is an oxymoron - and the buying into the notion that Ms Bhutto would lead it reflects an astounding naivete, if not ignorance.

Moreover, at a time when Osama bin Laden is more popular either than Gen Musharraf and Mr Bush in Pakistan, is it realistic to imagine that a political figure who is so divisive would ride into power with public support through a political scheme designed in Washington?

Ms Bhutto can surely talk the talk - employing PR and lobbying firms to market herself, an articulate and attractive Oxford-educated female - as America's Woman in Islamabad. But she lacks the power and the skills to walk the walk.

Even in a best-case-scenario, she would end up playing the role of the puppet of Pakistan's military and security services, just as she did during her last term in power in the country.

And, yes, did we mention that Pakistan, unlike Saddam's Iraq - or for that matter, Ukraine and Georgia - has nuclear weapons?

Indeed, the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan in the context of the war on terrorism and instability in the Broader Middle East suggests that perhaps the country should not be subject at this point in time to yet another American exercises in democracy promotion.

The most intriguing - and disturbing - historical analogy that is being discussed in Washington these days when the situation in Pakistan is mentioned, is the failed US strategy to choreograph a transition to power when the Shah of Iran began facing growing opposition to his rule in the late 1970s.

American meddling that helped force him out of power while at the same time pressing the Iranian military to refrain from taking control, created the conditions for the 1979 Islamic Revolution and the electoral triumph of Ayatollah Khomeini and his allies.

The US 'alliance' with Pakistan's Gen Musharraf after 9/11 was based mostly on realpolitik considerations, and here one can certainly make the argument that the Bush administration's policy has been a failure as far as getting the

US democracy push in Pakistan is just wrong The attempt is doomed to fail given the country's make-up and the current realpolitik

Pakistanis to deliver the remnants of the Taleban and Al-Qaeda, including perhaps Osama bin Laden, who are hiding in Pakistan's mountains.

Washington should use its power to press Gen Musharraf and the Pakistani military to deliver on their commitments and work with Afghanistan and India to eradicate Islamic terrorists.

Pakistan is not the place and today is not the time for allowing good intentions to pave the road to an illusionary democracy that could end-up looking more like hell.

Load-Date: November 15, 2007

End of Document

Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

October 30, 2007 Tuesday

National Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A19

Length: 973 words

Byline: Peter Goodspeed, National Post

Body

There will be more in play than pomp and circumstance when King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia climbs into a gold carriage and rides down London's Mall to Buckingham Palace with Queen Elizabeth today.

The 83-year-old Saudi monarch kicks off a five-country tour of Europe with a three-day visit to London -- the first state visit to Britain by a Saudi king in 20 years.

He will stay as a guest of honour at Buckingham Palace, hold talks with Prime Minister Gordon Brown and attend a gala banquet at the Guildhall hosted by the Lord Mayor of London.

In the process, he will be denounced by British politicians, targeted by human rights activists and ridiculed by the media.

Britons are already engaged in a fierce debate over whether they should even have agreed to the visit. A story headlined "A royal guest to be proud of?" in yesterday's edition of The Independent noted Mr. Brown "will welcome the leader of one of the world's most vicious dictatorships to Britain."

The paper noted Britain is rolling out the red carpet for the Saudis just weeks after Mr. Brown delivered a speech, at last month's Labour party congress, in which he declared: "The message should go out to anyone facing persecution, from Burma to Zimbabwe ... human rights are universal."

So why, the newspaper asked, after refusing to attend an Africa-European Union summit in Portugal because Zimbabwean dictator Robert Mugabe will be there, does Mr. Brown want to be so hospitable to King Abdullah?

After all, according to Amnesty International: "Fear and secrecy permeate every aspect of life [in Saudi Arabia]. Every day, the most fundamental human rights of people in Saudi Arabia are being violated."

King Abdullah did not make himself welcome when, just before he left home, he gave the BBC an interview in which he berated the West for not doing enough to counter Islamic terrorists.

Al-Qaeda, he complained, remains a problem in his country and "it will take 20 to 30 years to defeat the scourge of terrorism." But in the same breath, he said most countries are not taking the issue seriously, "including, unfortunately, Great Britain."

Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

He complained that Britain failed to act on previous Saudi warnings of possible terrorist attacks in Britain.

That is rich coming from the leader of the country that is the main exporter of Islamist extremism. Osama bin Laden is Saudi. Fifteen of the 19 terrorists who launched the Sept. 11, 2001, suicide attacks against the United States were Saudis. Saudi money, funnelled to madrassas in Afghanistan and Pakistan, supports the Taliban. Most of the foreign jihadists fighting in Iraq are Saudis.

Since ascending the throne in August, 2005, following the death of his half-brother former king Fahd, King Abdullah has embraced a program of gradual reform and political caution. He walks a tightrope between reassuring the West and retaining the support of domestic religious leaders. The result is a series of mixed signals.

While chipping away at the influence of the Wahabbist religious establishment, King Abdullah has unveiled plans for a transformation of Saudi Arabia's judicial system and encouraged education reforms.

Considered the most open of his 42 brothers, he seeks to showcase modernization in Saudi Arabia through massive new construction projects. Last week he unveiled plans for a US\$10-billion King Abdullah University of Science and Technology. It will be a modern co-educational institution in a country where women cannot vote or drive or receive life-saving surgery without a man's permission.

Even with one-quarter of the world's proven oil reserves and record-high oil prices, the Saudi economy is struggling to absorb millions of young people entering the job market. Forty per cent of the population is under 15 and unemployment is around 30% for men and 90% for women.

As a result, the King has vowed to spend hundreds of billions on roads, railways, water, sewage and electricity plants. The King also supports privatization programs, foreign direct investment and limited tourism.

Still, he remains an enigmatic ally. He has denounced the U.S. presence in Iraq as an "illegal foreign occupation." He has worked with Iran to ease Sunni and Shiite tensions in Lebanon and seeks common ground with Hezbollah and Hamas.

Writing last year in the magazine Foreign Affairs, Rachel Bronson and Isobel Coleman of the Council on Foreign Relations argued King Abdullah is an old man working to deadline.

"King Abdullah is neither a radical nor a revolutionary," they wrote.

"But it is up to him to push the country far enough ahead during his reign that it will have no choice but to move forward with reforms once he is gone. And time is already running out."

THE SAUDI VISIT IN NUMBERS:

King Abdullah arrives for a three-day visit to Britain:

13

The number of members of the Saudi royal family accompanying King Abdullah on his first state visit to the U.K., and who are staying at Buckingham Palace.

5,000

The total number of family members in the House of Saud.

20

The number of years since the last Saudi Arabian state visit to the U.K.

5

Saudi King's Visit To U.K. Draws Fire; Critics denounce poor human rights record

The number of planes thought to have landed at Heathrow carrying King Abdullah and his entourage yesterday.

23

The people in his all-male official entourage who came to the U.K., including senior ministers and advisors.

200+

The number of cooks, maids, barbers, doctors, nurses and security officials attending to the King during his trip.

2

The banquets he will attend during his three-night visit.

200

The people attending the state banquet tomorrow, including all senior members of the British royal family.

30

The number of wives King Abdullah is said to have married over his lifetime. It is thought he keeps around four wives at a time.

13

The number of people expected at a protest today against the visit and Saudi Arabia's human rights record.

Source: The Daily Telegraph

pgoodspeed@nationalpost.com

Graphic

Black & White Photo:; (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Black & White Photo: Dylan Martinez, Reuters; Prince Charles greets Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah upon his arrival at Heathrow airport in west London yesterday. ;

Black & White Photo:; (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Load-Date: October 30, 2007

There is no defence against these children of death

The Times (London)

October 8, 2007, Monday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 19

Length: 996 words

Byline: Robert Baer

Body

Robert Baer Face to face with the first of the remote-controlled human bombs

We are deep inside intelligence headquarters in Kabul. On the faded sofa opposite is an extraordinary new weapon - a 17-year-old Pakistani peasant boy called Farman Ullah. He is the world's first remotely detonated human bomb.

Farman is from the wilds of northern Pakistan and his mission was to blow up and kill the pro-Western Governor of Jalabad, an important Afghan city close to the Pakistan frontier. "Even before you blow yourself up, virgins come to the site of the explosion and wait to take you to Paradise," he says, parroting the propaganda he learnt from his Taliban indoctrinators.

The attack failed and Farman and another 17-year-old accomplice, Abdul Quboshi, were captured. But Farman's fanatic certainty about his scheduled appointment with the virgins of Paradise was not enough for his Taliban trainers. Attached to Farman's suicide bomb vest was a radio transmitter. If Farman's nerve failed or something went wrong, Abdul Quboshi's job was to press the detonator. As Farman told me: "The Taliban said God himself would ignite the vest. I did not have to do anything."

Farman may have thought God was taking him to Paradise but the real initiator was almost certainly a high-frequency radio signal.

Farman wanted to blow people up. He was a willing killer. But he was also a victim of the cult of the suicide bomber. Both he and Abdul were schoolboys, innocents, who for a thin dream of glory volunteered to fight and die in a holy war, a jihad.

Farman could not read the Koran and when I asked him he had no idea where Iraq was, or Palestine, though he did tell me that President Musharraf of Pakistan was "a Jew".

When I asked Farman why he wanted to kill the Governor he said "because he was an infidel and worked with the Americans". That was justification enough for the Governor to die. Farman believed that Afghanistan had been invaded by Christian foreigners who were raping Muslim women and killing innocent Muslims.

This deadly, vengeful child is every Western intelligence chief's ultimate nightmare. A programmed human bomb that cannot be reasoned with. And against whom there is little real defence. The suicide bomber. But a weapon that we must find some way to neutralise.

There is no defence against these children of death

I used to work for the CIA in the Middle East. In the CIA I saw terrible things but Farman's indoctrination was a new twist in the depths of human depravity; recruiting an ignorant child for his own remotely-controlled death. In the CIA my job was to stop terrorist organisations from attacking the United States and its interests. I used to recruit agents inside those terrorist organisations to gain intelligence.

And I know personally about the cost of intelligence failures. Six of my CIA colleagues died in the first suicide-bomb attack on a Western target in the bombing of our Beirut embassy in April 1983.

I've left the CIA but for the past three years I've gone back on the intelligence trail to investigate the cult of the suicide bomber. That journey has taken me through Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and on to the grim back streets of Leeds, where the suicide bombers of July 7, 2005, came from. Along the way I have interviewed dozens of members of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, Western intelligence chiefs and failed suicide bombers and their families.

The lessons learnt are complex but there is an answer. The cult of the suicide bomber will burn itself out. This cult of death will one day burn itself out and perish from the face of the earth.

But we will not defeat that cult by intelligence or military means alone. It is simply impossible. Across the Islamic world, even through the internet in some British Asian teenager's bedroom, it is all too easy to join the cult of the bomber. You don't need a gun or an RPG, just a keyboard and an ISP connection.

Within minutes you can be electronically downloading the poisonous propaganda that Farman was inculcated with by his Taleban controllers in the lawless border regions of Waziristan. You can share beheading video files with your new internet friends. And listen to Osama bin Laden's warped interpretation of the Koran that portrays the West as an aggressor and calls upon all Muslims to join in a "defensive jihad" to protect Muslim lands against Crusader invaders.

To stop suicide bombing we must first recognise the kind of war we are facing.

This is a war of belief, of ideology. The key concept in suicide bombing is not martyrdom but this notion of jihad -of what constitutes a righteous holy war. In the Koran there are many different interpretations of jihad, some personal and some charitable -alms to the poor. But bin Laden and the Taleban rely upon just one Koranic verse that declares jihad a religious obligation on all Muslims if another Muslim land has been invaded.

For this "defensive jihad" to work the West must be clearly identified as the aggressor. In this warped morality the 7/7 attacks are a justifiable act of war in revenge for the invasion of Iraq.

Bin Laden's world view is false. And there are many, many Islamic scholars who disagree with his theology and the killing of civilians. And it is obvious that the vast majority of the Muslim faith reject the cult of the suicide bomber. But it is that silent army of fathers, brothers, sisters and mothers who are the only real weapon against another generation of Farmans. It is only when this majority engages in a counter-ideological war that suicide bombing will finally die out. As one former Mujahidin commander told me: "You cannot make Allah happy by killing civilians."

But this is an ideological battle that will be won, or lost, at the local mosque, at the family dinner table or between friends across the Islamic world. Suicide bombing will be defeated not by a gun or a fancy scanner but by the religious principles of Koran itself.

Robert Baer's Cult of the Suicide Bomber is broadcast tonight on Channel 4 at 8pm

Load-Date: October 8, 2007

The Best Boekes

Sunday Tribune (South Africa)

September 30, 2007

e1 Edition

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Section: THE SUNDAY MAGAZINE; Pg. 11

Length: 1089 words

Body

Exclusive Book's

annual Boeke Prize award was introduced as a tongue-in-cheek response to Britain's Man Booker award which honours worthy literature that few bother to read. In contrast, the Boeke award was established to acknowledge books of exceptional readability. This year the Boeke committee took itself a little too seriously.

A Thousand Splendid Suns, Khaled Hosseini (Jonathan Ball)

The story of Mariam, born a harami (bastard) in Afghanistan in 1959, who is married off at 15 to Rasheed, a middle-aged widower from Kabul. Rasheed is desperate for a son and turns violent when Mariam keeps having miscarriages.

Two decades later the beautiful Laila comes into their unloving household. Only 14, she has lost her entire family and her sweetheart to the civil wars of Afghanistan. Rasheed takes Laila as his second wife. At first the two women are bitter rivals, but slowly they forge a deep bond. By now the Taliban are in power and when the women decide to escape Rasheed's brutality, the outcome is inevitable.

A compelling, bleak story of courage, love and sacrifice set against the backdrop of 30 years of war that left no one untouched by its horrors.

The End of Mr Y, Scarlett Thomas (Penguin)

When Ariel Manto discovers a copy of the End of Mr Y in a secondhand bookshop it's the start of a fantastic journey. The author is an eccentric Victorian scientist and his book is said to be cursed. Undeterred, Ariel buys the book and discovers the recipe for a potion that has the power to transport her to an alternative world called the Troposphere, where she can travel back and forth in time and tune into people's thoughts. But the Troposphere is a dangerous world and there are those who will do anything to lay their hands on this potion. Mind experiments and theories on relatively, physics, gravity and time travel are explored in this highly original book, most of which went right over my head.

Exile, Richard North Patterson (Pan Macmillan)

Dark secrets emerge when David Wolf an ambitious Jewish lawyer who is planning to run for congress, takes on the case of Hana Ashawi, a Palestinian woman who is charged with assassinating the liberal Israeli Prime Minister during a visit to America. But, by taking on the case, David is betraying not only his own people but his devoutly

The Best Boekes

Jewish fiancée. David travels to Palestine and Israel to find out who had set up Hana to take the fall. Is it her husband who hates David, right wing Israelis, or Hamas?

An unputdownable thriller that offers fascinating insight into the Palestinian/ Israeli conflict. |Read it.

The Book Thief, Markus Zusak (Random House)

An enchanting and moving story as told by the Angel of Death himself. Set in Germany in World War 2, 9-year-old Liesel is sent to live with a foster family when her mother can no longer feed her.

Liesel clings to her only possession, a book she stole called the Gravediggers Handbook. Slowly she is brought to life by the love of her gentle accordion-playing foster father, Hans Hubermann, and his wife Rosa, her friendship with Rudy, the boy next door, and the books she steals.

Despite the war, life is relatively uneventful until Hans and Rosa decide to hide a young Jewish boxer, Max, who is the son of the man who saved Hans's life in the World War 1.

From Hans, Liesel learns the power of words, from Max, courage and compassion, all of which she will need for what the Angel of Death has in store for her.

The Emperor's Children, Claire Messud (Pan Macmillan, R140)

Claire Messud writes an elegant chronicle of a year in the lives of three 30-year best friends who are living in Manhattan in 2001. Danielle is an ambitious TV producer, Marina the indulged daughter of a legendary liberal journalist, who is trying to move out of his considerable shadow. Julius is a freelancer writer who has few morals and little money, neither of which hinder his social ambitions. Their tight little world is shattered when Bootie, Marina's young cousin turns up unexpectedly. A college drop-out with delusions of grandeur, Bootie, along with the September 11 tragedy, changes their lives forever. A slow-moving book with a cast of characters so narcissistic it's hard to care what happens to them.

Measuring the World, Daniel Kehlmann ((Book Promotions)

This book, a literary sensation in Germany, its country of origin, tells of the contrasting lives of two real-life geniuses of German enlightenment in the 18th century.

One was naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humbolt, a Prussian aristocrat who sets out to measure the world against enormous odds.

The other is the mathematician and physicist Carl Fredrich Gauss, a man born out of poverty but who made his first ground-breaking mathematical discoveries while still a teenager. He wrote Disquisitiones Arithmeticae, his magnum opus, at the age of 21. Maybe it lost something in the translation, but I couldn't finish this book.

No Country For Old Men, Cormac McCarthy (Pan Macmillan)

"Who must think that he thought that they thought that he thought they were very dumb. He thought about that." Once you become attuned to this style of writing and the lack of punctuation, this is a chilling insight into the nature of contemporary crime. Llewellyn Moss is hunting antelope near the US's Rio Grande, when he stumbles across several bullet-ridden bodies, a load of heroin and \$2 million in cash. He takes the money and runs. Bodies begin to pile up when an ex-special forces officer and a mercenary killer so cold-blooded he chills your blood, go after the money.

In their wake comes Sheriff Bell, a dedicated lawman who is nearing retirement and who soon realises this is no country for old men with old sensibilities. No happy ending in this bleakest of books.

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, Paul Torday (Jonathan Ball)

The Best Boekes

Dr Alfred Jones, is a fisheries scientist working for the British government when he is asked to look at the viability of introducing salmon farming in the highlands of Yemen. Despite this being totally unfeasible, the British government is keen to boost relations between the two countries and Dr Jones is ordered to make it happen.

Inevitably he falls foul of the government and his high-powered wife. But when he eventually meets the visionary Sheikh Muhammad, who's dream this is, and the project's manager, the beautiful Harriett, his life changes dramatically.

From the enigmatic sheikh he learns that faith is about believing in possibilities, and from Harriet that love can never be rational. A wry, witty book about redemption that charmed me to the last page.

Load-Date: September 30, 2007

End of Document

A father's plea for the prisoner Israel forgot. Beduin languishes for 8 years in Egypt

The Jerusalem Post
August 22, 2008 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1138 words

Byline: BRENDA GAZZAR

Body

After more than eight years, Israeli Beduin Suleiman Tarabin's hope that his eldest son Ouda will be released soon from his solitary cell in a Cairo prison is fading.

Ouda Tarabin was 19 when he illegally crossed the Israeli border into Egypt in late 1999.

He was detained by Egyptian authorities and reportedly sentenced for espionage-related crimes that his family and the Israeli government insist he didn't commit.

Tarabin was never indicted, but was sentenced to 15 years in prison under Egypt's Emergency Law, which has been in effect since 1981 and grants police sweeping powers of arrest.

"What is the crime that they are holding him for? There is no crime," said his father Suleiman Tarabin from their family home about 15 kilometers from Beersheba. "They just grabbed him. Why did they grab him if there is peace (between Egypt and Israel) and he's an Israeli citizen?"

Foreign Ministry spokesman Yossi Levy said in a statement that Tarabin "was not a spy for Israel of any kind. Full stop."

"We're talking about an issue that is sad and infuriating from [both] a human and [a] legal perspective," he added.

But as Egypt has tried in recent months to broker a prisoner exchange between **Hamas** and Israel involving kidnapped IDF soldier Gilad Schalit and Defense Minister Ehud Barak prepares to visit Egypt next week, relatively little attention appears to be focused on Tarabin - the only Israeli prisoner known to be held in an Egyptian jail.

"It is a great breach of human rights," says Ouda's lawyer Izhak Melzer. "The man never had a chance to defend himself; to refute the charges. It's not a trial, it's a mockery. There is no corroborating evidence."

Last week, Melzer requested that the Israeli cabinet link Tarabin's case to the release of 199 Palestinian prisoners, a gesture intended to boost the standing of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, but the cabinet approved the release on Sunday without a word on Tarabin.

Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, who says that she and the ministry are working to keep Tarabin's issue on the agenda, told Melzer that she did not think linking the two would help his case. Israel's relationship with Palestinian parties is important "and we have no interest in giving Egypt veto power on this issue," she wrote in a letter dated August 14.

A father's plea for the prisoner Israel forgot. Beduin languishes for 8 years in Egypt

A spokesman for Barak said Tarabin's case was being taken care of by the relevant parties.

"Ouda was tried in absentia in March 2000 in an Egyptian military criminal court, [and] accused of revealing information and uncovering military secrets," according to a July 1, 2007 Israeli Foreign Ministry letter written to Melzer about the case.

Egyptian Military intelligence investigators told Ouda that he had been sentenced to prison for 15 years before he had entered Egypt and that his father had been sentenced to 25 years for espionage, Melzer said. They said the sentences were based on testimony given by Ouda's Egyptian cousin, Eid Suleiman, who was arrested for similar charges in 1999 and remains in prison today.

Ouda Tarabin's family says Ouda has done nothing wrong other than cross into Egypt without the proper documentation. His brother Eid says they don't know why he entered Egypt but says he may have gone to visit his sister, who lives in Al-Arish.

Suleiman Tarabin argues that the Israeli government is not doing enough to get his son released.

"The Israeli government is obligated legally, they are obligated but there is neglect on the part of the government," Ouda's father Suleiman said. "If he was a spy, they really would have stood behind him... If he was a spy like Azzam Azzam. If he was Jewish, Israel would turn over the world (for him). But he's not Jewish or a spy. He's Arab."

Egypt detained Israeli Druse Azzam Azzam of the village of Maghar in 1996 and had sentenced him, too, to 15 years in prison for spying for Israel, accusing him of passing messages in women's underwear using invisible ink.

Azzam, who along with Israel has denied the charges, was released in 2004 after he had served eight years of his sentence, as part of a prisoner swap that included the release of six Egyptian students imprisoned in Israel.

The Foreign Ministry says it only learned about Tarabin's case five years after he was first arrested. Suleiman Tarabin, however, filed a report with police in January 2000 in the town of Rahat informing them that his son had been arrested in Egypt after he had been notified by Egyptian relatives, Melzer said.

Melzer asked police this week to conduct an investigation to determine what steps they took, if any, to follow up on the issue.

Foreign Ministry officials said Tarabin's release is "a high priority" for them in their relations with Egypt.

"Since becoming aware of the arrest of Ouda Tarabin... the Foreign Ministry is making great governmental and consular efforts to aid him in this matter and to work for his release," the Foreign Ministry press statement said. "The issue comes up in all of our bilateral meetings with Egypt, often at the level of heads of state and senior ministers."

Israel's consul was also meeting as often as possible with Tarabin, helping to pass packages and letters between him and family members, according to the statement. The Israeli embassy in Cairo is also in regular contact with the relevant Egyptian authorities "to accelerate the release of the Israeli citizen Tarabin."

But Egypt does not appear eager to release the 27- year-old Israeli Beduin.

An Egyptian embassy spokesman in Tel Aviv said the issue of Tarabin "was being taken care of by the courts."

And in June, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said he had discussed Tarabin with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Sharm e-Sheikh, but added that "we cannot release him as long as he has already been convicted," according to a transcript of an interview that was broadcast in Egypt and obtained by Melzer.

Melzer is hopeful that with the right amount of politicking, Mubarak could decide to release Tarabin during the upcoming Id al-Fitr holiday, one of several occasions in which amnesty is traditionally granted by the president.

A father's plea for the prisoner Israel forgot. Beduin languishes for 8 years in Egypt

"It has nothing to do with the courts," Melzer said. "It has only to do with Mubarak."

But Suleiman Tarabin, who hasn't seen his son in more than eight years, says he has little faith in the acts of man and in the laws of states. The 63-year-old father of seven was born in Beersheba and fled with his family to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula during Israel's War of Independence.

When asked about the reported Egyptian allegations, Suleiman says he himself received his Israeli citizenship because he married an Israeli woman and not because of any alleged espionage activities.

Ouda "didn't do any spying, whether for Israel, or for Egypt," he reiterated. "Ouda has no fault." Chuckling at a reporter's question, he added: "Even if I was a spy, he was not involved."

Graphic

Photo: SULEIMAN TARABIN holds up his son Ouda Tarabin's Israeli passport and ID card at his home near Beersheba. (Credit: Brenda Gazzar)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Obama struggles to move beyond the sound bite

Sunday Business Post

August 24, 2008

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Section: COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

Length: 1216 words

Body

After radically shifting his policies away from the left, Barack Obama has seen John McCain whittle away his lead in the polls - at the worst possible time.

This could be the beginning of the most extraordinary week in Barack Obama's political life. Tomorrow, the Democratic Party convention - which will nominate him as its US presidential candidate on Thursday - begins in Denver, Colorado.

But after a year of almost unprecedented publicity, and a summer of leading his Republican opponent, John McCain, in the polls, there is growing concern in Democratic circles about Obama's prospects.

For the first time in months, the polls are showing McCain running neck and neck with Obama in the polls - and that's only the beginning of the Illinois senator's concerns. For a start, the whole Clinton business has still not been put to rest.

Obama has agreed to allow both Hillary and Bill Clinton their own speaking times in Denver, and there are concerns that the delegates' reaction to this may well damage Obama. There are even suggestions that demands for a "roll-call of delegates" by Clinton supporters could cause chaos.

It remains to be seen if Obama's decision to nominate Joe Biden as his vice-presidential candidate this weekend will go some way towards easing tensions over the Clinton issue.

Concerns are also emerging regarding Obama's support among **female** voters. In a recent poll, 28 per cent of Clinton supporters said they weren't voting for Obama - no matter what. Indeed, significant numbers of Clinton supporters, particularly **women** and **women's** organisations, are so enraged at not having a **female** candidate that they intend to vote for McCain.

Since previous polls had shown that Obama was pulling in a larger **female** vote than McCain, this backlash could seriously damage his prospects. In a survey released last week, the Pew Research Centre for the People & the Press found that **women** favoured Obama over McCain by 51 per cent to 38 per cent, a dramatic improvement from his 47 per cent to 42 per cent advantage in May.

Obama struggles to move beyond the sound bite

Men, by contrast, backed McCain by 49 per cent to 41 per cent. Single out white voters and the gender gap is even starker: McCain led Obama among white men by 55 per cent to 35 per cent, and among white women by 46 per cent to 43 per cent.

Race issues are also a factor. Numerous black organisations have taken offence at Obama's depiction of their ills. They complain that, when he speaks to black audiences, he attacks them, attributing their poverty, not to systemic oppression, but to bad culture and a lack of work ethic.

Indeed, if any white politician had said what Obama said about the failure of many African-American fathers to look after their children, they would have been hounded out of public life on the grounds of racism.

However, by far the widest and most significant concern about Obama has been his apparent policy trek from the left to centre ground as soon as the nomination was secured. Of course, this has always been the fate of Democratic politicians once their electorate changed from Democratic Party delegates to the American public at large.

But given that Obama's catch-call was "change", and that his appeal was offering something profoundly different to the established political status quo, there is genuine alarm at what is being described as his political flip-flopping.

In last week's prestigious Nation magazine, an open letter to Obama appeared, in which the signatories positioned themselves as abject supplicants, begging him to revert to his earlier stances in his primary campaign.

"Since your historic victory in the primary, there have been troubling signs that you are moving away from the core commitments shared by many who have supported your campaign, toward a more cautious and centrist stance," it said.

Central to Obama's initial appeal was his commitment on Iraq - to end the war and withdraw troops. However, more recently, this commitment has been gradually whittled down.

Furthermore, there is his extraordinary commitment to Israel. Obama has said that he supports turning all of Jerusalem over to Israeli control, despite the internationally enforced sharing of that city with the Palestinians. This position far exceeds anything that even McCain supports.

In fact, in recent months, Obama's outlined foreign policy has hardly differed at all from that of George W Bush's. He has threatened several times to attack Iran if it doesn't do what the US wants it to do with regard to nuclear weapons, and to intervene in Pakistan if its anti-terrorist policies are not tough enough or if there was a regime change he didn't approve of.

He has called for a large increase in US troops and tougher policies for Afghanistan and, as mentioned, has been wholly and unequivocally embracing Israel as if it were the 51st US state, while totally ignoring Hamas, an elected ruling party in the occupied territory. He has referred to Hugo Chávez's Venezuelan government as "authoritarian" and has spoken with hostility about Cuba, albeit mentioning token reform regarding visits and remittances.

There is also concern that Zbigniew Brzezinski is among Obama's principal foreign security advisors. Brzezinski was the national security adviser under former president Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981.

A Polish-born Cold War hawk who claims responsibility for initiating the mujaheddin war against the Soviets in Afghanistan - the political seeds that later produced al-Qaeda - he has, for example, recently described Vladimir Putin's position on Georgia as "following a course that is horrifyingly similar to that taken by Stalin and Hitler in the 1930s".

So much for any President Obama-led post-election Russian-US détente, then. Obama's recent bumpy ride culminated in a joint television appearance with McCain at the Saddleback Civil Forum on the presidency, moderated by Pastor Rick Warren, author of The Purpose Driven Life and widely viewed as the new Billy Graham.

The consensus from both left and right was that Obama did not fare well.

Obama struggles to move beyond the sound bite

He equivocated on some important and significant questions, such as the one he offered on the issue of abortion. When asked by Warren at what point a baby gets human rights, Obama responded: "Well, I think that, whether you are looking at it from a theological perspective or a scientific perspective, answering this question with specificity, you know, is above my pay grade."

Both Al Gore and John Kerry took the progressive vote for granted, and were duly punished. Now, as Obama - like them - moves to the centre-right, much of his original support may be falling off the bandwagon which, up to recently, appeared unstoppable.

Given, too, America's determined parochialism, Obama's recent European and Asian tour seems to have backfired (indeed, it may have accentuated the US's sense of his foreignness) and this week, he also faces the huge task of selecting a running mate.

If Obama thought that beating Clinton to the nomination was his most difficult battle, he was wrong. Suddenly, he has found himself in nomination week looking up the electoral hill at a conundrum that Karl Rove, Bush's infamous electoral strategist, succinctly summed up: "The McCain campaign has tapped that Mr Obama is merely an inexperienced celebrity-politician smitten with his own press clippings."

Load-Date: August 24, 2008

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Mahmoud Darwish, 67, Leading Palestinian Poet

The New York Times
August 11, 2008 Monday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section B; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 894 words

Byline: By ETHAN BRONNER

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Mahmoud Darwish, whose searing lyrics on Palestinian exile and tender verse on the human condition led him to be widely viewed as the pre-eminent man of Palestinian letters as well as one of the greatest contemporary Arab poets, died Saturday night in Houston after complications from heart surgery. He was 67.

Mr. Darwish, a heavy smoker, was known to suffer from health problems. Still, his death was received among Palestinians with shock and despair.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, declared three days of mourning on Sunday, saying that Mr. Darwish was "the pioneer of the modern Palestinian cultural project," adding, "Words cannot describe the depth of sadness in our hearts."

Yasir Abed Rabbo, secretary of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization, said, "No one could have imagined that Mahmoud's voice could disappear."

The Palestinian Authority will give Mr. Darwish a state funeral in the West Bank on Tuesday, the first since Yasir Arafat died in 2004.

Twice divorced with no children, Mr. Darwish had the straight hair, wire-rim glasses and blue blazer of a European intellectual and was, paradoxically for someone seen as the voice of his people, a loner with a narrow circle of friends. He was uncomfortable in public, where he was widely recognized, but he cared deeply about young Arab writers and published their work in the Ramallah-based journal that he edited, *Al Karmel*.

And while he wrote in classical Arabic rather than in the language of the street, his poetry was anything but florid or baroque, employing a directness and heat that many saw as one of the salvations of modern literary Arabic.

"He used high language to talk about daily life in a truly exceptional way," said Ghassan Zaqtan, a Palestinian poet and a close friend. "This is someone who remained at the top of Arabic poetry for 40 years. It was not simply about politics."

Nonetheless, politics played a major role in Mr. Darwish's life and work. Born to a middle-class Muslim farming family in a village near Haifa in what is today Israel, Mr. Darwish identified strongly with the secular Palestinian national movement long led by Mr. Arafat.

Mahmoud Darwish, 67, Leading Palestinian Poet

Mr. Zaqtan and Mr. Abed Rabbo said he was the author of Mr. Arafat's famous words at the United Nations General Assembly in 1974: "I come bearing an olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand."

He also wrote the Palestinian declaration of independent statehood in 1988 and served on the executive committee of the P.L.O. But he quit in the early 1990s over differences with the leadership and moved firmly out of the political sphere, lamenting the rise of the Islamist group Hamas and what he viewed as the bankruptcy of Palestinian public life.

Mr. Darwish first gained a following in the 1960s for his frank political poems, and to some extent they remain the source of his fame. Among his best known was "Identity Card" from 1964, in which he attacked Israel's desire to overlook the presence of Arabs on its land:

"Write down!/I am an Arab/ and my identity card number is 50,000/I have eight children/And the ninth will come after a summer."

It ends: "Therefore!/Write down on the top of the first page:/I do not hate people/Nor do I encroach/But if I become hungry/The usurper's flesh will be my food/Beware .../Beware ... /Of my hunger/And my anger."

There were other harsh political works in the following two decades, but those who knew Mr. Darwish said he had often expressed little pride in them, preferring his more personal and universal poems. He told The New York Times in a 2001 interview in Paris: "Sometimes I feel as if I am read before I write. When I write a poem about my mother, Palestinians think my mother is a symbol for Palestine. But I write as a poet, and my mother is my mother. She's not a symbol."

During the war that led to Israel's independence, Mr. Darwish and his family, from the Palestinian village of Al Barweh, left for Lebanon. The village was razed but the family sneaked back across the border into Israel, where Mr. Darwish spent his youth.

Politically active fairly early, he was arrested several times and was a member of the Israeli Communist Party. He left in 1971 and lived in the Soviet Union, Tunisia, Egypt, Lebanon and France.

After Mr. Arafat set up the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza in the mid-1990s, Mr. Darwish came to live in Ramallah, where he rented a house. He said he never really felt at home there -- he made clear that exile for him was increasingly an emotional rather than a purely political dilemma -- and wrote more comfortably when in Europe.

He maintained a wide circle of literary acquaintances, including Israelis, and he said he fully supported a two-state solution.

His work earned him a number of international literary awards and was translated into more than 20 languages, more than any other contemporary Arab poet, according to Mahmoud al-Atshan, a professor of Arabic literature at Bir Zeit University in the West Bank.

There was at first some question of where he would be buried, as some close to him sought to persuade Israel to let him be buried in the area of his home village. But the mayor of Ramallah said Mr. Darwish would be buried in Ramallah, the effective Palestinian capital of the West Bank.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Mahmoud Darwish, 67, Leading Palestinian Poet

PHOTO: Palestinians in Ramallah, West Bank, held a vigil on Sunday in honor of Mahmoud Darwish, who died Saturday in Houston. (PHOTOGRAPH BY ABBAS MOMANI/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE -- GETTY IMAGES)

POEM EXCERPT: WE TRAVEL LIKE OTHER PEOPLE We travel like other people, but we return to nowhere. As if traveling is the way of the clouds. We have buried our loved ones in the darkness of the clouds, between the roots of the trees. And we said to our wives: go on giving birth to people like us for hundreds of years so we can complete this journey To the hour of a country, to a meter of the impossible. We travel in the carriages of the psalms, sleep in the tent of the prophets and come out of the speech of the gypsies. We measure space with a hoopoe's beak or sing to while away the distance and cleanse the light of the moon. Your path is long so dream of seven women to bear this long path on your shoulders. Shake for them palm trees so as to know their names and who'll be the mother of the boy of Galilee. We have a country of words. Speak speak so I can put my road on the stone of a stone. We have a country of words. Speak speak so we may know the end of this travel. (From "Victims of a Map," Al Saqi Books, London, 1984. Translated by Abdullah al-Udhari.)

Load-Date: August 11, 2008

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post
July 14, 2008 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1147 words

Byline: Ziva Eliezer, The Editor responds, J. Meyer, L.M. Berkowitz, P. Yonah, Haim M. Lerner, Larry Derfner responds, Hela Crown-Tamir, Gish Truman Robbins, Michael Mohnblatt, Keith Lawrence

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

How could you?

Sir, - I was very upset to see you juxtapose two articles in your July 13 issue - one dealing with human and animal starvation in Africa ("When tea isn't just a drink, but an entire meal") and, right next to it, "Physiology can be oh, so cruel" on obesity and overeating.

My God! Don't we live in the same world? How can I read these articles and continue my day's activities?

ZIVA ELIEZER

Tzofit

The Editor responds:

The juxtaposition was deliberate, to highlight the stark - and jolting - difference of priorities between populations who inhabit the same planet but, as you imply, might as well be living in different worlds.

'Heimish' Asians?

Sir, - Larry Derfner's "Nice Jewish boy, nice Asian girl" (July 10) read like a formula for eradicating our Jewish religion. He seems not only to hate haredim, but also our basic religious beliefs.

J. MEYER

Jerusalem

Sir, - Larry Derfner seems to insult traditional Jewish families who prefer that their children choose Jewish partners to make a Jewish marriage and build a Jewish family.

I have raised nine Jewish children, of whom five have already found their bashert - their intended - and gifted me with 21 Jewish grandchildren. My youngest son has just announced his engagement to a lovely Southern Belle from Birmingham, Alabama, the only rabbi's daughter for miles around. He was raised in a poor but "heimish" family in Detroit, Michigan.

Letters

I'd call it "Nice Yankee boy, nice Southern girl, both Jewish."

L.M. BERKOWITZ

Southfield, Michigan

Sir, - Larry Derfner omitted a very important factor in the union of an immigrant Asian girl and a Jewish boy in the US. While he identified his friend's son as secular, he made no reference to the Asian girl's religion. People from totally different backgrounds often find that religion becomes a factor in their relationship after their first child is born.

The friend's son may be giving up Judaism - of which, sadly, he has no knowledge because he was brought up in a secular home - only to find himself having to deal with Buddhism, Hinduism or some other exotic oriental faith.

What is clear from this op-ed is that American Jewry is in a state of crisis.

P. YONAH

Shoham

Sir, - The "nice Asian girls" that Larry Derfner's friend's sons have chosen may have all the "heimische" qualities of nice Jewish girls of several decades ago, but the point about intermarriage is that these boys are taking steps to sever their ties, completely, to their long line of Jewish history and heritage. Their children will no longer be Jews!

On this basis Derfner may want to rethink his "100%" approval of his own sons marrying out in the future.

HAIM M. LERNER

Ganei Tikva

Larry Derfner responds:

I don't know where J. Meyer read that I "hate haredim"; I don't know how L.M. Berkowitz figures I meant to "insult" families who want their children to marry only Jews; I disagree with P. Yonah that Jews who marry gentiles are "giving up Judaism," and I would remind Haim M. Lerner that Jewish men who marry gentile women can, and often do, have their children converted to Judaism.

Silver lining

Sir, - We are all concerned about the drought (Letters, July 10). But crisis can also bring something good - as in 1986, when the Sea of Galilee was dangerously low and two brothers, Moshe and Yuval Lufan, found what is now known as the Jesus Boat. There is no doubt that it is from the time of Jesus and the fishermen he called his disciples.

As a guide, I can tell you that this treasure has earned millions of shekels for tourism in Galilee. An entire museum was built around the boat. Perhaps this season, while we wait for the winter rains, will yield another boat.

HELA CROWN-TAMIR

Mevaseret Zion

Anti-terror model...

Sir, - In "A tale of two hostages" (July 11) Caroline Glick illuminatingly juxtaposed two reactions to terrorism. One was a rescue mission initiated under the leadership of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe that infuriated both Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Ecuador's leader Raphael Correa and their left-wing allies and cohorts. The other was Israel's ineffective response to its enemies - a stark contrast to Colombia's successful mission.

Letters

Is it so difficult to comprehend that terrorist blackmailers cannot be defeated by appeasement, and that it only provides an incentive for them to demand more?

Instead of cowering beneath the sneers and hatred exhibited by the so-called intellectual pacifists, led by a UN ensnared in brutal dictatorships and ideologies and a hopelessly inadequate EU, Israel needs to wake up and earn the respect and admiration it had following the War of Independence, the 1967 Six Day War, the Entebbe hostage rescue and the daring Osirak raid.

As a consequence of his actions, Uribe facilitated the defeat and demoralization of the FARC terror group, exposed the evil conspiracy between Chavez and Correa, and, incidentally, also discredited the French government's ties to terrorist deputy commander Raul Reyes.

The free world cheered as the hostages, including the high-profile Ingrid Betancourt, walked free and Colombia reaped the multiple benefits awarded to those who actively combat the enemies of freedom and tolerance.

GISH TRUMAN ROBBINS

Pardesiya

...for Israel

Sir, - If two retired IDF generals advised the Colombian military on the daring rescue mission that freed Ingrid Betancourt from the FARC terrorists in the Colombian jungle after six years in captivity, why can't our mighty IDF, with our thousands of battle-experienced soldiers augmented by the world's best surveillance, intelligence and military equipment, rescue Gilad Schalit from Hamas?

MICHAEL MOHNBLATT

Tel Mond

Smart, not stupid

Sir, - Edward Bernard Glick's "How the universities got that way" (July 8) contained errors related to the political affiliations of Duke faculty.

He wrote: "One of the best ways to influence students, colleagues, and the citizenry at large is to hire, promote, and tenure only those people who agree with you. Duke University is a case in point. The chairman of one of its major departments was once asked in a radio interview if his department hired Republicans. He answered: 'No... because they are stupid and we are not. Why should we knowingly hire stupid professors?'"

This appears to be a reference to a February 10, 2004 article in the student newspaper, the Duke Chronicle, in which a Duke philosophy professor is quoted as saying: "We try to hire the best, smartest people available. If, as John Stuart Mill said, stupid people are generally conservative, then there are lots of conservatives we will never hire."

The professor is also quoted as saying, "I don't know the political affiliation of all of my colleagues in philosophy, nor do I care. Our last hire was in the history of modern philosophy. We hired an expert in Kant and Newton. Politics never came up in the interview."

KEITH LAWRENCE,

Director, Media Relations

Duke University

Durham, North Carolina

Letters

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Put them to death

The Jerusalem Post

July 25, 2008 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6

Length: 1199 words

Byline: SARAH HONIG

Highlight: Another Tack

Body

Preempting an opponent's objection with an objection - thereby turning an argument on its head - is the bread-and-butter of polemics. The tactic is common everywhere - from ordinary conversation to the halls of academe and courtroom litigation. When used cunningly, counterarguments can become the demagogue's most invaluable of tools, used to sway the intellectually indolent and apply populist pressure.

Much as it's politically incorrect by our society's kitschified codes to cast Miki Goldwasser - mother of Ehud, who was ambushed, slain and nabbed by Hizbullah two years ago - as a skilled manipulator, her cleverness cannot but be acknowledged.

Her meticulously crafted June 18 letter to the prime minister testifies to that. Striving to rebut the contention that "if [Samir] Kuntar is swapped, more people would be kidnapped," she faults the very fact that Kuntar was held behind bars: "Had Kuntar been exchanged in the Tannenbaum deal, you wouldn't be reading my letter today. Contrariwise, were Kuntar not to be exchanged today, there would be more abductions and this time perhaps also of Israeli citizens pleasurably touring abroad. Nasrallah is determined to get Kuntar back no matter what. His next attempt could be lots worse. It could end up in kidnapping a family, juveniles, expectant mothers or anyone else."

It may have been her prerogative to shout to all and sundry that she doesn't give a hoot about why Kuntar was convicted in the first place, nor does she care about the consequences of his release. It's legitimate for a distraught mother to focus only on her personal pain. But it's illegitimate to cynically contrive to mess with the minds of the rest of the nation, from whose ranks emboldened Hizbullah's next victims will surely come.

Her pro-forma premise was that Kuntar's liberation was Nasrallah's ultimate objective. But was it? Kuntar perpetrated his horrific crime before Hizbullah's inception. He's not a Shi'ite nor a member of Nasrallah's militia.

IN 1979 Kuntar led the invasion of the Haran family's Nahariya apartment. He caused the mother, Smadar, to hide in the ceiling crawl space and inadvertently smother her toddler daughter Yael to death, lest her cries betray them. He took the father Danny and four-year-old Einat at gunpoint to the beach, where he executed Danny and where Einat was swung hard by her ankles to callously bash her head against the rocks. Kuntar then repeatedly slammed his rifle butt into Einat's skull. Remnants of her brain tissue adhered to his weapon. There are conflicting versions about who witnessed whose horrifying death. Did Danny see Einat's brains spill out or was her father's bloodied body the last thing Einat saw?

Put them to death

Such barbarity is the stuff of which heroes are made in the Arab world, and his savagery is precisely why Kuntar is adulated. Setting him loose constitutes a matchless prestige booster for Nasrallah. That's his sole stake in Kuntar, and it won't cause Hizbullah to close all accounts with Israel. Far from it. Having coerced Israel to capitulate, Nasrallah will home in on the next lucrative prestige booster. Pretexts aren't scarce and can, moreover, be quickly manufactured.

Just as offensive is Goldwasser's resort to scare tactics, like her warning that if Kuntar weren't let out, the next hostages may be families and youngsters. Do such scenarios hinge only on Kuntar's fate? Does his release obviate the danger? Does the bloodlust genuinely depend on the Kuntar excuse? Haven't we already seen the indiscriminate slaughter of whole families, women and children before Kuntar was seized? What on earth does Miki Goldwasser think Kuntar's initial nighttime attack on the pajama-clad Harans was?

But worst of all is her insinuation that Nasrallah's will must be done because he is "determined." Woe to us collectively if the Jewish state calculates its moves according to the determination gauge of its worst genocidal enemies. Logically, this path inevitably leads to Israel's eradication, just as Nasrallah, Ahmadinejad and assorted Hamas lynchpins openly preach. If we accept their determination to achieve a given goal as a foregone conclusion that mustn't be resisted, then we're goners.

TO SURVIVE in our hostile environment we must consistently frustrate everything about which Nasrallah is determined - not acquiesce to his insistence and subserviently abet his purposes. We must do the opposite of what he demands, not give in to his diktats. Whatever aggrandizes him, endangers us.

Moreover, Nasrallah's determination is inextricably linked to Ahmadinejad's determination. By giving in to Teheran's Lebanese hand puppet, we encourage the puppet master to persevere in his genocidal aims.

Kuntar was nothing but Nasrallah's pretext for extortion. The best we can do is remove as many such facile pretexts from our prisons as possible. It's remarkably easy to fabricate new rationales for bloodshed, but convicted murderers sentenced to life behind bars mustn't be allowed out alive. The enemy must have nobody to free. This may mean conditional death penalties - to become mandatory in case attempts are made to spring convicts via hostage- taking.

The flaw here is that Israel's exceedingly milksop system, whose life sentences are in any case worthless, will lack the gumption to execute villains when it comes to the crunch. It's way too much to expect resolve under pressure from a leadership which brainwashes its people to take pride in weakness, portraying it as the hallmark of humanitarianism.

The best alternative is not to wait till hostages are taken, but put to death every Kuntar-type right after sentencing. This may not directly save lives, but it would ensure that unspeakable homicide won't go unpunished, that those who gleefully spill the blood of Jewish children won't live to be feted for their bestiality and won't be accorded heroes' welcomes.

That too is some consolation, even if minor. It's important - six decades after the Holocaust - to trust that the Jewish state won't countenance the callous massacre of Jews merely because they are Jews.

It's at least slight solace to know that the most heinous of butchers won't get the last laugh on us and won't in the interim enjoy our hospitality, be well fed by Israeli taxpayers, will further their education, pursue hobbies, receive conjugal visits, procreate and even commission and coordinate more terror onslaughts.

The only way to quit being suckers is to quit being suckers.

Many in our midst will of course regurgitate the questionable claim that by imposing capital punishment, we might imperil captured Israelis, whom vengeful unbridled enemies will readily kill. But the greater likelihood is that by contracting the sort of deal whereby living Kuntars are swapped for corpses, we eliminate the last enemy incentive to keep abductees alive.

Put them to death

Hizbullah, it would pay us to remember, had never returned any living Israeli - except for over-the-hill drug-dealer Tannenbaum, another wry Nasrallah joke at our expense. That's something to remain mindful of before expediently trying to turn common sense on its head. By having won her argument, Miki Goldwasser pushed us another step closer to losing our existential war.

Graphic

Photo: The funeral last week of Ehud Goldwasser. Mother Miki and wife Karnit escort him to his final resting place. (Credit: AP)

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Obama risks falling into the gulf between image and political reality

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Body

The image of a man beyond petty electoral considerations is revealed to be just that - the product of an image consultant

WITH the American primary season finally over and the Democrats having kissed and made up, the policy differences between the candidates are receiving greater attention. Democrats are understandably eager to paint John McCain on tax, on Iraq, on healthcare as Chapter 3 in the Book of Bush.

In truth, though, McCain has established enough distance from the president on issues like the environment to gain a fair hearing with independents. He is probably the best candidate the Republicans could run in the (pretty dire) circumstances. Nevertheless, with nearly five months still to go until polling day and the American economy looking out of puff, the momentum is with the senator from Illinois. The race is his to lose.

Barack Hussein Obama has an extraordinary gift for stimulating the guilty zones of educated white liberals and blacks throng to him. But among four specific constituencies he piles up negatives: older females, working-class Scotch-Irish males, Hispanics and, that most traditionally Democrat of ethnic groups, Jews.

Between now and November, Obama is on a mission to assuage the doubts these groups harbour. He will seek to address their concerns one by one.

In tougher times, Americans of whatever background - like Europeans - pay most attention to pocketbook concerns. But even the price of petrol is not a wholly domestic issue and with the last of the four critical groups mentioned, foreign policy - specifically policy towards Israel and its neighbours - has a particular resonance. Abroad, too, the question deserves serious attention: what does Obama's rhetoric about 'change' mean when it comes to that cockpit of the world's problems, the Middle East?

Precious little, some in the Arab world concluded after hearing Obama address the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), one of the most effective - critics say sinister - lobbying groups in Washington. Obama had set himself an express objective: to allay concerns that he was equivocal about Israel's security and the threat posed by Iran in particular.

McCain has been categorical. He has committed himself "to never allowing another Holocaust".

Obama risks falling into the gulf between image and political reality

Obama, however, fought Hillary Clinton from the left field. He promised negotiations with Iran without preconditions, potentially overturning three decades of US policy. To AIPAC, though, Obama was keen to stress he was ruling nothing out, including, he intimated, military strikes to destroy Iran's budding nuclear weapons capacity. The audience loved it - mission accomplished, as it were. But he went further, some would say ill-advisedly. He declared that, as far as he is concerned, Jerusalem must always remain the capital of Israel and must never be divided. This could be an unsustainable position.

Uniquely in the world, Israel's declared capital and its parliament are in one city - Jerusalem - and all the foreign embassies, including the American one, are in another - Tel Aviv.

Jerusalem's status is possibly the thorniest of all the Arab-Israeli issues. Very many Jews see the settlements in the West Bank as defensive positions, optional extras. Jerusalem is different. It is at the very core of Jewish and Israeli identity.

In part of the city, though, Arabs make up the overwhelming local majority. For Muslim Palestinians, the city also has special significance, albeit somewhat beneath that of Mecca. The issue is further complicated by the fact that the Western Wall, the holiest of Jewish sites, is in the Old City which constitutes part of mainly Arab east Jerusalem.

The bottom line is that few believe the Jerusalem issue can be addressed before all the other issues are solved and, even then, it will be ferociously difficult. But if it can be - and it's a big 'but' - it's hard to see how that can be reconciled with Obama's apparent commitment to it remaining united under Israeli sovereignty.

Is McCain's position any different? No. Does he maintain this contradiction between solemn commitment and practical reality? Naturally. If lasting peace was on the table, would he climb down and compromise on Jerusalem a bit? Of course he would. McCain is a pragmatist.

But wasn't Obama supposed to be a fundamental change from all the other cynical careerists? Wasn't he supposed to be a man of the highest principle - that rarest of all commodities, a politician you could trust? There is an irony here.

On the one hand, no one believes for a minute that Obama wouldn't sell out on Jerusalem when it came to it. On the other, getting the commitment out of him was seen as vital. The trouble is because Barack Obama has set himself up as no mere politician, his willingness to make a casual promise that he cannot keep makes voters doubt all his other promises. The image of a man beyond petty electoral considerations is revealed to be just that - the product of an image consultant.

A campaign adviser quickly qualified Obama's position, stating that Jerusalem is Israel's capital (for now) and "it's not going to be divided by barbed wire and checkpoints" - which isn't quite the same as "united". This was just the latest in a series of such clarifications. Irish-born adviser Samantha Power, who had to resign after calling Hillary Clinton a "monster", speaking of Obama's plans to withdraw troops from Iraq, said he wouldn't "rely on some plan that he's crafted as a presidential candidate". We saw it again when his economic adviser assured Canada that Obama wasn't really serious about the anti-free trade rhetoric he was spewing.

PEOPLE are beginning to wonder what this "change you can believe in" really amounts to. When Obama says he won't talk to Hamas, the Islamists who run the Gaza Strip, is he to be believed, for example? Of course, what are presumed to be Obama's real views find a ready embrace in European capitals, but the Obama brand is taking hit after hit.

Fully 43% of Americans believe he is "not tough enough" on national security and foreign policy. While seemingly ruling nothing out, his pretty obvious preference would be to engage in direct bilateral discussions with Iran - much as America negotiated with the Soviet Union, he says.

And it's true that Jack Kennedy, for instance, backed down during the Cuban missile crisis, offering to remove US nuclear warheads from Turkey in exchange for the removal of Soviet nukes from Cuba. But that was only after

Obama risks falling into the gulf between image and political reality

deploying troops and going to the brink of war to make the alternatives to negotiations credible. There was another difference, too: Khrushchev was open to a deal. The Iranians repeatedly insist they are not.

McCain, by contrast, can come across as belligerent to an American public wary of further foreign engagements. The Obama people paint him as an ideologue who wants to keep troops in Iraq for another 100 years. The Republican candidate - who once jokingly sang "bomb Iran" to the tune of Beach Boys' hit Barbara Ann - has been reassuring voters with an "I hate war" campaign ad. Having had his body broken to pieces in Vietnam, he has every reason to.

Still, if McCain can sow enough doubts in voters minds about Obama's credibility as commander-in-chief, this election might not be the slam dunk it appears right now.

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Shape of vote to come; Obama Vs. McCain

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Body

The longest and perhaps the most gruelling presidential primary contest in U. S. history limps to an end over the next 10 days, but American voters can already see the shape of the general election to come.

Illinois Senator Barack Obama is already acting as if he has secured the final 69 delegates he needs to secure the Democratic presidential nomination. He is hiring more campaign staff, boosting his election operations in crucial swing states and asking advisors to begin vetting potential vicepresidential candidates.

Instead of talking about delegates and math, Mr. Obama has refocused his sights on Republican presidential candidate John McCain, trying to tie him to a costly war in Iraq, an unpopular President George W. Bush and an uncertain economy.

"This year's Republican primary was a contest to see which candidate could out-Bush the other, and that is the contest John McCain won," Mr. Obama told voters in Iowa on Tuesday. "The Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 2% of Americans that once bothered Senator McCain's conscience are now his only economic policy.... The Bush Iraq policy that asks everything of our troops and nothing of Iraqi politicians is John McCain's policy, too, and so is the fear of tough, aggressive diplomacy that has left this country more isolated and less secure than at any time in recent history."

"John McCain has decided to run for George Bush's third term," he later told voters in Billings, Mont.

Mr. McCain, who has been quietly building his general election organization ever since he nailed down the Republican nomination in late March, has also shifted into full general election mode, touring crucial battleground states and refining his sales pitch to voters.

He has begun to frame the coming election as a classic left-right, liberal-conservative contest, telling voters at nearly every turn: "There are going to be stark choices between a liberal Democrat and a conservative Republican."

The former U. S. Navy pilot, Vietnam prisoner of war and four-term senator is stressing his own qualifications as a potential wartime commander-in-chief while questioning Mr. Obama's character and experience.

The Republicans are portraying Mr. Obama as a left-wing elitist who dabbled in Chicago politics after attending Harvard University but whose voting record suggests he is a big-government advocate who wants to raise taxes,

Shape of vote to come; Obama Vs. McCain

recklessly pull U. S. troops out of Iraq and, without preconditions, meet leaders of such pariah states as Iran, North Korea, Venezuela and Cuba.

"I have the knowledge, the background and the judgment to lead this nation. My opponent does not," Mr. McCain told a crowd in Stockton, Calif., on Thursday.

Then poking fun at the 46-year-old Mr. Obama, the 71-year-old Mr. McCain said: "I admire and respect Senator Obama. For a young man with very little experience, he's done very well. For his very, very great lack of experience and knowledge of issues, he's been very successful."

According to most political experts, Mr. McCain will have an uphill fight throughout the election.

"At least theoretically, the Democrats have a near-perfect climate for presidential victory in 2008," says Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. "A deeply unpopular Republican president is mired around 30% in the polls, a couple of points higher than Richard Nixon on the day he resigned.

"A large majority of Americans believe that the Iraq war wasn't worth fighting and should be phased out as soon as reasonably possible. The economy has tanked, gas prices are through the roof and an incredible eight in 10 Americans think the country is seriously off on the wrong track.

"No presidential candidate [from the same party as] a two-term incumbent has ever been elected under this set of severely adverse conditions."

If Mr. McCain is going to succeed, he will have to hope the gruelling Democratic primary season leaves the party deeply divided. He'll also need things to settle down in Iraq and to see the economy pick up by the fall.

But perhaps most importantly, Mr. McCain has to get out from under Mr. Bush, Mr. Sabato says.

"McCain will have to stress his fealty to certain Bush/Republican principles, while staking out independent, anti-Bush ground on specific issues," says Mr. Sabato. "It wouldn't hurt for McCain to remind the public, subtly, but with some frequency, that he ran against Bush in

2000 and predicted Bush would not be a successful leader."

Mr. Obama has his own share of problems. The Republicans have already started to depict him as an outsider, a man with a strange name, an unusual background and an unpatriotic "God Damn America" pastor. They've played up the fact he associates with former radicals from the 1960s radical Weather Underground and gleefully note that a leading Hamas official, Ahmed Yusef, recently declared: "We like Mr. Obama and we hope that he will win the election."

U. S. political campaigns can get vicious and many fear the personal attacks will become intense.

"We know what's coming," Mr. Obama recently told a campaign crowd. "We've seen it already ... the attempts to play on our fears and exploit our differences, to turn us against each other for pure political gain -- to slice and dice this country into Red States and Blue States; blue-collar and white-collar; white, black, brown."

But while he tries to paper over those differences, Mr. Obama's primary campaign has underlined some glaring weaknesses. He has consistently been unable to win significant support from Latinos, older women and working-class whites.

There is also the fact that no presidential nominee since Walter Mondale in 1984 has lost more primaries than Mr. Obama. Mr. Mondale lost 17, while Mr. Obama has lost 15, with primaries in Puerto Rico, South Dakota and Montana still pending.

Shape of vote to come; Obama Vs. McCain

Mr. Obama may try to use his vicepresidential selection to boost his electoral appeal to groups that are cool to him personally, but his biggest challenge now will be to build a Democratic electoral presence in states where he suffered significant primary losses, such as California and New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

To do that, he will have to fight Mr. McCain for the support of white working-class voters. That should push the state of the economy to the forefront of the election and trigger debates over the value of the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico.

While Mr. McCain can be expected to accuse Mr. Obama of inexperience and naivete in foreign policy, the Democrats will repeatedly attack Mr. McCain for admitting his own limited knowledge of economics.

In the end, Mr. McCain, who doesn't feel comfortable with the hard right of the Republican party, will seek to broaden his appeal by reaching beyond the traditional Republican base to attract independents and moderate Democrats.

Much of that battle may be determined by money and passion, two areas where the Republicans already seem to be lagging behind the Democrats.

Despite his bitter primary battles with Hillary Clinton, Mr. Obama, who has raised more than US\$200-million in campaign contributions, will lead an highly energized Democratic electorate that has registered millions of new voters.

pgoodspeed@nationalpost.com

Graphic

Color Photo:: (See hardcopy for Photo Description) ;

Color Photo: Carlos Barria, Reuters; Barack Obama, attending Cuban Independence Day celebrations in Miami yesterday, has raised more than US\$200-million in campaign contributions. ;

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Bin Laden And The Hookah

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Byline: WADE STEPHENS III, Special to the Tribune

Body

By WADE STEPHENS III

Special to the Tribune

ISLAMIC CAIRO - Ambivalence and rhetoric mix then drift here like the peach-tinted smoke from the hookah at our table. The words that rise from Abdel are like the smoke; the 30-year-old man is from the United Arab Emirates, and came to Egypt to study and be with his remaining family. He is drinking coffee in an alley café steps from the Mosque of Sayyidna al-Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, thus so sacred that non-Muslims are not admitted, except when they are admitted through the side door for women, accompanied by someone with the guide skills of Abdel, shoes folded sole-to-sole under an elbow, head covered with a pashmina. Americans are welcomed at all other mosques as long as they abide by certain traditions in this nasty, noisy, niggardly and noisome city of 15 million.

At one mosque, the student is off looking at religious rock paintings while the old man sits on a bench watching hundreds in prayer. Absently, he crosses his legs for a while. Far across the interior that has one side fully open to an acre-size courtyard a cleric spots the crossed legs, stops, raises a hand and wags an index finger at the man on the bench. "What?" thinks the America. The cleric, seeing the confused face, points to the floor. The old man looks at others on the benches and sees that all of them have both feet on the carpet. Oh! he thinks and does just that. The cleric smiles, nods his head and bows slightly at the waist. Third-world communication with first class manners.

"The Koran says that an enemy in your home should be protected and bin Laden does not honor this." Abdel said. "Jihad should come from the heart because it is stronger than guns."

The Islamic quarter of Cairo is a rectangular slice of vivid chaos in the southeast of the city. Founded in 641 A.D. by invading Muslims, to be in this oasis of Islam is to feel welcomed, calm, safe and respected. It is spectacular in its beauty and hospitable in its manner.

"Osama bin Laden has a valid point about Western hegemony. Does the U.S. get to serve exclusively its interests without consequence because it is a dominant world power?" he asks. "Arabs love Americans but just do not like their government because it believes it can do whatever it likes to do."

It is easy to move about guided by Abdel. The sights are of children twirling and swinging and kicking soccer balls as the 5:15 p.m. prayer starts at the al-Hussein Mosque. The smells are of the spices from the stalls at the Khan al-

Bin Laden And The Hookah

Khalili market. The sounds are of muttered prayers by men on grand carpets and small pieces of worn woolen rug, and the prayers blasted by loud speakers so that when you walk through three-foot alleys with speakers hanging from arches and boarded abandoned windows you are surrounded by sound you've heard and that you're coming to.

Abdel will take the college student up the spiral steps in the dark interior of the minarets of the Mosque of al-Azhar. He is doing this so they can see and hear Islamic Cairo as he explains the cadence of the prayers as they come from a speaker just across from the circular walkway at the top of the slender minaret. The broadcast prayers are a song, a striking coincidence that the sun sets as a crescent moon rises from the east above the four-story roofs of apartments, shops, houses, businesses, schools and markets built in a maze of antiquity. The old man has acrophobia; he sees most of this because he has stopped and waited below to peep through a slit in the 1,100-year-old rock wall of the tower.

Now, the words at the café become harsher to a Western ear. The rich people - the Jewish people - who control the world from behind a curtain are responsible for most of the suicide bombings, Abdel asserts. "They wish certain things to happen, and they use the religious beliefs of others to make these violent things happen.

"If you are poor ? and are offered money and prosperity for your family in exchange for what you think will bring you to Paradise, it is a good choice for you. You will do what these jihadists ask, but it is manipulating."

"Do Arabs respect any American leaders?" the college student asks, wondering if she should drink from the nearby water fountain. Abdel notices this, and briskly orders bottled water, which he pays for.

"The people of Egypt have an enormous respect for Jimmy Carter," Abdel said of the president who crafted the 1979 Camp David Accords with Israeli politicians and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. It leads to a peace treaty between Israel and Egypt; and the Islamic Brotherhood assassinates Sadat "? because they have a closed mind about what Islam is for."

The Egyptian president is Hosni Mubarak. "He has survived to age 79," Abdel said, "because he says 'yes' to the people around him. They are these powerful people who tell him what to do. Sadat wouldn't listen to their demands and that is why he was killed."

Two weeks after Abdel uttered those words the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip had all food, medicine and fuel supplies shut off by Israeli roadblocks. More Hamas rockets had killed more Israelis. Palestinians exploded a powerful bomb at the base of a metal wall that is the Egyptian border in this upper part of the Sinai Peninsula. Palestinians flooded into Egypt clamoring for food, water and supplies necessary for daily life. Mubarak welcomed them as his "Islamic brothers," sent troops to assist, and then commanded the same troops to push the Palestinians back into Gaza.

Exodus 34 blows a reeling message from the cloud on Mount Sinai. "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you."

From every point of the compass the African wind carried the whooshing sound of conflicts and shouts. It was not a sound of resolution and calm. That was as fleeting as the pink smoke from a hookah.

- Wade Stephens III is a former editorial writer with The Tampa Tribune.

For more photos from the Stephens' odyssey through Africa, go to TBO.com and click on "Opinion" on the drop-down menu under the News header in the navigation bar.

Photo credit: Photos courtesy of Wade Stephens III

Photo: Religion is a powerful part of Africa, with Catholicism, Islam, Judaism and traditional tribal beliefs often intersecting and occasionally clashing.

Photo: A Bedouin man sells geodes from Mount Moses in Sinai, Egypt.

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Notes

OTHER VIEWS

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post
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Byline: Deborah Bach, Wendy Blumfield, D. Katcoff, Asher Eder, Phoebe Turigye, Irene Riungu, Mark L. Levinson, Gitelle Rapoport

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Tzurit, Elad & Leora

Sir, - Anyone watching the annual Independence Day Bible Quiz could witness Tzurit Berenson's fantastic memory and ability to function under pressure. Along with her modesty and humility, it's no surprise that she's a winner.

As the mother of Leora Bach, who tied with Tzurit and Elad Finish at the National Finals in Lod, I want to add that I am bursting with pride that our nation is blessed with three such fine teenagers, symbolizing all the potential in their generation. I credit it all to our Holy Torah.

A small "scoop": Tzurit, Elad and Leora all cooperated and signed the letter about Jonathan Pollard. Though competing against each other, they had tremendous respect for each other and were able to overcome any possible selfish thoughts to work for what they considered an important cause.

It's time for the US to release Jonathan Pollard, who has been incarcerated for longer than many others who spied against the US. Mr. Pollard has paid dearly for whatever he may have done. May the unity of purpose displayed by Tzurit, Elad and Leora continue to light our path ("Bible quiz winner to PM: Get Pollard out of jail," May 9).

DEBORAH BACH

Haifa

Credit and blame

Sir, - It is disturbing that Dr. Dorit Nitzan-Klosky is to be indicted as head of the Ministry of Health National Food Service at the time of the Remedia scandal. This is rather like shooting the messenger ("Eight charged in Remedia scandal," May 7).

From the start of the cycle of tragic events, Dr. Nitzan-Klosky worked tirelessly to solve the mystery and get this product withdrawn from the shelves. Indeed, she has a very positive track record in supporting breastfeeding and has made more efforts than most ministry officials in adhering to the WHO Code for the Marketing of Artificial Baby Milks.

Letters

Many people are to blame for this scandal, including the manufacturers of the formula and the supervisors of its import into Israel, but a share of the blame should go to those health professionals who do not sufficiently support breastfeeding and needlessly recommend supplementary feeding with formula when it is inappropriate.

On the other side, credit should officially be given to two hospital doctors. One listened to the parents of the sick babies and compared their stories, leading to the conclusion that the common factor in all the cases was feeding with Remedia; the other recognized the symptoms of Vitamin B1 deficiency.

WENDY BLUMFIELD,

Hon. President

Israel Childbirth

Education Center

Haifa

A clear choice

Sir, - Avi Shafran worries that Rev. Wright's toxic message might come to pervade black attitudes, poisoning race relations in America ("What troubles me about the Wright affair," May 11). As long as African-Americans heed the lessons of the Mideast, that will not happen.

The terrorist organizations and terror-sponsoring states teem with demagogues like Rev. Wright and Louis Farrakhan, men who spew paranoid venom to boost their self- importance and power. Chaos and tyranny result.

In contrast, Rev. Martin Luther King's conciliatory message of love and non-violence, grounded in Judeo- Christian ethics and common sense, fostered racial harmony and black progress, and strengthened American democracy.

The choice could not be clearer.

D. KATCOFF

Jericho, Vermont

Toward peace...

Sir, - Re "How to survive in a sea of rejection?" (May 7), in which Amnon Rubinstein wrote, "It is much more difficult to reach a compromise with a fundamentalist God- ordained movement than with a nationalist one":

* No compromise whatsoever could ever be reached with a "fundamentalist God-ordained movement." Dreaming of achieving one can only be self-defeating.

* Crediting the jihadists as a "fundamentalist God- ordained" movement is abusing the Koran. The call for jihad against Israel, though worked up from the Koran, stands in outright contradiction to that holy book. There are eminent Muslim scholars who can attest to it.

While it is often said that the Koran doesn't even mention Jerusalem and/or Zion, it credits the Book of Psalms - Songs of Zion - as given by Allah to David (Sura "Zad").

* There are many ways to prepare the way - for us and the world at large - to not merely "survive in a sea of rejection" but to eventually reach a trustworthy peace, even brotherhood, with the Muslim peoples.

ASHER EDER

Jewish Co-Chairman

Letters

Islam-Israel Fellowship

Jerusalem

...not necessarily

Sir, - Re Gershon Baskin's "Next year in Palestine" (May 6): It is a fact that many Israelis do not learn from history, and yet history repeats itself! The Palestinians not only seek a state but also to destroy Israel. No matter how much you grant them, the Islamists' terrorist instincts will never be quenched until every Jew has been driven into the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel needs to consider her security first, as the Gaza disengagement proved that the land-for-peace solution will never solve anything. And you may soon find out that there is no essential difference between Hamas and Fatah, headed by Mahmoud Abbas.

PHOEBE TURIGYE

Kampala, Uganda

Syrian ploy

Sir, - I suspect that what is happening in Lebanon is a ploy by Syria to cover its real intention of testing the strength of Israel and the reaction of the world ("Between Gaza and Beirut," Khaled Abu Toameh, May 11).

Israel: Check your back, the enemy is edging to the back door, ready to strike.

You are the brightest guys around and you have wonderful leaders - but their handling of things is not as good as it should be, faced with foes like Iran, Syria and Libya. Compromise for the sake of promises of peace will jeopardize your existence.

I pray every time I remember to, for the peace of Jerusalem.

IRENE RIUNGU

Nairobi, Kenya

Fuels rush in?

Sir, - I was surprised when your editorial "Self-harm as strategy" (May 9) turned out to criticize Gaza for disrupting its own fuel supply. I thought it was going to criticize Israel for supplying the fuel in the first place.

MARK L. LEVINSON

Herzliya

No Shoshana,

Chava or Naomi

Sir, - I regret that I cannot recommend Rabbi Sacks's Israel - Home of Hope CDs owing to the fact that some of the music was newly recorded "in part because (Rabbi Sacks) deferred to Orthodox sensibilities and eschewed female singers." Unfortunately, many Jews' sensibilities are offended by that exclusion.

While I respect and admire Rabbi Sacks, I was astonished at his decision to record Israeli music without singers such as Shoshana Damari, Chava Alberstein and Naomi Shemer, major contributors to Israeli culture. Surely ample halachic authority permits men to listen to a woman singing on a recording, especially when the men are unacquainted with the singer and don't see her in person. Besides, it's possible to indicate on the CD and/or disc jacket those tracks that contain music sung by women so listeners can avoid it if they wish.

Letters

I hope the chief rabbi will reconsider his stringent policy when the time comes for a re-release of the CDs ("A vital affirmation of our awe-inspiring history," David Horovitz, April 4).

GITELLE RAPOPORT , Chicago

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Israelis adopt besieged Sderot; Zionists and allies rally to town living under storm of rockets

The International Herald Tribune

April 5, 2008 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1124 words

Byline: Ethan Bronner - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: SDEROT, Israel

Body

This long-neglected immigrant town a kilometer or so from Gaza, pounded by Palestinian rockets for seven years, is taking on a new identity, edging into the center of Zionist consciousness as a symbol of the nation's unofficial motto: "Never Again." Like the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, Sderot is now a must-see stop for those who support Israel or are being urged to do so.

Several groups have set up offices to arrange visits to a damaged home or a trauma center. Foreign diplomats have been bused here by the government. A United Nations officer says he has brought top officials here five times. John McCain came last month; Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, locals said, cannot be far behind.

Israelis and their supporters are lining up to volunteer for various projects and money is pouring in for bomb shelters, social services and an Orthodox religious seminary.

"For years, the government and others thought of Sderot not as a national problem but a local one," Mayor Eli Moyal said just before the ribbon cutting for an elegant first aid and ambulance center built with money donated largely by American Jews. "They now understand that if Sderot falls, Israel falls."

The sense that Sderot is actually Israel's front line in its battle for legitimacy and self-respect has gained currency, just as in the Arab world the suffering of Gazans has taken on a special significance. For Israelis, the conviction of Sderot's importance began growing with the huge increase in rocket fire since the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and after the 2006 war with Hezbollah, which sent thousands of rockets into northern Israel.

With both Hamas and Hezbollah gaining strength on Israel's borders and developing rockets with longer ranges, Sderot, its advocates say, is a bitter sample of what more prosperous and distant parts of Israel may face if the threat here is ignored. And to a growing number across the political spectrum - who come from those more prosperous and distant parts - it is inspiring in the way that a collective rescue operation can be.

"In Tel Aviv, you have great cafés, nice clothes and you live an illusion as if everything is all right," said Ilanit Swissa, a theater director who moved to Sderot a few months ago to work with high school actors, one of about a dozen liberal intellectuals setting up camp here. "But it is not true. Here I feel like I am contributing something. We are at war and you feel it here."

Israelis adopt besieged Sderot Zionists and allies rally to town living under storm of rockets

Surrounded by orange groves and wheat fields, guarded above by a military blimp that sets off an alert with each rocket launched from Gaza, Sderot has been a tough place to live.

There have been days when more than 50 rockets have landed in or near the town, bringing panic, destruction and occasionally death to a town of 20,000 that is heavily populated with Israeli minority groups - Moroccans, Ethiopians and refugees from Central Asia. Panic is widespread. Businesses have closed. Three thousand people have moved away.

Residents have grown accustomed to - though hardly comfortable with - the constant sound of a town-wide alert known as "Code Red," produced when the blimp detects an incoming rocket. Once the alarm has gone off, there are 20 seconds to get to a shelter before the rocket hits. Given such a short warning, children in kindergartens are kept inside all day rather than risk their failing to move quickly. Everyone knows someone who has suffered either property or personal damage.

Hundreds of expended rockets are on display in the courtyard of the police station. While typical of many its size in Israel, the town itself is pockmarked with rocket holes and shelters. A sense of pride in Sderot's refusal to yield and an interest in finding ways to protect and enhance the town have spread rapidly and deeply in the pro-Israel world.

"We hold an international meeting every four years and our last one was in January in New York," Helena Glaser, president of World WIZO, a Zionist women's group, said as she toured Sderot. "We printed T-shirts saying 'Sderot Needs You.' In one day, we raised \$1 million."

The other day, a busload of fundraisers were inspecting new care centers they had sponsored, passing some of the dozens of shelters, some of them donated by evangelical Christians. A rabbi was going over plans for a \$5 million seminary, donated mostly from abroad.

For people who live and work here, all the attention, especially from wealthy outsiders, can seem overwhelming. Several said they are unable to get anything done.

"It has gotten out of hand," said the director of the local volunteer center, Dror Marsha. "It has become a trend - a good trend - but I can't handle it. We have 1,000 volunteers a month now." Two years ago, he said, the number was 200.

Apart from the donations and support from the outside, another big change in Sderot in the past year has been economic, and the surprising reason for that is the Israeli evacuation of Gaza. Until 2005, there was an industrial park just inside Gaza of companies jointly owned by Israelis and Palestinians. With the withdrawal, the companies relocated to Sderot and employ Israelis, bringing the city's unemployment rate from a crushing 20 percent in the late 1990s to a near national low of 3.5 percent, said Shalom Halevy, a municipal spokesman.

Still, 30 percent of Sderot's residents show symptoms of stress, five times higher than other populations in Israel, according to studies carried out by Marc Gelkopf of Haifa University. Many families sleep in one room together for fear of missing the alarm.

As much as Sderot is a symbol, it is also a kind of Rorschach test - a screen onto which various political factions project their hopes and fears.

For the right, it is evidence that only force will stop the rockets. For the left it is evidence that force is not the answer and that the rockets cannot be stopped without a new approach.

One attempt at such a new approach involves a group in Sderot who have started holding discussions with Palestinians in Gaza via speaker phone. Called "Another Voice," the group is urging a cease-fire. There is also a new blog, a discussion between a resident of Sderot and one of Gaza, both anonymous for now.

But for Rabbi David Fendel, who has raised millions of dollars for an entirely rebuilt 500-student yeshiva that he has run here for years, the rockets are proof that withdrawing Israeli settlers and soldiers from Gaza was foolish. The point of his project is to make a statement to those who wish Israel ill.

Israelis adopt besieged Sderot Zionists and allies rally to town living under storm of rockets

"The Palestinians are trying to turn this into a ghost town," he said as he stepped through the construction site of his school. "We're not going to let them. We're going to make it a dynamic center of Zionism, Torah and building."

Load-Date: April 7, 2008

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Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss-Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism

The Jerusalem Post

April 10, 2008 Thursday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 1144 words

Byline: HAVIV RETTIG

Body

A Swiss government official on Wednesday blasted the Anti-Defamation League for "not corresponding to the facts" in an ad campaign claiming that a 25-year, multi-billion-dollar Swiss-Iranian energy deal would contribute to international terrorism.

The deal, signed by the state-owned National Iranian Gas Export Company (NIGEC) and the private Swiss company EGL in March, will see some 5.5 billion cubic meters of gas per year flowing from Iran to Europe by 2012. Depending on market factors, the deal's value could reach more than \$30 billion.

The deal was signed in Teheran on March 17 in the presence of Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey, who stated that it did not violate either UN sanctions - which Switzerland has joined - or even US law, which sanctions companies that invest large sums in Iran's energy sector.

The US embassy in Bern criticized the deal in March, saying it sent "the wrong message at a time in which Iran continues to defy UN Security Council resolutions that demand a suspension of activities with respect to nuclear enrichment and processing."

At the time, Calmy-Rey explained that the purpose of the deal was to "decrease our dependence, and the dependence of Europe, on Russian gas." A representative of Swiss signatory EGL told The Jerusalem Post at the time that the company was not investing inside Iran, but had only signed a contract to purchase gas and deliver it out of the country.

Yet, "as the Swiss government pursues its own narrow economic interests, it is bankrolling the world's leading sponsor of terrorism," accused one of the ADL ads, published on Tuesday in The Wall Street Journal Europe, while another published in The International Herald Tribune bluntly called Switzerland "the world's newest financier of terrorism."

Similar ads were published in Swiss papers Le Temps, Le Matin Bleu, and Neue Zurcher Zeitung, as well as in The New York Times and The New York Sun.

According to the ADL, the deal means that "the [Swiss] government is funding an Iranian regime that viciously abuses the human rights of million of its own citizens, especially women and minorities."

But in a conversation with the Post on Wednesday, a Swiss government official rejected the criticism outright.

Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss - Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism

"On what grounds does an NGO criticize a sovereign country like Switzerland for following its own long-term strategic rationale, which is in line with international considerations?" demanded Lars Kunchel, spokesperson for the Swiss Foreign Ministry in Bern.

"It is beyond the pale to accuse us of financing terrorism," he declared, adding that the accusations "are simply not true."

Noting that "the Swiss state is not party to the deal," which was signed with the private company EGL, Kunchel said the deal "fully conforms to all existing UN sanctions against Iran and is even in full conformity with the Iran Sanctions Act, which is a piece of American legislation that has extraterritorial ambitions. Most countries outside the US would not respect another national law as their own law, but even if you accept US legislation as internationally valid for all countries, the contract in question is 100 percent in line with this legislation."

Saying that his criticism of the ADL was his own opinion and not the formal response of the Swiss government, Kunchel listed 10 other countries that purchase energy from Iran, including Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, South Africa, China, India and fellow European states France, Italy and Greece. These countries, he said, have not been the targets of ADL campaigns.

At the same time, "to my knowledge, the Swiss government was not even approached by the ADL, other than with these ads," he said.

Reached by phone, ADL director Abe Foxman said the Swiss state still had responsibility for the deal, noting that "this private deal was signed and delivered by the foreign minister, who flew to Teheran to conclude it. Why was that gesture necessary?"

According to Foxman, "Switzerland is hiding behind legalities" on the question of sanctions. "This is a moral question. Switzerland pretends and desires to be the conscience of society. It is the repository of so many international treaties because of its high standard. What kind of standard is this setting at this time?"

Switzerland was a target for ADL scrutiny, he added, because "this deal is being done now, after the ascendancy of [Iranian President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad, after we know Iran is aiding and abetting Hizbullah and Hamas, while the deals of other countries have been in process for several years."

Foxman also took issue with the complaint that ADL had not approached the Swiss government before launching the media campaign. "Why do we need to discuss with them something they've already done, and done so publicly?"

Another American Jewish official who asked not to be named said the problem was not with the business side of the deal, but with the Swiss government's "legitimization" of the Iranian regime.

"Even if they're right," he said of Kunchel's remarks, "the Swiss have only themselves to blame. If [Calmy-Rey] conducts a highly publicized visit to a Holocaust-denying regime, is photographed in a head scarf smiling with Ahmadinejad, and permits material support to the economy of a regime that seeks to eliminate Israel, how do they think the Jews are going to react? The world is rightly going to be looking at this relationship under a magnifying glass and trying to understand its meaning."

According to the official, "it's not just the Jews who are upset. The American government is angry over this, too. What did the Swiss expect?"

The deal, ostensibly intended to secure Switzerland's energy supplies, may yet prove harmful to the country's energy security, according to Prof. Uzi Arad, a former Mossad director of intelligence who holds a PhD from Princeton in energy security and has worked closely with Swiss authorities in the past.

"Simply by strengthening this Iranian regime, the deal may be making Iranian gas the least secure on Earth," he told the Post on Wednesday. "The appeasing nature of [Calmy-Rey's] visit unquestionably strengthened Iranian

Swiss gov't official slams ADL for 'non-factual' ads. Campaign claims Swiss - Iranian energy deal 'legitimizes' Ahmadinejad, supports terrorism

defiance. In supporting an aggressive, hostile regime, it only brings us closer to the kind of crisis that [National Infrastructures Minister Binyamin] Ben-Eliezer, [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy or [US presidential hopeful John] McCain have warned about," explained Arad, referring to a possible military showdown with the West, or between Iran and Israel.

Such a confrontation would likely lead to the cancellation of the deal and the loss of the gas supply.

"This deal isn't only in bad taste, when many countries are willingly giving up on lucrative deals to help in the international effort to isolate Iran; it's also not clever on their part," Arad said. "Rather than increasing Swiss energy security, it only harms Switzerland's reputation."

Graphic

Photo: SWISS FOREIGN Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in Teheran last month. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post
March 17, 2008 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1163 words

Byline: Zvi Freedman, Peter Simpson, Gershon Harris, J. Friedman, James A. Marples, Sara Shaw, David Katcoff, H. Feldman, David Teich, Marcella Wachtel

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Calling do-gooders

Sir, - The riots in Tibet offer a wonderful opportunity for all the foreigners who come to Israel to protest: Pack up your bags and banners and go and demonstrate in Beijing or Lhasa.

You'll need to take into account, however, that this is a different ball-game and there will be no kid-glove approach such as you receive from the IDF. There you'll be playing for real ("Tibetans killed as China crushes protest," March 16).

ZVI FREEDMAN

Tivon

Beyond fine words

Sir, - If Chancellor Merkel wants to prove that Germany stands with Israel, then rather than just speaking high-sounding words, she and her Austrian counterpart should stop resisting increased trade sanctions between the EU and Iran and realize that German business must take some of the burden of forcing Iran to stop becoming nuclear ("Germany, Israel face common threats, Merkel says ahead of arrival today," March 16).

PETER SIMPSON

Jerusalem

Eliot Spitzer...

Sir, - Without belittling any of governor Spitzer's pre-scandal achievements, I found Marilyn Henry's less-than-veiled criticism of Jews for not "sticking by their man," as it were, somewhat curious ("A case of Jewish anxiety," March 16). There are no Jewish issues here, and certainly no reason to expect the Jewish community to come to the governor's defense.

Letters

This was a major and indefensible moral and possibly criminal failing of a high-level, high-profile and powerful politician. The governor - or any self-respecting politician - could do nothing less than resign and face the legal, political and possibly familial consequences alone.

Compare that with a very Jewish president of the Jewish state committing far worse acts against Jewish women, paying for all defense costs with money taken from mostly Jewish taxpayers, and ultimately trying to save some face by relying on a controversial plea-bargain arranged and approved by Jewish government legal officials and a very Jewish Supreme Court.

I'd say we have a lot to learn from our American Jewish brethren.

GERSHON HARRIS

Hatzor Haglilit

...and the Jews

Sir, - I was fascinated by Calev Ben-David's analysis of the Eliot Spitzer affair ("A sordid finish for the potential 'Jewish president,'" March 12). I wonder, however: Why must we Jews persist in adopting as our own the accomplishments of those who are Jewish in name only?

It is reported that, aside from having no religious upbringing, Mr. Spitzer was never a bar mitzva. He also did not marry within our faith. I understand ethnic pride, but what purpose does it serve to uplift ourselves on a man's Jewish ancestry when he has not done the most basic Jewish things?

Mr. Spitzer is not the first person to have failed to embrace his Jewishness. My point is rather this: The fact that he could have reached even greater heights in politics and public service has nothing to do with his Jewish identity, or lack thereof. His tenuous ties to Judaism simply would not warrant the frenzied adulation a first Jewish US president might evoke. To believe otherwise means we should also be proud of Disraeli, Zolli, even Jesus, all of whom were Jews.

As Jews, we strive to be decent, good and honorable and seek association with those, Jew and non-Jew, who are the same. We live, I hope, in search of equity and justice - to be the righteous amongst the nations. As such, we should view Mr. Spitzer for what he is: a man who, in time, should be pitied for his personal failings.

However, to intoxicate ourselves with "what could have been" for a man who happened to be born Jewish is a precedent unworthy of repetition.

J. FRIEDMAN

New Jersey

Double standards

Sir, - I realize that men are mortals and prone to human temptation, and I don't criticize the former governor for succumbing to his weaknesses by finding a lover. But I do criticize him for breaking his oath of office and for his double standard in carrying out a fierce legal crusade against wrongdoers while he himself committed similar wrongs.

I believe American men need to address the issue of prudence and responsibility in regard to sexuality. If men were required to fully support any woman they slept with, they might show a lot more discretion. As long as it's a game of hide-and-seek "trysts," men like Spitzer will fall from grace in future scandals ("New York Governor Eliot Spitzer linked to prostitution ring," March 11).

JAMES A. MARPLES

Longview, Texas

Letters

Charm is all

Sir, - Shmuley Boteach is not the first to say that sex appeal lies in what is concealed rather than what is revealed ("Let modest be the new sexy," March 26). It reminds me of what the Scottish novelist J.M. Barrie referred to as charm: "It's a sort of bloom on a woman; if you have it, you don't need to have anything else; and if you don't have it, it doesn't matter what else you have."

SARA SHAW

Kfar Saba

Yourselves to blame

Sir, - Your complaints about the US role in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations sound valid, but getting to this situation in the first place was an Israeli decision ("A skewed process," Editorial, March 14).

It was Israel that agreed to the "road map" and invited the US to act as a monitor. It should have been obvious from the start that "counting outposts," which has to do with real estate, involves something far more tangible than terrorism, which is both ephemeral and easily disavowed. In addition, involving a third party holds the compliance criteria hostage to its judgment.

The result has been bad for peace since the Arabs can now score a propaganda victory without actually having to recognize or reconcile to Israel.

DAVID KATCOFF

Jericho, Vermont

Why not try this?

Sir, - Is it not possible to bring the war in Gaza to a halt by Israel declaring that it will not in any way reply to the rocket bombardment for a period of five days? This silence would show the world that Israel is keen on peace. If Hamas continues with its aggression, everyone will know who is responsible for the violence. This could be worthwhile, and we have nothing to lose.

H. FELDMAN

Kibbutz Yizre'el

No give, no get

Sir, - If it is against someone's beliefs to donate an organ, what logic says it's ok to benefit from someone else's donation? ("Donors & recipients," Letters, March 16.) Rather than answer that question, Rabbi Avi Shafran claims that Jeremy Maissel is trying to "compel" people to donate by withholding receipt of organs ("The life you save," February 27). All Mr. Maissel is saying is that it's time people understood the consequences of their actions.

"Donation" means someone receives. If you think it's wrong to donate, why should you receive?

DAVID TEICH

Rehovot

Sir, - "The primal human urge for retribution" has nothing to do with those who object to the attitude that receiving an organ is ok, but donating one isn't.

A person unwilling to donate an organ does not deserve to receive one at the expense of others who need it.

Letters

And since there is an extreme shortage of donor organs, only those who are willing to donate should be on the recipients' list.

MARCELLA WACHTEL

Jerusalem

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Silenced by the men in white socks

The Independent (London)

March 15, 2008 Saturday

First Edition

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The INDEPENDENT

Section: COMMENT; Pg. 40

Length: 1129 words

Byline: ROBERT FISK

Body

Shut them up. Accuse them. Imprison them. Stop them talking. Why is it that this seems to have become a symbol of the Arab - or Muslim - world? Yes I know about our Western reputation for free speech; from the Roman Empire to the Spanish inquisition, from Henry VIII to Robespierre, from Mussolini and Stalin to Hitler, even - on a pitiable scale - to Mr Anthony Blair. But it's getting hard to avoid the Middle East.

When Egyptian women cry "Enough!", they are sexually abused by Mubarak's cops. When Algerians demand to know which policemen killed their relatives, they are arrested for ignoring the regime's amnesty. When Benazir Bhutto is murdered in Rawalpindi, a cloak of silence falls over the world's imams. Pontificating about the assassination in Pakistan, Shaikh es-Sayed, who runs one of Canada's biggest mosques, expressed his condolences to "families of beloved brothers and sisters who died in the incident [sic]". Asked why he didn't mention Bhutto's name, he replied: "Why? This is not a political arena. This is about religion. That's politics." Well, it certainly is in Syria. George Bush - along with M. Sarkozy - has been berating Damascus for its lack of democracy and its human rights abuses and its supposed desire to gobble up Lebanon and "Palestine" and even Cyprus. But I always feel that Syria had a raw deal these past 90 years.

First came the one-armed General Henri Gouraud, who tore Lebanon off from Syria in 1920 and gave it to the pro-French Christians. Then Paris handed the Syrian coastal city of Alexandretta to the Turks in 1939 - sending survivors of the 1915 Armenian genocide into exile for a second time - in the hope that Turkey would join the Allies against Hitler. (The Turks obliged - in 1945!) Then in the Six Day War, Syria lost the Golan Heights - subsequently annexed by Israel. Far from being expansionist, Syria seems to get robbed of land every two decades.

On the death of Hafez al-Assad in 2000 - it's extraordinary how, like Sharon now that he is comatose, we come to like these old rogues once they've departed - we were told there was to be a "Damascus Spring". I always thought this a bit dodgy. I'd experienced the Lebanon Spring and read about the Ukraine Spring and I'm old enough to remember the Prague Spring, which ended in tears and tanks. And sure enough, the Damascus Spring presaged no golden summer for Syria.

Instead, we've gone back to the midnight knock and the clanging of the cell door. Why - oh why - must this be so? Why did the Syrian secret police have to arrest Dr Ahmed Thoma, Dr Yasser el-Aiti, Jabr al-Shufi, Fayez Sara, Ali

Silenced by the men in white socks

al-Abdulla and Rashed Sattouf in December, only days after they - along with 163 other brave Syrians - had attended a meeting of the Damascus Declaration for Democratic Change? The delegates had elected Dr Fida al-Hurani head of their organisation. She, too, was arrested, and her husband, Dr Gazi Alayan, a Palestinian who had lived in Syria for 18 years, deported to Jordan.

The net spread wider, as they say in police reports. The renowned Syrian artist Talal Abu Dana was arrested up in Aleppo, his studio trashed and his paintings destroyed. Then on 18 February, Kamel al-Moyel from the lovely hill town of Zabadani, on the steam train route from Damascus, was picked up by the boys in white socks. A point of explanation here. Almost all Middle East Moukhabarat men - perhaps because a clothing emporium has won a concession for the region's secret policemen - wear white socks. The only ones who don't are the Israeli variety, who wear old baseball hats.

Needless to say, the Syrian prisoners were not ignored by their regime. A certain Dr Shuabi, who runs a certain Data and Strategic Studies Centre in Damascus, appeared on al-Jazeera to denounce the detainees for "dealing with foreign powers". Dr al-Hurani suffered from angina and was briefly sent to hospital before being returned to the Duma jail. But when the prisoners were at last brought to the Palace of Justice, Ali al-Abdulla appeared to have bruises on his body. Judge Mohamed al-Saa'our - the third investigative judge in Damascus, appointed by the ministry of interior - presided over the case at which the detainees were accused of "spreading false information", forming a secret organisation to overthrow the regime, and for inciting "sectarian and racist tendencies". The hearing, as they say, continues.

But why? Well, back on 4 December, George Bush met at the White House - the rendezvous was initially kept secret - the former Syrian MP Mamoun al-Homsi (who currently lives, dangerously perhaps, in Beirut) with Amar Abdulhamid, a member of a think tank run by a former Israeli lobbyist, and Djengizkhan Hasso, a Kurdish opposition activist. Nine days later, an official "source" leaked the meeting to the press. Which is about the time the Syrian Moukhabarat decided to pounce. So whose idea was the meeting? Was it, perhaps, supposed - once it became public - to provoke the Syrian cops into action?

The Damascus newspaper Tichrine - the Syrian equivalent of Private Eye's Rev Blair newsletter - demanded to know why Washington was showing such concern for human rights in Syria. Was not the American-supported blockade of one and a half million Gaza Palestinians a violation of the rights of man? Had not the Arabs seen all too clearly Washington's concern for the rights of man in Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo? All true. But why on earth feed America's propaganda machine (Syria as the centre of Hamas/ Hiz-bollah/Islamic Jihad terror, etc) with weekly arrests of middle-aged academics and even, it transpires, the vice-dean of the Islamic studies faculty at Damascus University?

Of course, you won't find Israel or the United States engaged in this kind of thing. Absolutely not. Why, just two months ago, the Canadian foreign minister, Maxime Bernier, discovered that a confidential document sent to Canadian diplomats included a list of countries in which prisoners risked being tortured - and the names of America and Israel were on the list! Merde! Fortunately for us all, M. Bernier knew how to deal with such pernicious lies. The document, he announced, "wrongly includes some of our closest allies. It doesn't represent the opinion or the policy of the (Canadian) government". Even though, of course, the list is correct.

But M. Bernier managed to avoid and close down the truth, just as Mr Mubarak does in Cairo and President Bouteflika does in Algiers and just as the good Shaikh es-Sayed did in Toronto. Syria, according to Haitham al-Maleh, a former Syrian judge, claims there are now almost 3,000 political prisoners in Syria. But how many, I wonder, are there in Algeria? Or in Egypt? Or in the hands - secret or otherwise - of the United States? Shut them up. Lock them up. Silence.

Load-Date: March 15, 2008

A terror tour of Israel

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

March 19, 2008 Wednesday

National Edition

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Section: ISSUES & IDEAS; Pg. A20

Length: 1174 words

Byline: Nathan Hodge And Sharon Weinberger, Slate.com

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

JERUSALEM -The tourists still haven't come back to Israel, despite the aggressive rebranding campaign ("Hot Israel") and the photo spread in a recent edition of Maxim magazine ("Women of the Israel Defense Forces").

The country had even gone a year without a single suicide bombing, but our garrulous taxi driver was complaining as he drove us from the Ben Gurion airport to the Sheraton hotel in Jerusalem. "Now, it's mostly religious travellers -- evangelical Christians and religious Jews," he said.

True to the driver's word, we arrived at the Sheraton to find the lobby crowded with Orthodox Jews celebrating the Sabbath. We had arrived in Israel neither as religious pilgrims nor as traditional tourists: We had signed up for the Ultimate Counter-Terrorism Mission, a weeklong journey around the country during which we would learn about Israel's battle with terrorism. The trip was aimed at U.S. police officers and homeland security professionals.

For Israel's tourism industry, the new millennium has not been kind. In 2000 -- what should have been a banner year for tourism and pilgrimages -- the number of visitors to the Promised Land plummeted. The second intifada kicked off after the failure of the Oslo negotiations and former prime minister Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, keeping most tourists away. In an even worse signal to visitors, Israel's minister of tourism, Rehavam Ze'evi, was shot dead by Palestinians in October, 2001. While the people with fanny packs began trickling back between 2003 and 2005, a series of suicide bombings and rocket attacks kept most casual tourists away. Then came the 2006 war in Lebanon, and the Israeli tourism industry tanked again.

So, what can a country do when its tourist industry is eclipsed by terrorism? The answer, it seems, is to market terrorism to tourists. In perhaps one of the strangest twists of Middle East politics, terrorism is being used to lure visitors back to Israel. Our itinerary -- which promised participants such highlights as an "observation of a security trial of Hamas terrorists" and briefings on "the realities of Israel's policy of targeted killings" -- was not, at first glance, for the casual visitor.

Who goes on a terror tour? At the bar on the first evening at the hotel, we sat next to George and Joan Kessel, a retired couple from Boca Raton, Fla., who were trying -- with little success -- to tell the bartender how to mix a Gibson. "We just finished a mission at Technion University," said Joan, a stylishly dressed woman with her silver hair cut in a modern bob. "That one was really good."

A terror tour of Israel

We had never heard of the term "mission," but we soon learned it is a generic word associated with organized trips to Israel. Typically, the trips -- often aimed at Jewish Americans -- are meant to educate the visitors on some aspects of Israeli politics or culture. In a sense, the Ultimate Counter-Terrorism Mission, rather than an aberration, is the logical extension of what Israel has done for decades: bring over Jewish Americans and other potential supporters in the hopes of demonstrating how vulnerable the country is to internal and external threats.

"We started organizing this a few years ago when tourism dropped off," said Avi Leitner, a lawyer with Shurat HaDin Israel Law Center, an Israeli organization that sues terrorist organizations and countries on behalf of victims of terror attacks. But this year's tour was different; previous trips organized by Shurat HaDin were aimed at the regular tourist, featuring evening cruises, cookouts and "luxurious bus transportation." This year's tour, organized with a Long Island-based homeland security firm, Shaneson Consulting Group, was aimed primarily at law enforcement.

Our group was what could only be described as eclectic. While police officers, for whom the tour was tailored, dominated the group, we also had the Kessels, a homeland security contractor, a former dentist, a retired ophthalmologist and two bounty hunters. Perhaps the most famous of our tour companions was Richard Marcinko, the pony-tailed ex-Navy SEAL turned best-selling writer who was there as part of his security business, Red Cell International. For the next week we would

travel around Israel, including parts of the West Bank, in a massive tour bus, with a sign clearly marked "Ultimate Counter-Terrorism Mission" on the windshield -- something that elicited more than a few snickers from the security-conscious members of the group.

If Israel has not always been able to convince the world of its righteousness, it has been particularly adept at marketing its image abroad as a military powerhouse with superior technology. Israeli armaments manufacturer Rafael likes to advertise "60 years of experience in the war on terrorism." Even Krav Maga, the martial arts form taught to Israeli soldiers, has found sweeping success in the United States with aerobics buffs. That image--partially dented by the failures of the Second Lebanon War -- was on display throughout the tour. Indeed, part of the idea of the tour was to market Israeli hardware such as the Corner Shot, a gun mount with a video monitor that allows assault teams to shoot around corners.

The days were packed full of visits to military bases, security briefings from members of Mossad and Shin Bet, and stops for fine dining. In the evenings, we had additional lectures that gave us a James Bond image of Israeli operations. In an evening lecture at the hotel, Oren Ben-Lulu, a veteran of Duvdevan, an Israeli commando unit that specializes in undercover work, described the intricate charades these units stage to arrest their suspects. Commandos would go into the West Bank disguised as Palestinians, sometimes even working in drag. Ben-Lulu, who stood more than six feet tall, joked that the "younger, better-looking guys" are assigned this job. Duvdevan even employs a well-known Israeli makeup artist to help.

Ben-Lulu, who is now an orthopedic surgeon, even recalled some of the more comical episodes from his career, which sounded like outtakes from *La Cage aux Folles*, not combat operations in an occupied territory -- for instance, snatching a suspect at a wedding. "After the second wedding, we stopped doing it, because it's not very nice," he said. "You are ruining their wedding, actually."

Funerals, he said, were still fair game.

The whole point of this tour was to sell the Israeli model of counterterrorism. But as skilled as the Israelis are at this, it's hard to imagine U.S. troops dressing in drag to arrest terror suspects in Iraq. Perhaps when the United States gets to that point, it'll mean it has been there too long. Yet Israel, which finished 2007 without a single suicide bombing originating in the West Bank (and only one from Gaza), was claiming at least partial success. So, is it something worth emulating?

As we boarded the bus in the afternoon of our first day, Yossi Maimon, our tour guide, made an announcement. Ninety minutes earlier there had been a bombing in Dimona, Israel's first suicide attack of the year.

Graphic

Black & White Photo: Esteban Alterman, Bloomberg News; Tourists at the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Old City of Jerusalem. ;

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

February 18, 2008 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1210 words

Byline: Judy Prager, Yvette Porter, Rabbi Shlomo Wexler, Adam Frank responds, Colleen McDuling, Wendy Blumfield, Charles Wands, Ruth Mastron

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

From insult to injury

Sir, - It was outrageous for the Beersheba District Labor Court to award compensation to Gazan workers who lost their jobs due to 1. the forced relocation of the factory as a result of terrorist activity, and 2. the so-called disengagement from Gush Katif ("Blind justice," Editorial, February 17).

What about the Israelis who lost their jobs when the Hollandia mattress factory was hit by non-stop Kassam fire and had no choice but to move to the center of the country? Are those workers also going to get compensation - and if not, why not?

The ruling party in Gaza, Hamas, should be liable for all costs as it is responsible for the damage done to both communities.

JUDY PRAGER

Petah Tikva

'Kosher' slaughter...

Sir, - Isn't it interesting that a stream of Judaism whose adherents obsesses over whether there is a microbe in their water or a worm in their lettuce has no ethical problem with an industrialized system of slaughter that, while technically "kosher," is morally abhorrent - all in the name of cost-efficiency? ("Why do the OU and Israel's rabbinate condone barbarity?" Adam Frank, February 14.)

YVETTE PORTER

Paramus, New Jersey

Sir, - I was deeply concerned by Rabbi Frank's op-ed. He seems to be unaware, or chooses to ignore, the fact that articles of this nature over the last two centuries ultimately led to the banning of kosher slaughter entirely in several European countries. Now that the actual slaughter has been judged humane (Dr. Temple Grandin, quoted in Rabbi Frank's article), the focus of the attacks on shehita has shifted to the shackling and hoisting method used in South America, where the kosher slaughter in question takes place.

Letters

My father, a scholarly shochet and gentle man, worked all his years in American packing plants where shackling and hoisting were employed. For several years I worked with him. Based on our experience, I wish to point out that: "A recent undercover investigation" cited by Rabbi Frank is unidentified and does not qualify as a reliable source. Quoting "Animal Science data" without date or authorship, does not carry weight. Likewise, a Haaretz journalist writing for a popular magazine a decade ago is not a reliable source.

I can assert from my experience that no kosher slaughterhouse in the US reaches the rate of 100 steers an hour. The Shochtim Union would not allow it because time has to be allowed for the shochet to hone his knives, to pass his knife to a colleague for inspection after each slaughter, and to allow the flowing blood to drain after slaughter.

Shackling and hoisting methods are not barbaric. They compare well to other methods in use. No animal weighing more than a half ton will passively let someone cut its throat. None of the so-called humane methods have found a solution to this problem. Electrocution, gassing or penning are sometimes even more painful than shackling.

I have never seen an animal remain conscious for a full minute after kosher slaughter. There may be some reflex movements for a few seconds after proper slaughter and draining of the blood, but no animal remains conscious for 60 seconds. In any event, machine flaying of animals does not apply in South American slaughtering plants.

I agree with Rabbi Frank that the Israeli rabbinate should purchase meat from North America. At the same time, keeping the cost of kosher meat down and protecting the income of Israeli shochtim may not be highly idealistic, but it cannot be considered barbaric.

RABBI SHLOMO WEXLER

Jerusalem

Adam Frank responds:

My article supported shehita, but questioned the supervising authorities. It did not cite references, as the Post is not a scholarly journal. Not one of Rabbi Wexler's criticisms brings any outside facts or reliable sources to dispute the points I made. His arguments speak of practices in the US, while my article underscored slipshod practices in a Third World country.

He must be aware that a shochet uses more than one knife in a day's work; as one knife is used, the others may be prepared for the subsequent steers. Also, the blood draining occurs in a different place than the "killing floor," so the flow of blood does not slow the slaughter rate. The concerned reader may wish to view www.grandin.com (heading "Ritual Slaughter") for scientific data and halachically approved humane ASPCA restraint methods in use in the US; and <http://getactive.peta.org/campaign/ukkosher08> for a written and video report of the October 2007 investigation. Finally, "barbaric" is the term used by professor of animal science Temple Grandin PhD.

...why kill at all?

Sir, - As members of the Jewish faith and culture, we are taught to have respect and compassion for animals - even that we should feed our pets before we feed ourselves. Why, then, is cruelty to food animals condoned? It is a well-known fact that violence toward animals breeds violence toward humans.

Instead of merely making slaughtering conditions more acceptable, why kill at all? It would behoove the Jewish nation, and in fact the rest of the world, to revert to basics and adhere to the principles laid down in Genesis, where God clearly states that we have been given herbs, grains, seeds and fruit to eat. This suggests that we humans are vegans by nature.

Let us make 2008 a year of compassion and humane revolution. Let us prove that we are a kind species. Let us take responsibility for our actions and cease all this senseless destruction of Earth and her inhabitants.

Becoming vegan would be a good place to start.

Letters

COLLEEN McDULING

Animal Behavior Scientist & Specialist

Sevenoaks, Kent, UK

For the record

Sir, - "Now in a shelter, a battered wife tells her story" (February 14) reported that the first shelter in Israel, in Haifa, was opened by Na'amat. This is far from the reality.

In 1978, a group of dedicated volunteers, mostly Anglo immigrants, the emerging feminists of Haifa Women to Women, scraped together enough funding to open a small apartment. They were appalled by the plight of abused women and their children, and even more by the attitude of the Israeli public at that time that "it doesn't happen here." In the first years there was no support at all from any public bodies or recognized women's organizations.

When I wrote an article on the opening of this shelter for The Jerusalem Post, the then editor of the Haifa office told me it was of no interest. Only a few months later, when a woman was murdered at the newly opened Herzliya shelter, was my article used.

WENDY BLUMFIELD

Haifa

I'm with you

Sir, - You have a great Web site. Keep up the great work. I am Judeo-Christian and love the Jewish people. I toured Israel in 1995. It was the best time of my life. We know that Israel is Hashem's land on the face of the earth. I pray for the IDF and the IAF - my heroes and superb aviators - every day.

CHARLES WANDS

Satellite Beach, Florida

Help me find them

Sir, - I will be visiting Israel in March, and my mother has asked me to try and find our cousins, Bella Tarnarider (b. 1955), last known address Rehov Mivtza Yonatan, Kfar Saba; and Edward Nemcov (b. 1963), last known address Rehov Brener, Petah Tikva. Their mother, Fira, emigrated to Israel and was my mother's first cousin.

Thanks in advance for any help!

RUTH MASTRON

ruth@sococo.com

Oceanside, California

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

February 13, 2008 Wednesday

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Byline: Leslie Portnoy, Ora Leshem, Colin L. Leci, Julio Harris, P. Yonah, Dov Epstein, Aryeh Newman, Sally Shaw, David Kravitz

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Jewish origins

Sir, - In "Genetics and the Jewish identity" (February 12) Diana Muir Appelbaum and Paul S. Appelbaum correctly point out that few would want to join our small, oppressed minority. But they go on repeatedly to attribute dilution of the Jewish genetic heritage to intermarriage.

The reality is that over the centuries, every pogrom and every conquest left its quota of violated Jewish women, many of whom then found themselves pregnant. Jewish Law dictates that if a child could be the child of the woman's husband, it is presumed to be his, so the products of such rapes were brought up as members of the Jewish family. Modern attitudes notwithstanding, in the past this was the source of far more genetic dilution than intermarriage.

Secondly, the writers suggest that the reason 10 percent of the East African Lemba people carry the kohen modal haplotype is because they come from the Yemen. However, there are very, very few kohanim among Yemenite Jews, which suggests that this cannot be the source of the Lemba.

Finally, it is a pity that you did not quote the letter published by The Times of London shortly after the discovery of the kohen modal haplotype became known. The writer, whose surname was Cohen, proudly pointed out that he could now properly say that he had "Levi genes."

LESLIE PORTNOY

Netanya

Sir, - Further to your fascinating article on genetics and Jewish identity, I would like to draw your readers' attention to a lecture that will give them more information on the subject. Geneticist Dr. Doron Behar is speaking on "Maternal Diversity in the Jewish Diaspora" today, February 13, at Beth Fisher, 5, Klausner St., Ra'anana at 8 p.m. Entrance fee for non-members is NIS 20.

ORA LESHEM

Jewish Family Research Association

Letters

Tel Aviv

This new religion...

Sir, - Re "British ministers call on Israel to reverse decision to limit electricity supply to Gaza" (February 10): Had British Foreign Secretary David Miliband and Development Secretary Douglas Alexander been members of the British cabinet during WWII when centers of civilian population such as London and other cities were hit by V1 and V2 rockets, would they have abandoned their responsibility and denounced the Royal Air Force for taking retaliatory action against civilians in Germany? Would they have suggested that the UK government abide by the piece of paper Neville Chamberlain received from the Nazis promising peace?

There is a new religion called human rights, and it has gone too far. Indeed, it is out of control, destroying the Judeo-Christian ethics that have guided the moral standards of the world. What would the British ministers suggest we do instead of reducing the electricity supply to Gaza - hand medals or Nobel peace prizes to those who build and fire the Kassam rockets?

It would seem that the UK government, as well as Quartet head Tony "Spin" Blair, still think financial reward is in order.

COLIN L LECI

Jerusalem

...called human rights

Sir, - If any other country was bombed daily by a neighbor that had a covenant to destroy it, what would the normal response be? Say if Canada was bombing the US, or Portugal was bombing Spain daily, how might they respond?

Israel is being overly patient, overly kind, overly concerned about civilian injuries and overly worried about international media-bashing. No country in Israel's position would be patient or kind, or worried about international opinion.

Israel is suffering a greater humanitarian crisis from the Gaza bombs, yet the only humanitarian crisis that gets consistent mention is the Palestinian one - caused by the Palestinians themselves through continuously bombing Israel!

Hamas should take the blame for causing all of this trouble.

JULIO HARRIS

Chicago

Two good steps

Sir, - As a possible invasion into Gaza seems to be drawing closer, I believe there are two steps Israel can take before making this faithful decision: Renewal of our gas masks, and a call-up of reserve units to secure all our borders. These steps will make it clear that we are not crying "wolf" again and give diplomacy more time to function. And we will be in a better position to handle all eventualities ("Barak: IDF operations 'could lead to war,'" February 12).

P. YONAH

Shoham

Miraculous growth

Letters

Sir, - Re "Palestinians grow by a million in decade" (On-Line Edition, February 9): The Palestinians can't have their cake and eat it. Ask Ahmed Qurei or any other Palestinian advocate, and you will hear that Israel is conducting ethnic cleansing and genocide. If so, how do they explain their rise in numbers?

Imagine genocide increasing the population exponentially!

A miracle.

DOV EPSTEIN

Efrat

Dror's real

moral lapse

Sir, - I am afraid the real moral and political lapse in Yehezkel Dror's interview with Ma'ariv, sensationalized by the media, has been completely ignored.

Prof. Dror's political views are quite irrelevant. We are all entitled to them. But his failure to accept the idea of ministerial responsibility and even suggest that considerations of political profit and loss are valid in this context is shockingly irresponsible.

Noblesse oblige! He should serve as a model in reinforcing the democratic norm of personal responsibility as an absolute.

Let us take an example, not from the Third World but from a country like Britain, where John Profumo, the minister caught in a sex scandal in the early 1960s, resigned once it was clear he had been economical with the truth in a declaration to parliament; or the recent resignation of a British minister who had not disclosed his sources of party funding.

Unfortunately, in Israel you stay in power irrespective of your behavior unless the police come and take you to prison. In Israel those who resign are the exception to the rule.

The moment the Winograd Report found him guilty of failing in his prime ministerial responsibilities - and it certainly did, even in the interim report - Ehud Olmert should have resigned together with Dan Halutz.

If Prof. Dror was so keen to unload his views on the public after the report, the least he could have done was underline the norm of personal ministerial responsibility and not legitimize the lack of accountability that is such a plague in Israel ("Dror: I cannot make up my mind whether Olmert should resign," February 8).

ARYEH NEWMAN

Jerusalem

Sir, - After Winograd, it seems once again that what we have here is not survival of the fittest, but survival of the slickest.

SALLY SHAW

Kfar Saba

Kosher eats in Toronto

Sir, - "Yehudah Fisch says that there is a shortage of kosher restaurants in his home town of Toronto" ("Learning to dish up kosher gourmet food at the Jerusalem Culinary Institute," February 10). Clearly he cannot be talking about Toronto, Canada.

Letters

There are over 200,000 Jews in Toronto, and when I visited the suburb of Thornhill last October, I might have been forgiven for thinking I was back in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. There were streets of kosher shops and supermarkets, delis and restaurants.

True, there is little kashrut in the center of the city, but that is not where the Jews live.

DAVID KRAVITZ, Netanya

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Double whammy

Guardian.com

January 24, 2008

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theguardian

Length: 1134 words

Highlight: Labour faces trouble on two fronts, a lot of froth over coffee, and German zoo polar bear Knut cannot breed

Body

Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's digest of the day's newspapers

RAW ON TWO FRONTS

Labour faces "humiliation" on two fronts, according to the papers. Plans to allow police to hold terror suspects without charge for up to 42 days are likely to be defeated in the Commons, while the chancellor is about to water down his reforms to capital gains tax, which infuriated small businesses. The Times says Alistair Darling will probably halve the proposed flat rate of 18% for the first 750,000 of gains. The concession would cost the government 200m.

"Ministers hope today's move will repair relations with business," says the FT. But "the concession falls short of [a] U-turn" and may not be enough.

The Sun, meanwhile, is outraged at the latest rises in council tax. Bills will rise by an average of 4% in April, almost twice the rate of inflation. "The eye-watering rise means the average charge for a Band D property has DOUBLED since 1997," complains the paper. "Hard-working families are being taxed to death ... daylight robbery ... Town hall chiefs ... throw our cash around like confetti ... Taxes are already sky-high. There is a limit to how long people can keep opening their wallets. That limit has been reached."

Meanwhile, the European Central Bank has indicated that it would not follow the Federal Reserve's lead in cutting interest rates. The ECB president, Jean-Claude Trichet, said fighting inflation was a higher priority in the eurozone.

The Times' Anatole Kaletsky challenges George Soros' pessimistic view of the current financial crunch. "My hunch is that a combination of monetary and fiscal easing, along with some regulatory changes ... will lessen the credit crisis and prevent a world recession," he writes.

As for 42-day detention, the Commission for Equalities and Human Rights has threatened to seek a judicial review if the current 28-day limit is extended. "The commission says the proposal would have a disproportionate impact on Muslims, and suggests that people who are unlawfully detained for the 42 days and lose their livelihoods, homes or families in the process should be entitled to compensation," reports the Guardian. Many backbenchers are not convinced of the need for it either.

Double whammy

* Labour humiliation * FT: Darling bows to pressure * Times: 200m reprieve * Times: Please relax! * Sun: Town hall robbers * Herald Tribune: ECB targets inflation

LIGHT GREEN OR GREEN LIGHT?

Council tax is not the only bill rising over the next few years. "Over the next decade, the price of carbon dioxide may become as familiar to us as the cost of a barrel of crude oil or a litre of petrol," the Times says. "It will become very noticeable as power generators pass on the rising cost of electricity." That cost will rise because the European Commission is determined to increase the proportion of energy generated by renewables to 20%. It also wants a 20% cut in CO2 emissions, both by 2020.

This is all too much "targetitis" for the FT. "With renewables providing just 8.5% of the EU's energy in 2005, it is widely accepted that reaching 20% will be challenging, to put it mildly ... Most damagingly, the privileged status of renewables takes the focus away from energy efficiency, by far the lowest-cost means of reducing emissions ... The best way to reduce emissions is to get the price of carbon right in the EU's trading scheme, and let the market find the most effective ways to deliver the cuts."

"If ever there were a time to invest in wind farms, this is it," counsels the Times. It disapproves of EU plans for a "wholly ill-advised biofuels bonanza" - as does the Guardian, which wanted the targets to be more ambitious. "Taken in isolation, the proposals announced yesterday deserve a cautious welcome. Trouble is, they may not be matched by other parties. Other countries are still dragging their feet over tackling climate change. And business, which was so keen to talk green while the economy boomed, may not be so enthusiastic now it is heading for a slump."

* EU sets 20% target * FT: Too many targets * Times: Green light * Europe goes light green

HOLE-IN-THE-WALL MART

Thousands of Gazans poured into Egypt yesterday to buy "everything from olive oil to mattresses, from cement to computers", the Independent reports. Militants blew a hole in the border fence separating the overcrowded Gaza Strip and Egypt and the population, deprived of goods by an Israeli blockade intended to put a stop to Hamas rocket attacks, took advantage.

One Israeli official told the Herald Tribune that the breach might be a "blessing in disguise" because it would "ease tremendously the pressure on Israel on the humanitarian level ... We don't care if people buy food in Egypt. And terrorists come in anyway." He went on to raise the possibility that Israel would "get out of Gaza and throw away the keys".

* Independent: Freedom for a day * Herald Tribune: Gazans raze wall

NOT GUILTY IN CRETE

The red-tops splash with the Crete jury's acquittal of John Hogan, the man who threw his son from a balcony. His wife is appalled. Her six-year-old son Liam had "lost his young life for nothing", she told reporters. Hogan was found not guilty of murder on the grounds of diminished responsibility and sent to a psychiatric hospital, where he is likely to spend several weeks.

* Sun: A lost life for nothing

SLIM PICKINGS

"Fat people could be paid to lose weight under government plans to tackle obesity," splashes the Mail. Vouchers and cash prizes may be offered to people who manage to shed the pounds. The Telegraph, perhaps surprisingly, favours the idea - "not least because of the tendency of the authorities to resort to coercion when persuasion fails". The Times says the government would be better off introducing more PE, rather than the cookery lessons promised earlier this week.

Double whammy

Meanwhile, research into the fat and calorie content of creamy coffees horrifies the Telegraph. A Starbucks' venti white chocolate mocha with whip contains 628 calories. Starbucks, which also serves the most-expensive espresso on the high street, came bottom in Which?'s survey on taste. Caffe Nero performed best.

* Mail: Fat people paid to slim * Times: Slimmer and smarter * The good, the cheap, and the fattening * Telegraph: A meal in a cup

BEAR NECESSITIES

Troubling news in the Independent: "Knut is a psychopath and will never mate", announces the paper. Yes, the polar bear that broke hearts will never be able to breed.

The description comes from a German zoologist, Peter Arras. "Knut won't manage anything with a female bear, I guarantee that," he says. His problems stem from his mother's early rejection and his proximity to human beings.

* Independent: Knut will never mate

TODAY ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED

London market soars French bank SocGen uncovers alleged 3.7bn fraud Police chief killed in Mosul

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

January 30, 2008 Wednesday

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Byline: L. Zurakov, Jessica Fischer, Norm Blumenthal, Yoav J. Tenenbaum, Sara Sterzer, John Daly, Dina Hahn, Hanna Zlotnick, The Editor responds

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

We aren't savages

Sir, - There isn't much question that this government of ours has made serious errors. Which government hasn't made errors ? But where Jack Cohen and I part ways is when he says, in response to "Israel restoring Gaza fuel supply" (January 27): "There is no reason why we should supply our enemies, why we should be concerned about their humanitarian needs when they are not concerned about ours" ("Consistency's the thing," Letters, January 28).

It's difficult to live under the threat of Kassams and other missiles, but during the seven years that Sderot has suffered, their actual losses in lives and property have not come up to the numbers of Gazans eliminated.

We are living in difficult times, and we must face problems that we probably never dreamed of, but we are not savages, and I don't believe we want to live as they say the denizens of the jungle live. Think again, Mr. Cohen.

L. ZURAKOV

Netanya

'What buck?'

Sir, - I hope that when the final Winograd report is released today, Ehud Olmert will heed the words of Harry Truman: "The buck stops here!" ("Olmert delays negotiations on Jerusalem - PM vows to stay on after Winograd panel publishes report on Wednesday," January 29.)

JESSICA FISCHER

Michmoret

Grab the high ground

Sir, - From the perspective of an American Jew, I respectfully think that the time has come for Israel to again attempt to seize the high ground of world opinion. What has happened over the last few days at the Rafah border has changed the paradigm. As the capitalist axiom teaches: "When goods cross borders, troops don't."

Letters

To grab the high ground again, all Israel has to do is open her borders to the merchants of Gaza and the West Bank to buy and sell goods at the border markets. These merchants and the distribution system they create will employ the working class and allow the schools to stay open and essential services to again be provided. The reason American capitalism has been so successful is that the honest merchant class creates a win/win result that rewards good behavior and hard work.

Respectfully, Jews, I think, are special and being special we need to always be ready to seize the high ground when the opportunity is presented.

Peace and Love from an American Jew ("Fatah, Hamas fight for control of Gaza border," January 29).

NORM BLUMENTHAL

La Jolla, California

Paradox

Sir, - Arun Gandhi's statements on Jews and Israel demonstrate that espousing an ideology of non-violence is no guarantee of a non-violent attitude ("Gandhi resigns his peace role after blasting Jews and Israel," January 27).

YOAV J.TENEMBAUM

Tel Aviv

Democracy usurped

Sir, - Evelyn Gordon is to be congratulated on an excellent article about the arrogance of the former president of the Supreme Court ("The Third World according to Aharon Barak," January 24). Barak has no one but himself to blame for Justice Minister Daniel Friedmann's bid to restore sovereignty to the Knesset and to restrict, if not abolish, the right of the court to declare laws of the Knesset null and void for being unconstitutional. No such action would have been needed had Barak not arrogated to himself (i.e., his court) the right to broaden standing before the Supreme Court to anyone and everyone, and asserted that when he nullifies the legislative will of the Knesset he is acting in defense of democracy.

The Knesset, in Lincoln's definition of democracy, is elected by the people and represents the people. Aharon Barak and the other members of the court were never elected by the people and are, therefore, not accountable for their decisions.

Did the Knesset explicitly authorize the court to exercise judicial review? Is there any legislative act saying that the court shall decide the validity of the actions of the government or the Knesset? There is none; Barak's conduct thus represents an act of usurpation and denial of democracy which should have been corrected via determined action of the Knesset.

The Knesset was, and is, sovereign and no individual, however distinguished, may set himself up as a tribunal of last resort.

SARA STERZER

Beit Shemesh

Right to remember,

mandate to not forget

Sir, - January 27 marked the 63rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, with representatives of countries worldwide citing the need to remember the atrocities carried out in the name of hate, and the need to stand witness in order to make sure it never happens again.

Letters

Apparently our Education Ministry feels that the European countries that perpetrated these crimes are perfectly capable of bearing witness on behalf of those they murdered, and that Israeli students need not attend. It recently announced that the price of trips to Poland to participate in memorial ceremonies was not high enough, and that it had decided to raise them by another 33 percent to \$1,500 - far above the average Israeli salary. Thus to send their child on this experience a family must donate an entire month's salary. Parents have stated that they will not be sending their children to represent their cities, schools and, more importantly, country.

Unless the ministry takes drastic action, the number of students who will bear witness to the European nations for their actions will continue to dwindle. Can anyone really expect the guilty to give accurate testimony? And why should they, if the Israelis themselves don't feel it worthwhile to make an appearance?

With the number of Holocaust survivors declining daily, now is the time to send our young to walk the killing fields, together with those who survived them. Time is running out.

JOHN DALY

Ashkelon

Missing...

Sir, - Re your interview with Welfare and Social Services Minister Isaac Herzog ("We are becoming an indifferent society," January 18): It was with great surprise that I noticed the name of Emunah was not included in the list of organizations providing social services in Israel.

It is true that not all the organizations and non-profit organizations providing great services to the community can be listed; however it is important to note that Emunah - the largest religious women's movement in the world and the third-largest women's organization in Israel - provides services ranging from daycare centers, children's homes and high schools to women's college, family counseling services, communal projects such as Golden Age clubs, assistance with conversion, food distribution for the needy, and much more.

Without the untiring dedication of our workers and volunteers, together with those of all the other organizations mentioned in the article, Israel's social services would collapse.

DINA HAHN

Chairperson

World Emunah

Jerusalem

...and mixing

Sir, - In your quick crossword of January 27, the two left-hand columns were missing. And next day you mixed up "equinox" and "solstice."

HANNA ZLOTNICK

Jerusalem

The Editor responds:, We regret the omission and the error.

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Islamic reasoning, with loopholes

The International Herald Tribune

January 5, 2008 Saturday

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Byline: Irshad Manji - The New York Times Media Group

Body

Arguing the Just War in Islam

By John Kelsay.

263 pages. \$24.95; £16.95. Harvard University Press.

Reviewed by Irshad Manji

*

Before the Iraq invasion, a young imam offered some chilling advice to Muslims at the University of Toronto: if they could not fight the jihad against America with their souls or their sons, they should fight with their money. The Muslim Students Association told campus authorities that the imam did not represent the true spirit of Islam. With that, the case was closed.

"Arguing the Just War in Islam" re-opens such debates. John Kelsay, a professor of religion at Florida State University, shows that today's freelance fatwa-hurlers rarely capture the best of Islamic thought, but are not wholly divorced from it either. Their pronouncements attempt to pass for "Shariah reasoning," a tradition of reconciling the Koran's passages and the Prophet Muhammad's examples to changing times.

For Muslim militants, however, the times do not change. Because Islam is humanity's "natural religion," evolution ended in the seventh century. That means the Islam of 1,400 years ago must be true everywhere and forever. "The militant vision," Kelsay observes, "is one in which premodern precedents are not so much interpreted as applied." No wonder a 20-something imam in the cosmopolitan West can feel utterly entitled to champion values straight out of tribal Arabia.

To his credit, Kelsay refuses to whitewash the role of religion in fostering the violence he discusses. "Those who wish to argue that Islam has nothing to do with the attacks of 9/11 or with the tactics of Iraqi 'insurgents' will find no comfort here," he warns early on.

Yet his analysis also respects the nuances of Shariah reasoning. Kelsay appreciates Islamic history and delves into detail - though it is often tedious - about how theologians, jurists and dissidents decided what constitutes a just war. Like their Christian counterparts, Muslims have asked and asked again: When may battle be waged? Can noncombatants ever be targets? How much force is proportional? Does negotiation take precedence over an easy victory?

Islamic reasoning, with loopholes

Kelsay could have brought these questions to life had he given us something - anything - about the personalities of the questioners and not merely the process they followed. Stick with him, though. By forensically dissecting the development of Shariah reasoning he illuminates the situation we now face, in which classical Islamic scholars are trumped by bloodthirsty bandits who pose as thinkers.

Osama bin Laden is hardly the first of them. Consider the assassins of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president who made peace with Israel in 1979. His murderers' manifesto tried to justify Sadat's killing with Shariah reasoning. Their case was weak - and they knew it. So they turned themselves into tabloid terrorists, exploiting emotion, inflating language and sensationalizing their target's crime.

In short, Kelsay points out, the thugs resorted to "emergency reasoning." According to their fevered testimonial about Sadat, "the enemy now 'lives right in the middle' of Islamic territory." Emergency reasoning jettisons the basics of justice along with logic. The charter of Hamas tells slaves they may fight Zionists without their masters' permission - thereby accepting bondage in Islam even while preaching liberation from oppressors.

By contrast, traditional Shariah reasoning is sober enough to cut both ways. Take the just-war criterion of protecting innocents. One mainstream Muslim scholar has acknowledged that, in Kelsay's words, a child's death may be "foreseeable but unavoidable, as when an enemy's military resources are deployed in the midst of a civilian population. . . . Soldiers whose actions take place under such conditions are excused from the guilt associated with unjust killing." That ruling would let Israeli defense forces off the hook for collateral damage in their 2006 war in Lebanon, since Hezbollah deliberately operated in residential Beirut.

To get out of embarrassing pickles like this, the most populist interpreters of just war in Islam go for broke. The televangelist Yusuf al-Qaradhwai is one example. Skirting both tradition and reason, he intones that "necessity makes the forbidden things permitted." The "forbidden" includes suicide, conveniently redefined as martyrdom. Deep Shariah reasoning takes another tabloid turn.

Kelsay proves that we can understand the shifting rationales behind Islamist violence without excusing that violence. But his generosity also leads him, prematurely, to proclaim Shariah reasoning an "open practice." Were this true, we Muslims would have already had our liberal reformation. As Kelsay himself notes, unconventional thinkers in Islam pay heavy tolls, from aborted careers to prolonged prison terms to outright execution. An open practice? From the author's lips to the Almighty's ears.

Kelsay would retort that mass movements like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami were founded by ordinary folk, a schoolteacher and a journalist respectively. Each of them seemingly supported the democratizing of interpretation. After all, they benefited from it. But their campaigns did not democratize Shariah reasoning at all. As puritan movements, they further restricted who could participate in shaping Islam. Early on, the Muslim Brotherhood closed down bookstores and other dens of free thought. The Jamaat-i-Islami declared a minority Muslim sect inauthentic. To this day, the Islamic world's only Nobel laureate in science, a member of the banned sect, cannot be buried with proper religious rites in his home country, Pakistan.

Nor can moderate Muslims be counted on to rescue Shariah reasoning from militants. The sheik of Al Azhar University in Cairo, widely regarded as the highest seat of learning in Sunni Islam, never directly challenged the manifesto of Sadat's assassins. Kelsay rightly wonders, "Why not insist that militants like bin Laden or al-Zawahiri cease their advocacy of military operations, or that they confine themselves to making the case for reform through normal political channels?"

He provides a fascinating answer: moderates can share key premises with militants. The moderates whom Kelsay has studied "do not in fact dissent from the militant judgment that current political arrangements are illegitimate." Which is not to say they have sought real democracy. Some moderates agree with militants that "democracy implies a kind of moral equivalence between Islam and other perspectives. And such a situation is dangerous, not only for the standing of the Muslim community, but for the moral life of humankind."

The hope rests with "Muslim democrats" who will pluck the Koran and the Prophet out of a tribal time warp. Kelsay focuses on Muslims in America, recognizing three male scholars whose work ranges from online consultations

Islamic reasoning, with loopholes

about the future of Shariah to arguments for harmonizing Islam with women's equality and freedom of conscience. He then urges the West to prosecute its war on terror by demonstrating rather than defying democracy. Doing so will help Muslim democrats get heard within their communities - a necessity for all of us, Kelsay suggests, because these Muslims might be the only people who can rehabilitate democracy's appeal after the serial hypocrisies practiced under its banner by Washington, among others.

It is a provocative conclusion, but an incomplete one. Muslim democrats will also have to confront Koranic passages that give militants an escape hatch. The most famous verse tells believers that slaying an innocent is like slaying all of mankind unless it is done to punish villainy. Radical Muslims seize on this loophole. Moderate Muslims sanitize it. Reform-minded Muslims must reinterpret it.

How this happens could well be the next chapter in reclaiming Shariah reasoning and the richness of Islam itself.

*

Irshad Manji, a fellow with the European Foundation for Democracy, directs the Moral Courage Project at New York University.

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Palestinian Christians lament treatment; Evangelicals visiting from the U.S. accused of shunning Arab followers of Jesus in his homeland while keeping allegiance to Israeli Jews.

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Main Edition

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Byline: CRAIG NELSON

For the Journal-Constitution

Body

Bethlehem, West Bank --- Shortly before Christmas, Tamara Mousa and her cousin, Fida, re-enacted an ancient practice.

They descended the 14 well-worn steps that curl into the grotto beneath the pock-marked walls of the Church of the Nativity. Amid the thick scent of melted wax from flickering candles, they sank to their denim-covered knees, inches from a silver star embedded in the marble floor and bowed their heads to pray.

After a minute, the two young Palestinian women, who are Greek Orthodox Christians and attend a local Roman Catholic university, raised two fingers to their lips, then gently touched the polished star with a hole at its center --- the spot where Jesus is said to have been born.

The mysteries of that ritual link Tamara and Fida to centuries of Christians whose footsteps they have followed into the damp, musty confines of the grotto. What is missing, they say, are strong bonds with their fellow believers in the United States. In their view, they have been misunderstood, shunned and demonized, especially by American evangelicals.

"They think of us as terrorists. They think everyone living in the Palestinian territories and Arab countries is Muslim," said Fida Mousa, 20. "They only come to visit Nativity Church and leave. They give us no chance to show that we're normal human beings."

Evangelicals believe that supporting Israel is a biblical imperative, and they are flocking to the Holy Land in record numbers. An estimated 130,000 American evangelicals expected to visit by the end of the year, up from some 100,000 in 2006, according to Israel's Tourism Ministry.

Palestinian Christians lament treatment Evangelicals visiting from the U.S. accused of shunning Arab followers of Jesus in his homeland while keeping allegiance....

The visiting pilgrims tour the Jewish and Christian quarters of Jerusalem's Old City. They parade through its streets to demonstrate their solidarity with Israel. They visit Galilee, the main biblical locale of Jesus' ministry. They give hundreds of millions of dollars each year to projects in Israel.

Visiting American evangelicals rarely, however, seek out Palestinian Christians, for what evangelical officials and tour operators describe as logistical and cultural reasons.

Dr. Munib Younan, the bishop of the Lutheran church in Palestine and Jordan, believes politics, theology and ethnicity help explain why visiting evangelicals evince little interest in their Arabic brethren.

Munib says Palestinian Christians, like all Arabs, have been stigmatized by the events of 9/11 and the effort by some in Israel and in the U.S. evangelical community to promote a Judeo-Christian bulwark against what they see as the menace posed by Islam.

"American evangelicals have their own agenda, which is to uncritically support the policies of the government of Israel. They come with power, they come with money, they come with end-of-the-world scenarios. I'm not part of their strategy or tactics," Munib said.

"To them, I'm not Christian enough," he said.

Victor Batarseh, the Roman Catholic mayor of Bethlehem, is just as blunt, criticizing Christian Zionists for their opposition to Israel ceding any land as part of a peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"We do not believe what these evangelical and fundamentalist Christians in the U.S. are doing. This is not right. This is not the word of Jesus Christ. Our Lord was not a real estate agent," said Batarseh, 72.

Local tour operators, however, see more benign motives behind the apparent lack of evangelical interest in the local Christian community.

David Frank, director of IGT-Transglobal Travel Ltd., says American evangelicals never request visits with Palestinian Christians.

"We don't arrange it unless we're asked, and I don't really recall being asked," says Frank, whose company conducts excursions of the Holy Land for some 80 evangelical groups every year.

"They want to get as much as possible spiritually. They want to visit holy places --- Jerusalem and Tiberias."

As for Bethlehem, it is a mere six miles from Jerusalem, yet enclosed by a 24-foot-high, Israeli-built security fence on which Israel's Tourism Ministry has hoisted a large banner with the message "Peace Be With You" in Arabic, English and Hebrew.

Frank, who is Jewish, says time and convenience, not politics and ideology, are the chief factors limiting visits to the place where the Bible says Jesus was born.

"They have to cross the border and it's a hassle. What used to take a half hour --- a visit to the Church of the Nativity --- now takes four hours."

David Parsons, the spokesman for the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem (ICEJ), a leading Christian Zionist organization that champions evangelical tourism to the Holy Land, concurs.

"Israeli tour buses don't want to go to Bethlehem. They are forced to unload their passengers, who are then put aboard Palestinian buses. They are afraid to go there and elsewhere in the West Bank due to liability issues," Parsons said.

Parsons stresses his "deep respect" for the burdens borne by local Christians. Nevertheless, he notes what he calls a "cultural divide" between evangelical Christians and the "more traditional" faith of local Christians.

Palestinian Christians lament treatment Evangelicals visiting from the U.S. accused of shunning Arab followers of Jesus in his homeland while keeping allegiance....

"For Palestinian Christians, you are born a Christian and it is part of your identity. For evangelicals, you can be born into Christianity, but you still have to have your own experience of God."

The Palestinian Christian community is shrinking rapidly. Its share of the population in Arab East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip has dipped below 2 percent of the population, down from at least 15 percent in 1950 by some estimates.

Still, Parsons and most U.S. evangelicals believe their most important tie is to Israel's Jews.

Criticizing a letter written last summer to President Bush by 34 evangelical Christian leaders who called for a two-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict, ICEJ said that biblically speaking, Israel and its people enjoy a unique status.

Noting that Palestinian Arabs "with all due respect, have made no positive contributions of note to the world," the ICEJ said in a written reply that, "God established a unique relationship with Israel for the purpose of world redemption, and that relationship is enduring and has no equivalent whatsoever on the Palestinian side."

Tamara Mousa voices frustration at being cast in such a light.

"We're not what evangelicals think or want us to be. We're Palestinian Christian Arabs. We can't renounce any part of who we are. We're Palestinian. We're Christian. We're Arab. Period," said Tamara, 21.

Unwilling to soften the edges of their identities, Tamara and Fida said they will continue to be invisible people when, on rare occasions, American evangelicals cross through the barrier into their home town of Bethlehem.

"When they come to visit holy sites like the Church of the Nativity, that's all they want to see, like it's a museum. They don't want to see us. Their guards tell them not to talk to anyone in the street and urge them to 'keep walking,'" Tamara said.

"We're the living stones. They only want to see the dead ones."

Graphic

Photo: CRAIG NELSON / Cox Newspapers Fida Mousa (left) and her cousin, Tamara Mousa, pray at the Grotto of the Nativity. /ImageData* ImageData*

Photo: CRAIG NELSON / Cox Newspapers Bethlehem Mayor Victor Batarseh has been critical of fundamentalist American Christians for their opposition to Israel ceding land as part of peace deal. /ImageData*

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

January 9, 2008 Wednesday

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Byline: Benjamin Klein, Tzipi Landau, Kathy Kay, Jessica Fischer, Ze'ev Shemer, L. Zurakov, Lisa Amelan, Wendy Blumfield, Francis B. Mimouni

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

President's itinerary

Sir, - I hope President Bush will visit Sderot and see what Israel continues receiving in return for its withdrawal from Gaza. As a result the Palestinians voted in Hamas, and there's non-stop rocketing of Israeli cities. As a religious person I hope the president visits Josef's Tomb in Nablus and sees what Palestinians did when a Jewish holy site fell into their hands. I hope he visits east Jerusalem and some Jewish settlements and appreciates that over 200,000 Jews cannot be made homeless ("Right-leaning ministers to tell US president they oppose making concessions to Abbas," January 8).

BENJAMIN KLEIN

Brooklyn

What it takes...

Sir - Re "Bush schedule finalized" (January 8): Thousands of police and other security personnel will be on duty until Friday afternoon to guarantee the safety of US President George W. Bush. Dozens of cars and drivers have been hired to transport his entourage. Jerusalem sanitation workers will be employed around the clock to clean the streets through which his convoy has to pass. Beit Hanassi has been renovated for the visit. The list goes on, but the message is loud and clear: To get things working in this country requires the visit of the president of the United States.

How much does it all cost? Wouldn't it have been more beneficial to direct all this money toward Holocaust survivors and hungry children?

One day we might get our priorities straight.

TZIPI LANDAU

Jerusalem

...to get the cash flowing

Letters

Sir, - The finance minister is giving MKs an extra NIS2,800 in salaries, plus another NIS2,800 for car maintenance per month. They do not want it, but the minister tells them to go on and take it. This comes to about NIS 10m. a year.

A third of Israel's children are living under the poverty line. The faculty of the universities are asking for long-overdue compensation for salary erosion. Students cannot attend classes and may be losing a year from their studies, ruining the lives of many. I think those 10 million shekels can be put to better use ("MKs decry pay raise - but take it anyway," January 1).

KATHY KAY

Petah Tikva

This much, at least

Sir, - Don't expect much from the Bush visit. But... Ehud Olmert can still ask for Jonathan Pollard's release! (Free Pollard, Yishai to urge Bush," January 8).

JESSICA FISCHER

Michmoret

Then I woke up

Sir, - Monday night at 4 a.m. we heard a loud boom. It was raining, so I assumed it was a thunderclap. My wife knew right away it had to have been a rocket explosion, and guessed our military was conducting more exercises. Little did we know that two Katyusha rockets had hit our neighboring town of Shlomi.

"I won't let Arabs scare me out of my home or out of my country," declared my wife, angrily. Rockets hitting our area angered me too. But more than that, I felt like our brothers and sisters when they were forcibly expelled from their homes in Gush Katif and northern Samaria. I felt useless.

It is my duty to protect my children. It is our military's duty to protect our towns. Where is our army? Where are our leaders? Who will send a clear message to those Arab barbarians in Lebanon and in Gaza that launching rockets against Israeli towns is a big mistake? ("Status quo won't change after Katyusha," On-Line Edition, January 8.)

I had a dream: that Ashkenazi fellow stormed the Knesset and established a temporary military government. He took Olmert, Peres and Barak into custody, then unleashed the IDF on Gaza and Lebanon. The UN overflowed with condemnations, but after that no one ever again dreamed of messing with the Jewish state.

Then I woke up.

ZE'EV SHEMER

Hispin, Ramat Hagolan

No equal billing (sigh)

Sir, - I really enjoyed Michael Boyden's "As Israel approaches 60" (January 8). I disagreed with his statement, however, that Israel has never had a strong Socialist party.

What were Mapai and Mapam during the early days of Ben-Gurion et al? Surely they were Socialist parties. Other than that, I fully agree with every point Rabbi Boyden made. It's truly unfortunate that the powers that be do not insist the Reform and Conservative streams of religion get equal billing with the Orthodox.

L. ZURAKOV

Letters

Netanya

Loss of a baby

Sir, - The terrible blow of losing a child is often made harder to bear because of a widespread reluctance on the part of friends and family to broach such a difficult subject. The moving ("Given, and taken," December 23, 2007) covering the tragedy suffered by the Clyman family was therefore a welcome step in the right direction, and it is to be hoped that many will be helped by Seth Clyman's book.

While all mourning is personal and there is no right or wrong response, I would urge caution about following the family's course of action in not attending the funeral and refraining from visiting the grave and observing the yahrzeit.

As one who suffered a similar loss and has provided support for many bereaved women, I know of many who deeply regretted not attending the baby's funeral and not being able to visit the gravesite. Often they were unable to mourn properly and, even years later, continue with their lives.

There are no actual rules about attending the funeral, sitting shiva or visiting the grave. The customs we have now, formed in times when women were, unfortunately, likely to lose many infants, were meant to spare them further suffering. Luckily, that is no longer the case for most people, and to accord custom the force of religious law deprives many of communal support - and of much-needed closure - when they could use it most.

LISA AMELAN

Jerusalem

No new mom need

get depressed

Sir, - Childbearing women do not have to suffer in silence, and it grieved me to hear about the stress and frustration experienced by Victoria Feinerman ("Why new moms get depressed," Letters January 7).

The Israel Childbirth Education Centre, modeled on Britain's National Childbirth Trust, was founded in 1981 to provide support and education during the childbearing period. Through its training program there now exists a network of prenatal courses, postnatal support groups, breastfeeding counsellors and doulas. These counsellors are trained to provide non-judgmental support for women and their partners. No woman need feel alone, whatever her needs - natural birth or medicated, breastfeeding or not.

Details of this nationwide network can be found at (www.leyda.org.il). Those with difficulties understanding the Hebrew Web site can call (0507) 114-117.

WENDY BLUMFIELD

Israel Childbirth Education Centre

Haifa

Kudos

Sir, - "More than just little adults" (December 30), on the construction of a children's hospital at Shaare Zedek Medical Center, was a masterpiece. Judy Siegel- Itzkovich understands medicine and is highly professional and always on target, while providing interesting, even fun reading for the non-medically-oriented reader. A real pro!

FRANCIS B. MIMOUNI, MD

Department of Pediatrics

Letters

Shaare Zedek Medical Center, Jerusalem

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OFM: Bombs, bullets & our daily bread: Tonight, over four million Palestinians, and more than eight million others across the world, will eat supper as refugees. For this special report, Alex Renton visits Gaza, where every day brings a new struggle against hunger. And Rebecca Seal looks at refugee diets from Darfur to Bangladesh

The Observer (London)

April 27, 2008

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TheObserver

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Byline: ALEX RENTON

Body

Lunch is whistling: the noise comes from Fathiya's old pressure cooker, which has shuddered scarily on a little gas hob for nearly two hours. I go out into the narrow alley between the concrete shacks of the refugee camp. Here most of the al-Absi family are standing round their home-made oven. From this ancient-looking monument of clay and straw Fathiya is bringing out perfect round flatbreads, brown-gold on either side. We open the balloons of bread, and Fathiya's 13-year-old daughter Noura offers round a little box of greenish powder that we sprinkle into the moist interior.

This is the Palestinian great snack, good for mind and body: the bread is baraka, the same as the word for 'blessing', and the powder is za'atar, a mixture of ground thyme, marjoram, salt and toasted sesame seeds. Neighbours have gathered, enticed by the smell, and everyone smiles as we sample that basic pleasure: new warm bread.

We are in Gaza City's Beach camp, one of the world's oldest and most crowded refugee camps; so it's strange to be taking part in a foodie idyll straight from the pages of Claudia Roden. The feeling only grows when at last the pressure cooker is opened, revealing a glorious mess of beans inside: Palestinian foutes. Into these Fathiya stirs dried mulukhiya (a spinach-like leaf, called Jew's mallow in England), salt, chilli and crushed garlic.

I sit down with Fathiya and five of her children, a couple of neighbours, an Oxfam community worker and Jamal, Fathiya's husband, on the concrete floor of the al-Absis' shack to eat. The dish cost about 10 shekels, £ 1.40, and it will make three meals for the family. The bean stew is gorgeous - deep, spicy and satisfying. All it needs is a little bit of lemon, I say. 'Of course it should have lemon,' agrees Jamal. He used to be a cook in a cafe in Tel Aviv before the Israelis closed the border with Gaza and stopped anyone going to Israel to work. Though Jamal hasn't helped during the long morning's preparation for this meal, he is keen to let me know he is a professional. We all look at

OFM: Bombs, bullets & our daily bread: Tonight, over four million Palestinians, and more than eight million others across the world, will eat supper as refugees....

the cook: so where's the lemon, Fathiya? She looks up from spooning beans for her 10-month-old daughter, Urud, and shakes her head. 'There isn't money for a lemon.'

Tonight, some 4.5 million Palestinians, and 8.4 million others across the world, will eat supper as refugees - people who, according to the UN's definition, are outside their country of nationality or habitual residence because of 'well-founded fear of persecution'. (There are 23 million more people who are displaced for similar reasons within their own countries.) As OFM's survey of refugee camps across the world shows, some of these people will eat adequately, some quite well, and others hardly at all. Long-term refugees like Fathiya, in well-established camps, do not live in immediate fear of hunger. But they must devote about every hour of the day to the job of getting their families fed.

Other refugees live in much worse conditions, of course. Mukishimana Dusabe, a mother of five whom we interviewed in an 'unofficial' camp aided by Oxfam, in the North Kivu region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is too frightened to go out to search for firewood to cook with. Her friend went foraging and was caught by soldiers who broke her arm and tried to rape her. Her son had disappeared; her young daughters have to work in the fields all day to get one banana to eat. 'I am a mother; I am scared that I will lose my strength and energy and that I will no longer be able to look after my family,' she told us.

By definition, refugees are a political problem. Very often the business of feeding them is one, too. Delivering food to the displaced is always complex: the logistics are usually horrendous - refugees don't naturally settle where it's convenient. The supplies may be 'taxed' - the word the aid agencies use ironically - looted by whoever wields guns or power locally. The requirements of rich donors may mean the supplies have to be brought from far away, adding to the expense. All American food aid, for example, including much that's delivered to Gaza - has to be bought from American farmers.

And of course, at all levels, soldiers and politicians oppose the feeding of refugees: if you don't give them aid, runs the argument, then perhaps they'll go away. Squeezing the rations or hindering the movement of supplies is a way of applying pressure for political ends - a habitual Israeli tactic in their war with Gaza's militant Palestinian government.

Almost everything in Gaza comes from Israel, but since June last year little other than 'essential humanitarian supplies' have been allowed in. This blockade is Israel's strategy to force out the Hamas government that refuses to recognise Israel or stop its militants firing rockets at Israeli towns over the border. Of Gaza's population of over 1.4 million, 1.1 million are dependent to some extent on food hand-outs. According to the UN, there was a shortfall of one-third in meeting this basic need between January and March this year.

Many observers consider these tactics an abuse of the rights of refugees. These were enshrined by the United Nations in 1951 when the world was just recovering from the horrors of mass, forced movement of population during and after the Second World War. One of the most significant of those rights is to 'protection', which states quite clearly that host governments have a duty to look after refugees. And that includes seeing they get fed. According to the agencies, infant malnutrition in Gaza is up 60 per cent since the siege - as many call it - began.

Though the Gaza Strip is territory occupied by Israel - which thus has specific obligations under international law to the refugees there - the business of feeding the 865,000 refugees who need food aid is the job of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency. UNRWA started work with Palestinian refugees the year Israel was created, 1948, and so it has fed Fathiya, who is 40, and Jamal, 50, all their lives. They were both born in the Gaza camps to parents who had fled the 1948 war from villages around Ashkelon in Israel. The town is hardly 12 miles away but there's a 16-foot wall now between Gaza and Israel; neither of them has ever visited their family's villages.

Every three months UNRWA delivers the ration. Because Jamal cannot work, the family gets an enhanced level of supplies. The basis of the hand-out is flour - a 75kg sack per person. There's also 50kg of rice and 6 litres of cooking oil, and some pulses like chickpeas, and sugar. Fathiya shows me one of the flour sacks - it's marked 'Wheat flour from Japan, for free distribution to refugees' - and we do the maths. This morning she baked 160 pitta

OFM: Bombs, bullets & our daily bread: Tonight, over four million Palestinians, and more than eight million others across the world, will eat supper as refugees....

bread - half a flour sack's worth. Of the nine sacks she gets every 13 weeks there's usually three left over - these she sells in Gaza's markets, where a 75kg sack will fetch 70 Israel shekels, about £ 10.

This oversupply is intentional. As is often the case in organised camps the basic agency food basket only provides a proportion of a family's nutritional needs - in Gaza the target is set at 55 per cent. UNRWA's Chris Gunness says : 'We rely on there being a working economy in Gaza and that people have income to supplement the food packages, and buy things like eggs, dairy, protein, fresh fruit and vegetables. But that's getting more difficult: there's a cash crisis in Gaza, since the shutdown began last June. Ninety per cent of businesses have shut, according to the World Bank, and 100,000 jobs have gone in the private sector.'

Fathiya al-Absi's £ 30 must be stretched to buy everything else for the kitchen. Lunch today needed yeast and salt for the bread, the garlic, chilli and herbs for the bean stew. There's also all the ordinary household expenses, and the cost of clean drinking water and gas cylinders. With the blockade these are now 55 shekels (£ 8) each, and the family gets through three a month. Electricity is unreliable, too, since the power and fuel supply is also limited by the Israelis. The large fridge in Fathiya's tiny kitchen serves only as a storage cupboard. So Fathiya and her oldest son, Tamer, built the clay oven. They fire it with scrap card board and plastic bags. Happily the stink from those doesn't much affect the bread.

The money doesn't stretch a lot further - to meat or fish, for example. The price of raw meat in Gaza has just about doubled since last June, and there's shortages of milk, too. I asked Fathiya's children what their favourite meal was: turkey shawarma, they all said. Ten-year-old Hanan had shared one with his father a few weeks ago - his face still glowed at the memory. But the family hasn't had any meat to sit down and eat together since last Eid, four months earlier, when some lamb was donated by the mosque.

Though Fathiya's children seem healthy enough, it's no surprise that malnutrition rates in Gaza are five times those of neighbouring Egypt. Even before the blockade 17.5 per cent of children under five suffered from chronic malnutrition, while 53 per cent of women of reproductive age and 44 per cent of children were anaemic. When the meal is finished, the two little girls say they still feel hungry. 'They always feel hungry,' says Fathiya.

Her only other income is from her work for an Oxfam-funded sewing cooperative, where people from the Beach camp are paid 12 shekels a day (£ 1.70) to make clothes that can be sold to residents. Fathiya also makes food for the workers there, for which Oxfam pays her. Much of that money goes to pay for 18-year-old Tamer's course in secretarial skills at Gaza's Al-Azhar University.

Her father, Jamal, is too sick, he tells me, to work, even if there were any jobs. He lifts his shirt to show me the twisted purple scars he says are entry and exit wounds from an Israeli bullet. Privately, I'm told that Jamal has other problems. Like a disturbing number of men in the Beach camp, many of whom used to make a living from fishing before the Israelis restricted the boats' movements on security grounds, he has a drug and alcohol habit. Crack cocaine is one commodity that can enter Gaza from Israel quite easily: social breakdown and rising levels of violence within families are another side-effect that has to be attributed in part to the political impasse.

The striking thing that unites all the women we interviewed in refugee camps is how much of their time is spent on the essential work of providing and caring for their families. For almost all of them the job occupied every waking hour. Fathiya's day begins at 6am, when she feeds Urud and cleans the two rooms where all the family live and sleep. The children she sees off to school without food - they will get a sandwich and milk when they arrive. Then, if, like today, it's a baking day, she starts making the bread. I tried to help her with this - but my kneading and pulling of the elastic pitta dough makes everyone giggle (still, when mine came misshapen out of the oven it tasted pretty good).

Fathiya's family have what many refugees don't have, which is a form of stability. They lack much else, though, that we would think essential: a decent house, to begin with. Their current two-room shack is temporary. UNRWA knocked down their original house, not much bigger, because it was infested with lice. But, since Israel has not allowed any cement into Gaza for nine months, plans to rebuild the house have been put on hold by the agency. So the family have lived through the cold of winter with gaping holes in their walls and no heating. And during all those

OFM: Bombs, bullets & our daily bread: Tonight, over four million Palestinians, and more than eight million others across the world, will eat supper as refugees....

months the conflict between Israel and Hamas has been worsening. As we left Gaza that evening we watched Qassam rockets rising into the evening sky, aimed at Israel. One of them killed an Israeli civilian in the nearby town of Sderot: by the next morning, 33 Palestinians had been killed in the Israeli reprisals. Four of them were children who had been playing football not far from where we ate. It was, said Israel's defence minister, Ehud Barak, 'a proportionate response'.

The Gazans also lack hope - perhaps the most debilitating problem a refugee knows. There seems to be no prospect of a political solution to their long exile - more than one Gazan I asked said that the refugees' only strategy was to have as many babies as possible. But no one I spoke to had any genuine expectation that this half-life might change. None of them, or indeed most of the four million Palestinians spread around Jordan, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, have known any life but that of a refugee.

Some of the older ones remember, though. And they all speak with harrowing sadness of 'our village', of the homes they have lost in al-Nakba - the 'catastrophe' of 1948. In Bethlehem the walls that enclose Aida refugee camp, another relic of that year, are painted with murals. Each one pictures a different lost village, its olive trees, green hills and chalk-white farmhouses. In Aida I met Ayesha al-Jarma, who was only six years old when her family fled Ajjur, near Hebron in the West Bank. She has been back, only once, when she was 25, to the ruins of her father's farm there. She has brought up nine children in the camp. Now she is a great-grandmother.

'We had a lovely life in the village,' she told me. 'We used to make maftool (couscous) with lamb, because we had sheep and goats. Or with chicken, or doves, we kept them, too. There would be pine nuts and za'atar for the rice. We grew wheat and vines, figs, apples and olives. We had watermelon and tomatoes and cucumbers.' Did her children grow up differently, eating the UNRWA diet? 'Of course,' said Ayesha. 'I always said to my children, you're like biscuits. You break so easily. In the village we'd fall from the roof and not break anything. We were healthy, but you go to hospital every week.' She sighs. 'Oh, how healthy were the children. And how happy.'

For more information on Oxfam's work in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, visit <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxfam-in-action/emergencies/gaza-crisis.html>. Additional reporting by Marie Cacace

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Guardian Weekly: Books: A deadly embrace: Fawaz A Gerges reads three books that consider how past US policy haunts Iraq's present: The Strategy and Ideology Of Martyrdom by Mohammed M Hafez US Institute of Peace 285pp \$17.50 A Poisonous Affair: America, Iraq, and the Gassing of Halabja by Joost R Hiltermann Cambridge University 314pp \$29 Merchant of Death: Money, Guns, Planes, and the Man Who Makes War Possible by Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun Wiley 308pp \$25.95

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Body

The new Iraq has set a world record in suicide bombings. Since the American-led invasion in 2003, Iraq has suffered nearly 1,000 suicide attacks, more than double the number carried out by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka, Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in Israel, combined. Most targeted Iraqi security forces and Shia civilians.

One of the saddest questions is whether it is partly "blowback" - intelligence jargon for what goes around, comes around. The fact that the US once backed Osama bin Laden and other jihadis against the Soviets in Afghanistan is well known. But three new books suggest that there are other kinds of blowback in the war on terror.

Far from "draining the swamp" of terrorism, as US architects of the war had hoped, the new Iraq imports suicide terrorists and exports bombing techniques. In *Suicide Bombers in Iraq*, Mohammed Hafez seeks to understand what drives men and, in rare cases, women, to sacrifice themselves. He believes they are mainly non-Iraqis, although he warns that it is impossible to reach firm conclusions about where they come from, what motivates them and how recruiters have mobilised so many in a short time. "It is not clear who is carrying out most of the suicide attacks in Iraq," he admits.

Analysts worldwide have been unable to arrive at a useful socioeconomic or psychological profile of suicide bombers in Iraq. Some are from poor families in developing countries such as Egypt, Syria, Algeria, Morocco and Pakistan, while others come from affluent homes in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, England and Italy. They are educated and uneducated. The bulk seem to be in their teens and 20s, but more than a few are in their 30s to 50s. And while some have had previous links to violent activism, for others the suicide attack is their first (and last) offence. The only consensus among analysts, Hafez says, is that suicide bombers are not simply crazy or born violent.

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Al-Qaida in Iraq and its ideological allies face growing indignation from fellow Sunnis fed up with the toll on Muslim civilians. But greater challenges are faced in Iraq than suicide terrorism, insidious as it is. Hafez estimates that suicide bombers and other internationalist, ideological jihadis represent just 5% of Iraqi insurgents. The overwhelming majority of fighters are Iraqi nationalists who eschew suicide bombing and deploy Islam as the vocabulary of resistance; their goal is to shift the balance of power in favour of Sunnis and to force US troops to leave.

Joost R Hiltermann, a former Human Rights Watch investigator who is now with the International Crisis Group, traces America's predicament in Iraq to its collusion with Saddam Hussein during the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s and its silence over his repeated use of chemical weapons.

Hiltermann's *A Poisonous Affair* is a chilling account of the gassing of Halabja, a village in Iraq's Kurdish region, in March 1988 and the subsequent counterinsurgency campaign known as Anfal ("The Spoils"), in which about 80,000 Kurdish civilians were driven from their homes by poison gas, hauled to transit centres, sorted by age and sex and taken to execution sites in Iraq's western desert. In the early 1990s, Hiltermann and his colleagues at Human Rights Watch pieced together the Anfal story from captured Iraqi documents, declassified US reports and testimonies of survivors. Hard as it tried, the NGO could not mobilise the international community to bring a charge of genocide against the Iraqi regime at the international court of justice.

A Poisonous Affair explains that, having recovered territories lost to Iraq in the early 1980s, Ayatollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, went on the offensive against Saddam. He sent vast numbers of barely trained young infantrymen against Iraqi lines, and the Iraqi leadership saw poison gas - first mustard gas and later more potent, insecticide-related formulas - as the most efficient way to stop them.

According to a CIA analysis cited by Hiltermann, Iraq employed chemical weapons "on a scale not seen since the first world war" and became the first nation to use nerve agents in battle. Still, the US sided with Saddam. Although officially neutral, Washington began sharing intelligence data on Iran's battle plans and provided Baghdad with economic aid. Arms poured into Iraq from the West as well as from the Soviet Union. And the Reagan administration opposed a UN investigation of Iran's allegations that Iraq had used chemical weapons.

Hiltermann explores America's multiple motives. US officials were still angered by the Iranians' seizure of the US embassy in Tehran and determined to prevent Khomeini from exporting his Islamic revolution. But then, as now, there were other factors: The Reagan administration hoped to co-opt Iraq, through "constructive engagement", into backing Arab-Israeli peacemaking and ending its assistance to radical groups, particularly Palestinians. Oil supplies and business opportunities for US companies also loomed large, Hiltermann notes.

Thus, in Hiltermann's account, the die was cast for Iraq's expanded use of chemical weapons. The main chemical offensive came in the spring of 1988 - first on a Kurdish rebel headquarters in the Jafati valley, then at Halabja, then on the first day of every stage of the six-month Anfal campaign. The Reagan administration laboured to get Saddam off the hook. *A Poisonous Affair* shows that US policymakers knew Iraq had gassed Halabja but instructed American diplomats to cast partial blame on Iran. By Hiltermann's persuasive account, the US sacrificed universal norms at the altar of cold war calculations and short-term gain, a choice that set the stage for America's current deadly embrace with Iraq as well as Iran's quest to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Blowback also looms large in *Merchant of Death*, a riveting investigation of the world's most notorious weapons dealer, Viktor Bout, whose post-cold war arms network has stoked violence worldwide. Although US intelligence officers have tried for years to shut down Bout's operation, Douglas Farah and Stephen Braun reveal that the US paid firms linked to him as much as \$60m to ferry weapons to the US military and contractors in Iraq in 2003 and 2004.

Senior US policymakers may have known Bout was among the war profiteers. But even after newspaper reports about his activities in Iraq, mid-level US officials in Baghdad allowed his suspected airplanes to continue to land at US air bases and even to fill up on military fuel for free, rationalising the decision on the need to get supplies

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quickly. "We have an old saying in the marine corps," one officer says in the book. "If you want it bad, you get it bad."

Farah, a former Washington Post reporter, and Braun, a Los Angeles Times correspondent, call the episode "a textbook case of shoddy postwar planning and bureaucratic blindness". But after reading Suicide Bombers in Iraq and A Poisonous Affair , it's hard not to see it as more than that.

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End of Document

Observer Magazine: Special investigation: When al-Qaeda was formed 20 years ago, Dr Fadl was its spiritual leader. His writings justified global terror. Last year, he denounced the use of violence- in a stroke undermining the entire intellectual basis of jihad. So can Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri fight the rebellion in its ranks?: Part Three

The Observer (London)

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Body

Zawahiri responds

Fadl's arguments undermined the entire intellectual framework of jihadist warfare. If the security services in Egypt, in tandem with the al-Azhar scholars, had undertaken to write a refutation of al-Qaeda's doctrine, it would likely have resembled the book Dr Fadl produced; and, indeed, that may have been exactly what occurred. And yet, with so many leaders of al-Jihad endorsing the book, it seemed clear that the organisation itself was now dead. Terrorism in Egypt might continue in some form, but the violent factions were finished, departing amid public exclamations of repentance for the futility and sinfulness of their actions.

As the Muslim world awaited Zawahiri's inevitable response, the press and the clergy were surprisingly muted. One reason was that Fadl's revisions raised doubts about political activity that many Muslims do not regard as terror - for instance, the resistance movements, in Palestine and elsewhere, that oppose Israel and the presence of American troops in Muslim countries. "In this region, we must distinguish between violence against national governments and that of the resistance - in Iraq, in Lebanon, in Palestine," Essam el-Erian, of the Muslim Brotherhood, told me. "We cannot call this resistance 'violence'." Nevertheless, such movements were inevitably drawn into the debate surrounding Fadl's book.

A number of Muslim clerics struggled to answer Dr Fadl's broad critique of political bloodshed. Many had issued fatwas endorsing the very actions Fadl now declared to be unjustified. Their responses were often surprising. For instance, Sheikh Hamid al-Ali, an influential Salafi cleric in Kuwait, whom the US Treasury has described as an al-Qaeda facilitator and fundraiser, declared on a website that he welcomed the rejection of violence as a means of fostering change in the Arab world. Sheikh Ali's fatwas have sometimes been linked to al-Qaeda actions. (Notoriously, months before 9/11, he authorised flying aircraft into targets during suicide operations.) He observed that although the Arab regimes have a natural self-interest in encouraging non-violence, that shouldn't cause

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readers to spurn Fadl's argument. "I believe it is a big mistake to let this important intellectual transformation be nullified by political suspicion," Ali said.

The decision of radical Islamist groups to adopt a peaceful path does not necessarily mean, however, they can evolve into political parties. "We have to admit we do not have in our land a true political process worthy of the name," Ali argued. "What we have are regimes that play a game in which they use whatever will guarantee their continued existence."

Meanwhile, Sheikh Abu Basir al-Tartusi, a Syrian Islamist living in London, railed against the "numbness and discouragement" of Fadl's message in telling Muslims that they are too weak to engage in jihad or overthrow their oppressive rulers. "More than half of the Koran and hundreds of the Prophet's sayings call for jihad and fighting those unjust tyrants," Tartusi exclaimed on a jihadist website. "What do you want us to do with his huge quantity of Sharia provisions, and how do you want us to understand and interpret them? Where is the benefit in deserting jihad against those tyrants? Because of them, the nation lost its religion, glory, honour, dignity, land, resources, and every precious thing!"

Jihadist publications were filled with condemnations of Fadl's revisions. Hani el-Sibai, the Islamist attorney, is a Zawahiri loyalist who now runs a political website in London; he said of Fadl, "Do you think any Islamic group will listen to him? No. They are in the middle of a war."

Even so, the fact that al-Qaeda followers and sympathisers were paying so much attention to Fadl's manuscript made it imperative that Zawahiri offer a definitive rebuttal. Since al-Qaeda's violent ideology rested, in part, on Fadl's foundation, Zawahiri would have to find a way to discredit the author without destroying the authority of his own organisation. It was a tricky task.

Zawahiri's main problem in countering Fadl was his own lack of standing as a religious scholar. "Al-Qaeda has no one who is qualified from a Sharia perspective to make a response," Fadl boasted to al-Hayat. "All of them - bin Laden, Zawahiri, and others - are not religious scholars on whose opinion you can count. They are ordinary persons." Of course, Fadl himself had no formal religious training, either.

In February this year, Zawahiri announced in a video he had finished a "letter" responding to Fadl's book. "The Islam presented by that document is the one that America and the west wants and is pleased with: an Islam without jihad," Zawahiri said. "Because I consider this document to be an insult to the Muslim nation, I chose for the rebuttal the name 'The Exoneration', in order to express the nation's innocence of this insult." This announcement, by itself, was unprecedented. "It's the first time in history that bin Laden and Zawahiri have responded in this way to internal dissent," Diaa Rashwan, an analyst for the al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, in Cairo, told me.

The "letter", which finally appeared on the internet in March, was nearly 200 pages long. "This message I present to the reader today is among the most difficult I have ever written in my life," Zawahiri admits in his introduction. Although the text is laden with footnotes and lengthy citations from Islamic scholars, Zawahiri's strategy is apparent from the beginning. Whereas Fadl's book is a trenchant attack on the immoral roots of al-Qaeda's theology, Zawahiri navigates his argument toward the familiar shores of the "Zionist-Crusader" conspiracy. Zawahiri claims Fadl wrote his book "in the spirit of the Minister of the Interior". He characterises it as a desperate attempt by the enemies of Islam - America, the west, Jews, the apostate rulers of the Muslim world - to "stand in the way of the fierce wave of jihadi revivalism that is shaking the Islamic world". Mistakes have been made, he concedes. "I neither condone the killing of innocent people nor claim that jihad is free of error," he writes. "Muslim leaders during the time of the Prophet made mistakes, but the jihad did not stop. . . I'm warning those Islamist groups who welcome the document that they are giving the government the knife with which it can slaughter them."

In presenting al-Qaeda's defence, Zawahiri clearly displays the moral relativism that has taken over the organisation. "Keep in mind that we have the right to do to the infidels what they have done to us," he writes. "We bomb them as they bomb us, even if we kill someone who is not permitted to be killed." He compares 9/11 to the 1998 American bombing of a pharmaceutical plant in Sudan, in retaliation for al-Qaeda's destruction of two American embassies in East Africa. (The US mistakenly believed the plant was producing chemical weapons.) "I

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see no difference between the two operations, except that the money used to build the factory was Muslim money and the workers who died in the factory's rubble" - actually, a single night watchman - "were Muslims, while the money that was spent on the buildings that those hijackers destroyed was infidel money and the people who died in the explosion were infidels."

When Zawahiri questions the sanctity of a visa, which Fadl equates with a mutual contract of safe passage, he consults an English dictionary and finds in the definition of "visa" no mention of a guarantee of protection. "Even if the contract is based on international agreements, we are not bound by these agreements," Zawahiri claims, citing two radical clerics who support his view. In any case, America doesn't feel bound to protect Muslims; for instance, it is torturing people in its military prisons in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. "The US gives itself the right to take any Muslim without respect to his visa," Zawahiri writes. "If the US and westerners don't respect visas, why should we?"

Zawahiri makes some telling psychological points; for instance, he says that the imprisoned Fadl is projecting his own weakness on the mujahideen, who have grown stronger since Fadl deserted them, 15 years earlier. "The Islamic mujahid movement was not defeated, by the grace of God; indeed, because of its patience, steadfastness and thoughtfulness, it is heading toward victory," he writes. He cites the strikes on 9/11 and the ongoing battles in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia, which he says are wearing America down.

To dispute Fadl's assertion that Muslims living in non-Islamic countries are treated fairly, Zawahiri points out that in some western countries Muslim girls are forbidden to wear hijab to school. Muslim men are prevented from marrying more than one wife, and from beating their wives, as allowed by some interpretations of Sharia. Muslims are barred from donating money to certain Islamic causes, although money is freely and openly raised for Israel. He cites the 2005 cartoon controversy in Denmark and the celebrity of the author Salman Rushdie as examples of western countries exalting those who denigrate Islam.

Writing about the treatment of tourists, Zawahiri says, "The mujahideen don't kidnap people randomly" - they kidnap or harm tourists to send a message to their home countries. "We don't attack Brazilian tourists in Finland, or those from Vietnam in Venezuela," he writes. No doubt, Muslims may be killed occasionally, but if that happens it's a pardonable mistake. "The majority of scholars say that it is permissible to strike at infidels, even if Muslims are among them," Zawahiri contends. He cites a well-known verse in the Koran to support, among other things, the practice of kidnapping: "When the sacred months are drawn away, slay the idolators wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush."

As for 9/11, Zawahiri writes, "The mujahideen didn't attack the west in its home country with suicide attacks in order to break treaties, or out of a desire to spill blood, or because they were half-mad, or because they suffer from frustration and failure, as many imagine. They attacked it because they were forced to defend their community and their sacred religion from centuries of aggression."

Zawahiri's argument demonstrates why Islam is so vulnerable to radicalisation. It is a religion that was born in conflict, and in its long history it has developed a reservoir of opinions and precedents that are supposed to govern the behaviour of Muslims toward their enemies. Some of Zawahiri's commentary may seem comically academic, as in this citation in support of the need for Muslims to prepare for jihad: "Imam Ahmad said: 'We heard from Harun bin Ma'ruf, citing Abu Wahab, who quoted Amru bin al-Harith citing Abu Ali Tamamah bin Shafi that he heard Uqbah bin Amir saying, 'I heard the Prophet say from the pulpit: 'Against them make ready your strength.'"' Strength refers to shooting arrows and other projectiles from instruments of war."

And yet such proof of the rightfulness of jihad, or taking captives, or slaughtering the enemy is easily found in the commentaries of scholars, the rulings of Sharia courts, the volumes of the Prophet's sayings, and the Koran itself. Sheikh Ali Gomaa, the Egyptian Grand Mufti, has pointed out that literalism is often the prelude to extremism. "We must not oversimplify," he told me. Crude interpretations of Islamic texts can lead men like Zawahiri to conclude that murder should be celebrated. They come to believe religion is science. They see their actions as logical, righteous and mandatory. In this fashion, a surgeon is transformed from a healer into a killer, but only if the candle of individual conscience has been extinguished.

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Several times in his lengthy response, Zawahiri complains of double standards when critics attack al-Qaeda's tactics but ignore similar actions on the part of Palestinian organisations. He notes that Fadl ridicules the fighting within al-Qaeda. "Why don't you ask Hamas the same thing?" Zawahiri demands. "Isn't this a clear contradiction?"

Zawahiri knows Palestine is a confounding issue for many Muslims. "The situation in Palestine will always be an exception," Gamal Sultan, the Islamist writer in Cairo, told me. Essam el-Erian, of the Muslim Brotherhood, said, "Here in Egypt, you will find that the entire population supports Hamas and Hezbollah, although no one endorses the Islamic Group."

Recently, however, the embargo in the Arab press on any criticism of terrorist acts by the Palestinian resistance movement has been breached by several searching articles that directly address the futility of violence. "The whole point of resistance in Palestine and Lebanon is to accomplish independence, but we should ask ourselves if we are achieving that goal," Marzouq al-Halabi, a Palestinian writer, wrote in al-Hayat in January. "We should not just say, 'Oh, every resistance has its mistakes, there are victims by accident'. . . Violence has become the beginning and the end of all action. How else would you explain Hamas militants throwing Fatah leaders off the roofs of buildings?" The resistance is destroying the potential of society to ever recover, the writer argues. Unfortunately, this reconsideration of violence appears at a time when despair and revolutionary fervour are boiling over in Palestine.

Zawahiri has watched al-Qaeda's popularity decline in places where it formerly enjoyed great support. In Pakistan, where hundreds have been killed recently by al-Qaeda suicide bombers - including, perhaps, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto - public opinion has turned against bin Laden and his companions. An Algerian terror organisation, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, formally affiliated itself with al-Qaeda in September 2006, and began a series of suicide bombings that have alienated the Algerian people, long weary of the horrors that Islamist radicals have inflicted on their country. Even members of al-Qaeda admit their cause has been harmed by indiscriminate violence. In February, Abu Turab al-Jazairi, an al-Qaeda commander in northern Iraq, whose nom de guerre suggests he is Algerian, gave an interview to al-Arab, a Qatari daily. "The attacks in Algeria sparked animated debate here in Iraq," he said. "By God, had they told me they were planning to harm the Algerian President and his family, I would say, 'Blessings be upon them!' But explosions in the street, blood knee-deep, the killing of soldiers whose wages are not even enough for them to eat at third-rate restaurants. . . and calling this jihad? By God, it's sheer idiocy!"

Abu Turab admitted he and his colleagues were suffering a similar public relations problem in Iraq, because "al-Qaeda has been infiltrated by people who have harmed its reputation." He said that only about a third of the 9,000 fighters who call themselves members of al-Qaeda in Iraq can be relied upon.

In Saudi Arabia, where the government has been trying to tame its radical clerics, Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah Aal-al-Sheikh, the Grand Mufti, issued a fatwa in October 2007, forbidding Saudi youth to join the jihad outside the country. Two months later, Saudi authorities arrested members of a suspected al-Qaeda cell who allegedly planned to assassinate the Grand Mufti. That same autumn, Sheikh Salman al-Oadah, a cleric whom bin Laden has praised in the past, appeared on an Arabic television network and read an open letter to the al-Qaeda leader. He asked, "Brother Osama, how much blood has been spilled? How many innocent children, women and old people have been killed, maimed and expelled from their homes in the name of al-Qaeda?" These critiques echoed some of the concerns of the Palestinian cleric Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who is considered by some to be the most influential jihadi theorist. In 2004, Maqdisi, then in a Jordanian prison, castigated his former protege Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the now dead leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, for his unproductive violence, particularly the wholesale slaughter of Shiites and the use of suicide bombers. "Mujahideen should refrain from acts that target civilians, churches, or other places of worship, including Shiite sites," Maqdisi wrote. "The hands of the jihad warriors must remain clean."

In December, in order to staunch the flow of criticism, Zawahiri boldly initiated a virtual-town-hall meeting. This spring, he released two lengthy audio responses to nearly 100 of the 900 often testy queries that were posed. The first came from a man who identified himself sardonically as the Geography Teacher. "Excuse me, Mr Zawahiri, but who is it who is killing, with Your Excellency's permission, the innocents in Baghdad, Morocco and Algeria? Do you

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consider the killing of women and children to be jihad?" Then he demanded, "Why have you not - to this day - carried out any strike in Israel? Or is it easier to kill Muslims in the markets? Maybe you should study geography, because your maps show only the Muslim states." Zawahiri protested that al-Qaeda had not killed innocents. "In fact, we fight those who kill innocents. Those who kill innocents are the Americans, the Jews, the Russians, and the French and their agents."

The murder of innocents emerged as the most prominent issue in the exchanges. An Algerian university student sarcastically congratulated Zawahiri for killing 60 Muslims in Algeria on a holy feast day. What was their sin, the student wanted to know. "Those who were killed on 11 December in Algeria are not from the innocents," Zawahiri claimed. "They are from the Crusader unbelievers and the government troops who defend them. Our brothers in al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb [North Africa] are more truthful, more just and more righteous than the lying sons of France." A Saudi wondered how Muslims could justify supporting al-Qaeda, given its long history of indiscriminate murder. "Are there other ways and means in which the objectives of jihad can be achieved without killing people?" he asked. "Please do not use as a pretext what the Americans or others are doing. Muslims are supposed to be an example to the world in tolerance and lofty goals, not to become a gang whose only concern is revenge." But Zawahiri was unable to rise to the questioner's ethical challenge. He replied, "If a criminal were to storm into your house, attack your family and kill them, steal your property, and burn down your house, then turns to attack the homes of your neighbours, will you treat him tolerantly so that you will not become a gang whose only concern is revenge?"

Many of the questions dealt with Fadl, beginning with why Zawahiri had altered without permission Fadl's Compendium of the Pursuit of Divine Knowledge . Zawahiri claimed the writing of the book was a joint effort, because al-Jihad had financed it. He had to edit the book because it was full of theological errors. "We neither forged anything nor meddled with anything," Zawahiri said. Later, he added, "I ask those who are firm in their covenant not to pay attention to this propaganda war that the United States is launching in its prisons, which are situated in our countries." Fadl's revisions, Zawahiri warned, "place restrictions on jihadist action which, if implemented, would destroy jihad completely."

Is Al-Qaeda finished?

It is, of course, unlikely that al-Qaeda will voluntarily follow the example of the Islamist Group and Zawahiri's own organisation, al-Jihad, and revise its violent strategy. But it is clear radical Islam is confronting a rebellion within its ranks, one to which Zawahiri and the leaders of al-Qaeda are poorly equipped to respond. Radical Islam began as a spiritual call to the Muslim world to unify and strengthen itself through holy warfare. For the dreamers who long to institute God's justice on earth, Fadl's revisions represent a substantial moral challenge. But for the young nihilists who are joining the al-Qaeda movement for their own reasons - revenge, boredom, or a desire for adventure - the quarrels of the philosophers will have little meaning.

According to a recent National Intelligence Estimate in the US, al-Qaeda has been regenerating, and remains the greatest terror threat to America. Bruce Hoffman, a professor of security studies at Georgetown University in Washington DC, says although Fadl's denunciation has weakened al-Qaeda's intellectual standing, "from the worm's-eye view al-Qaeda fighters have on the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan, things are going more their way than they have in a long time." He went on, "The Pakistan government is more accommodating. The number of suicide bombers in both countries is way up, which indicates a steady supply of fighters. Even in Iraq, the flow is slower but continues."

Still, the core of al-Qaeda is much reduced from what it was before 9/11. An Egyptian intelligence official told me the current membership totals less than 200 men; American intelligence estimates range from under 300 to more than 500. Meanwhile, new al-Qaeda-inspired groups, which may be only tangentially connected to the leaders, have spread, and older, more established terrorist organisations are now flying the al-Qaeda banner, outside the control of bin Laden and Zawahiri. Hoffman thinks this is the reason that bin Laden and Zawahiri have been emphasising Israel and Palestine in their latest statements. "I see the pressure building on al-Qaeda to do

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something enormous this year," Hoffman said. "The biggest damage that Dr Fadl has done to al-Qaeda is to bring into question its relevance."

This August, al-Qaeda will mark its 20th anniversary. That is a long life for a terrorist group. Most terror organisations disappear with the death of their charismatic leader, and it would be hard to imagine al-Qaeda remaining a coherent entity without Osama bin Laden. The Red Army Faction went out of business when the Berlin Wall came down and it lost its sanctuary in East Germany. The IRA, unusually, endured in various incarnations for almost a century, until economic conditions in Ireland improved significantly, and the membership agreed to reach a political accommodation. When one looks for hopeful parallels for the end of al-Qaeda, it is discouraging to realise its leadership is intact, its sanctuaries are unthreatened, and the social conditions that gave rise to the movement are largely unchanged. On the other hand, al-Qaeda has nothing to show for its efforts except blood and grief. The organisation was constructed from rotten intellectual bits and pieces - false readings of religion and history - cleverly and deviously fitted together to give the appearance of reason. Even if Fadl's rhetoric strikes some readers as questionable, al-Qaeda's sophistry is rudely displayed for everyone to see. Although it will likely continue as a terrorist group, who could still take it seriously as a philosophy?

One afternoon in Egypt, I visited Kamal Habib, a key leader of the first generation of al-Jihad, who is now a political scientist and analyst. His writing has gained him an audience of former radicals who, like him, have sought a path back to moderation. We met in the cafeteria of the Journalists' Syndicate in downtown Cairo. Habib is an energetic political theorist, unbroken by 10 years in prison, despite having been tortured. (His arms are marked with scars from cigarette burns.) "We now have before us two schools of thought," Habib told me. "The old school, which was expressed by al-Jihad and its spinoff, al-Qaeda, is the one that was led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Sheikh Maqdisi, Zarqawi. The new school, which Dr Fadl has given expression to, represents a battle of faith. It's deeper than just ideology." He went on, "The general mood of Islamist movements in the Seventies was intransigence. Now the general mood is towards harmony and co-existence. The distance between the two is a measure of their experience." Ironically, Dr Fadl's thinking gave birth to both schools. "As long as a person lives in a world of jihad, the old vision will control his thinking," Habib suggested. "When he's in battle, he doesn't wonder if he's wrong or he's right. When he's arrested, he has time to wonder."

"Dr Fadl's revisions and Zawahiri's response show that the movement is disintegrating," Karam Zuhdy, the Islamic Group leader, told me one afternoon, in his modest apartment in Alexandria. His daughter, who is four, wrapped herself around his leg as an old black-and-white Egyptian movie played silently on a television. Such movies provide a glimpse of a more tolerant and hopeful time, before Egypt took its dark turn into revolution and Islamist violence. I asked Zuhdy how his country might have been different if he and his colleagues had never chosen the bloody path. "It would have been a lot better now," he admitted. "Our opting for violence encouraged al-Jihad to emerge." He even suggested that, had the Islamists not murdered Sadat nearly 30 years ago, there would be peace today between the Palestinians and the Israelis. He quoted the Prophet Muhammad: "Only what benefits people stays on the earth."

"It's very easy to start violence," Zuhdy said. "Peace is much more difficult."

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David Horowitz Awareness

University Wire

October 19, 2007 Friday

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Byline: By Matt Kennard, Columbia Daily Spectator; **SOURCE:** Columbia U.

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Body

David Horowitz -- the Marxist turned neoconservative -- will be speaking on campus next week as part of the inaugural Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week. The festivities are scheduled to take place on campuses from University of California, Los Angeles to Brown University to DePaul University, showcasing the brightest stars in the global fight against fascism, running the not-so-lengthy ideological gamut from Ann "Convert Them to Christianity" Coulter to Robert "Why Christianity Is a Religion of Peace and Islam Isn't" Spencer.

Horowitz will be joined on our campus by the ever-thoughtful and nuanced sage Sean Hannity, of the ever-thoughtful and nuanced Fox News. Together they will be spreading the ugly news that, according to Horowitz's Oct. 15 article in Spectator, "150 million out of 750 million Muslims support a holy war against Christians, Jews, and other Muslims." They will declaim the apocalyptic threat to Western civilization posed by this new Hitler-inspired army bent not only on our destruction but the subjugation of us all to a medieval caliphate, in which women and homosexuals are enslaved while the rest lie entombed in a theocratic dystopia.

But where does Horowitz derive his pedigree to lecture us on the threat of fascism? It seems nowhere. Horowitz is on the extreme fringes of the right wing in America that spews invective against whatever ideology or politic the American government designates as its vogueish enemy. Horowitz's ideology has actually led him to support a surfeit of actions that have strengthened the hand of fundamentalist Islam and made its spread inevitable. First was his typically overwrought support for the attack on Iraq by the United States and Britain. As the war in Iraq was building up, Horowitz wrote in the Jewish World Review that if anti-war demonstrators were successful, "all over the Middle East and the Muslim world, fanatical haters of Americans, Christians and Jews will take heart from Saddam's successful defiance, will draw the conclusion that the West is weak, and will be inspired to commit new atrocities against its most defenseless citizens."

In fact, the classified U.S. intelligence report by the National Intelligence Estimate, "Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States," revealed the huge effect the war in Iraq had on increasing Islamic radicalism and spreading it to a new generation of young Muslims who would now be more likely to attack Western targets. And in Britain, a report by the Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre -- which is composed of officials from MI5, MI6, Government Communications Headquarters and the police -- stated, "Events in Iraq are continuing to act as motivation and a focus of a range of terrorist-related activity in the U.K."

Horowitz also forgets to mention the succor the American government has given to Islamic fundamentalists all over the Middle East. The most barbaric and reactionary incarnation of political Islam in recent history has been the

David Horowitz Awareness

Taliban of Afghanistan-formed from the remnants of the mujahideen -- who fought the Red Army during the invasion of Afghanistan in 1982. The footnote of their rise is that the jihadis were given arms and encouragement from Horowitz's biggest hero, President Ronald Reagan.

All over the Middle East, the United States has quashed secular Arab nationalism. The most potent bulwark against this upsurge in the secular nationalism embodied by leaders like Anwar Sadat and Abdul Nasser, was Islamic radicalism. The same is true for Israel -- another one of Horowitz's Holy States. According to Robert Dreyfuss, author of the book "Devil's Game: How the United States Helped Unleash Fundamentalist Islam," "There's plenty of evidence that the Israeli intelligence services, especially Shin Bet and the military occupation authorities, encouraged the growth of the Muslim Brotherhood and the founding of Hamas [in Palestinian territories]." The most backward and fundamentalist Islamic state in the Middle East is Saudi Arabia, a sordid marriage of the Saudi dynasty and the extreme Wahhabi strain of Islam. Women can't drive cars there and Sharia law stipulates the removal of the hands for petty theft.

Go on, guess who the biggest friend of the United States is in the Middle East, aside from Israel. That's right, Saudi Arabia. The treatment of women in that genuinely medieval state makes Ahmadinejad's Iran look like a feminist utopia. But Horowitz's salvos remain trained on the official enemies of his Holy State, and currently that's Iran. His website has a video about the treatment of women in Iran, but nothing about Saudi Arabia. One day he might reposition, but he must wait for the nod from the Holy State. The Saudi Arabia example shows by itself that Horowitz and his fellow travelers have little regard for the rights of women and homosexuals under Islam. If women or homosexuals happen to live in an oppressive country that America and Britain want to bomb, then they will be supported with reams of invective. If they live in one that pumps out oil for our consumption and keeps their population subjugated, they can expect to receive nothing from Horowitz.

It also shows that Horowitz and his ilk don't care about fascism, as long as the fascists are our friends. In fact, Horowitz has praised the Contra fascists of Nicaragua who launched an attack on the democratically elected Sandinista government in the 1980s, an offensive that led to thousands of deaths. "I can't wait for the contras to march into this town and liberate it from these f---ing Sandinistas!" he said as the fascist paramilitaries were liquidating a democratic government. And then there's General Pinochet, the fascist dictator of Chile, who presided over a prison state for 15 years, rounding up and murdering thousands of left-wing activists. Horowitz, referring to calls to imprison Pinochet on his trip to Britain, said, "Imprisoning Pinochet on a foreign trip to seek medical help is one of those bad ideas of progressives that will come back to bite them." He instead notes, "Under the 15 years of Pinochet's rule, Chile had prospered so greatly that it was dubbed the 'miracle economy,' one of the two or three richest in Latin America."

And, amazingly, Horowitz isn't even the worst of the nomadic warriors that are educating the country during this Islamofascist Awareness Week. His buddy Ann Coulter is also on board. This is the woman who wrote after Sept. 11: "We should invade their countries, kill their leaders and convert them to Christianity." "Their countries" refers, shockingly enough, to any Muslim country. She talks to the University of Southern California on Oct. 25 about how to fight fascism. George Orwell would not know whether to laugh or cry. Horowitz and his cohorts probably aren't fascists, but they are doing everything to promote its spread by pushing for an imaginary clash of civilizations. He might be an extremist crank, but his crackpot ideas are percolating out into the mainstream, where their hypocrisy and blindness must be fought with a brio equal to his own.

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Load-Date: October 19, 2007

Mr Myers has hit brand new low

Irish Independent

September 20, 2008 Saturday

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Independent.ie 

Section: LETTERS

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Body

I am accustomed to the rantings of Kevin Myers and his desire to shock the general populace, but his article in your edition of September 18 has plummeted to new depths.

His criticism of Sarah Palin for bringing her baby son Trig, who has Down syndrome, to the Republican convention is disgusting and depraved.

Mr Myers displays anti-family and anti-Christian values. His beliefs are grossly discriminatory against a person with a difference. Mr Myers makes arrogant and ignorant assumptions as to the facts surrounding Down syndrome.

As a health care professional, I will say that Mr Myers is in no position to make assumptions as to the level of disability, if any, that this child may have. Civilised and decent people will find his insinuations that Trig should have either been left at home or aborted repulsive.

His singling out of Ms Palin for criticism for bringing her baby to the convention implies that women should not seek to achieve political office. With an attitude such as his, one should not wonder why we have a low level of breast-feeding in Irish society. He appears ignorant of the fact that the Obama children attended the Democratic convention the same week.

Mr Myers wonders if he is alone in being revolted by the sight of Trig Palin. Of course you are Mr Myers. Perhaps you favour the return to the policy of eugenics practiced by the Nazis in the 1930s'

I, for one, will now be seeking an alternative source for my daily news.

Taoiseach's sums just don't add up

Opportunists abound in the current economic climate, and none more so than the Taoiseach, as he calls on the Irish people not to make life any more difficult for themselves in the wake of the seemingly surprising economic downturn.

"It is increasingly obvious to me that our economic difficulties and the political dilemma posed by the Lisbon Treaty are linked".

Mr Myers has hit brand new low

It is easy to correlate the two as they occurred almost simultaneously; however, it would be welcome if Mr Cowen could point out to us exactly how ratification of the treaty would have attenuated the shock to our economic system. I am intrigued, considering it is also a global crisis, it affects other EU member states, and, in our case, is not unrelated to a reckless national housing policy, or lack thereof.

Using the difficulties we currently face as an opportunity to promote the political agenda, when the reality is that the two issues are not related, is to be expected, though disappointingly transparent and predatory.

At the same time, our Finance Minister is telling us that other EU members will break the EU limits on borrowing in the next year, just like us -- despite their commitment to engaging with their EU partners -- a commitment we are perceived by our Taoiseach to be lacking. And despite our perceived lack of engagement, our banks and financial institutions are "robust and well-positioned".

Something in the simultaneous equations does not add up. I leave it to the economists to figure that one out, too.

Iranian regime is a savage tyranny

As Iranian president Ahmadinejad addresses the UN General Assembly, it is time that Ireland recognised that his regime is no legitimate example of a different culture, but a savage repressive tyranny. Ireland, and the whole EU, should show its total opposition to the Iranian regime's human rights abuses, oppression of religious and ethnic minorities, persecution of homosexuals, execution of minors and the stoning of women.

Ahmadinejad's Iran is not only one of the world's major human rights abusers but also an obstacle to lasting global peace and security. Ahmadinejad's continual bellicose language, denial of the Holocaust, repeated calls for the destruction of the UN-mandated state of Israel, rejection of the current peace process and active support of terrorist groups, such as Hizbollah, Islamic Jihad and Hamas, is feeding further violence and increasing instability in the Middle East.

The Iranian regime's religious fanaticism and glorification of global Jihad, combined with their ongoing development of nuclear capabilities (that could soon produce military warheads), along with their existing missile arsenal, should send alarm bells ringing globally.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's recently published report points to an oil-rich Iran increasingly blocking legitimate international scrutiny of its nuclear intentions, and that has not proved that its desire to go nuclear is solely for peaceful civilian purposes. Iran has also ignored the UN security council's demand for a freeze of its nuclear programme.

As they have done in the past, the Irish government, trade unions, churches, NGOs and people who are so sensitive to global moral and humanitarian issues must show their objection to Ahmadinejad's regime.

Only through a concerted campaign of international diplomatic and economic sanctions can this growing and sinister threat be stopped. It will be too late to act when Iran uses, or threatens, nuclear annihilation.

Time to dispel all Lisbon fantasies

The letter from Dualta Roughneen (September 18) concerning Lisbon is very instructive.

We can leave aside the fantasy about Irish people being possibly conscripted one day to fight on the Eastern front. I, too, have a fantasy -- about Sinn Fein/IRA possibly admitting one day that it was morally wrong to have killed, injured or threatened even one person in order to advance any political aim in Ireland.

Both these fantasies are irrelevant to Lisbon.

The writer's essential argument for saying 'No' to Lisbon is that the Irish people cannot trust the parliament and government they elect to make decisions concerning Ireland's place in the future evolution of Europe.

Mr Myers has hit brand new low

If that is indeed the case, and that is what the 'No' vote really means, then the Irish government should tell its partners that Ireland is unable to advance further with the European project on the same terms as the other member states which have ratified Lisbon and will, therefore, cease to be a full member of the EU.

That is the only solution which is fair to both the untrusting Irish and to the, presumably gullible, people of the rest of the EU.

Ganley added to treaty debate

I think the criticism received by Declan Ganley is unfair. Although he put up huge amounts of money himself, I don't think he did the 'No' side any injustice.

Sure, who else was going to be able to equal the weight of all the government, bar Sinn Fein, had he not got so involved? The only shame brought on the 'No' side came from the extreme conservatives claiming a 'Yes' vote would endorse prostitution, euthanasia and abortion. Such lies and speculation were unfounded.

I found Mr Ganley's participation in debates on the like of 'Questions & Answers' brought more to the debate than I would have otherwise found out from government sources.

His opinions were not based on lies and were not propaganda. His business dealings are separate from the debate. I voted 'No' based on reasoned consideration of the facts, some of them coming from Mr Ganley's debating in the media, not because I felt I was defending his business interests. I challenge the Government to find Mr Ganley's opinions voiced during the debate to be based on lies. Only then might I change my opinion of Declan Ganley and Libertas.

Myth behind the origin of PDs

When commenting on the imminent demise of the Progressive Democrats in your editorial recently, you began with the words "Born out of a sense of moral outrage . . .".

Not everybody would agree that that was the reason why they were founded. Personally, I have always felt that it was a case of "they won't make me captain, so I will form my own team".

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One road, two lives

Hindustan Times

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Body

NEW DELHI, India, Aug. 9 -- You could say that Syed Wasif Haider ended up setting off bombs because of Kanpur's terrible power situation. Haider was 27 years of age in the winter of 2000. He worked as sales manager at American company Becton Dickinson was happily married to Kavita, a Hindu woman, and had two daughters - five-year-old Maria, and two-and-a-half-year-old Dania.

One morning, the power inverter broke down in this cosy home in the Humayun Bagh neighbourhood of Kanpur. Haider took the machine to Jilani Electronics near the Gulab Ghosi mosque. The Kashmiri owner introduced him to another person - Maulana Mumtaz, a signboard painter with a mesmerising personality.

Haider's life was about to change. Across the state lived another man of the same age - Syed Abdul Mobin, father of three daughters and two sons, with his wife Sumbul. He had studied Arabic and Unani medicine at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) after leaving his village in the Dumariyagunj district near the Nepal border. The police say he was also SIMI's first bomber.

Some thirty metres away from Jilani's repair shop where Haider had gone, is the cluttered and chaotic Parade Road. The story of SIMI, India's most dangerous militant religious movement, runs through it.

The meet that sounded the bugle

Almost a year back, on the evening of October 29, 1999, thousands of Muslim men - and about 150 women - had poured into the Halim College campus on Parade Road, roaring Islamic slogans. It was the beginning of a three-day SIMI conference that announced its assault on democratic, secular India.

At the congregation, seven-year-old Gulrez Siddiqui got on the stage and electrified the audience of some 20,000. He roared: "Islam ka ghazi, butshikan/Mera sher, Osama bin Laden (The warrior of Islam, the slayer of idols/My lion, Osama bin Laden)."

Later, on a telephone line kept before the microphones, the voice of Sheikh Yaseen, the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, reverberated through the awestruck gathering. He was making a live address, as was Qazi Hussain Ahmed, head of the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, and the imam of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Israel. Those present included Maulana Kalbe Sadiq, vice-chairman of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board.

Three Afghans walked around with green badges bordered with silver and gold. One of them, Ali Khan, admitted that he was a Talib from Kandahar. Kandahar was where all attention would shift to in two months. There were

One road, two lives

books and cassettes of speeches by Maulana Masood Azhar, who, unknown to all at the point, would be released on December 31, 1999 in the Afghan city after an eight-day Indian Airlines hijacking.

"It was all a shock for us. We realised they are developing international links. We distanced ourselves," says Haji Mohammed Salees, 51, who runs a hosiery shop and was at the congregation. Salees is rumoured to be a founding member of SIMI and was briefly arrested in 2001, but now writes in newspapers against the organisation.

We are sitting down the same road at another milestone of the SIMI story - Bhatia Restaurant, once a SIMI planning hub, where major operations were allegedly planned over tea and fried snacks. "The road that SIMI was taking could never have helped Muslims," said Salees.

The Kandahar-Kanpur link

That road had started with a different destination in the first place. SIMI was founded with the aim of "character development of students". In many parts of Uttar Pradesh, priests went door to door asking parents to have their children join the Shaheen Force, the SIMI children's wing where they are taught basic tenets of Islam.

Its influence spread gradually. In 1984, priests were knocking at the door of the deeply religious Mohammed Farooq in Bachhawa village. Farooq promptly signed up his son Syed Abdul Mobin for the Shaheen Force. And then, Mobin headed for the AMU, the centre of SIMI's power.

By the 1990s, Mobin had completed a three-year course in Arabic language. He had also become a SIMI Ansar, with the task of moving door to door, motivating young Muslims. Haider, too, finished his Mathematics Honours - from the DBS College, Kanpur. Between 1994 and 1997, he worked as a sales representative with the Weighing Balance Company at first and UCB, a Belgian company, later.

Life was falling in place. He had broken tradition and married a Hindu woman, Kavita, who would convert and assume the new name of Mariam.

In 1995, Mobin travelled to Bhopal to attend the four-day All India Ansar Meet, where SIMI leaders openly talked about an armed struggle. Mobin, a young man who loved football, was ready to pick up grenades.

Thousands of kilometres away, in Afghanistan, the radical students' group Taliban assumed power in 1996. "The corruption in SIMI came after the Taliban took over Afghanistan," says Salees, munching on a pakoda at Bhatia Restaurant. "They thought, 'If they can do it there, we can also do it here'."

For some time, Kanpur was indeed getting shades of Kandahar.

By the time of the Ikhwan Conference in 1999, much was changing within SIMI. Two rival groups had emerged. One was led by president Shahid Badar Falahi, who wanted to transform it into a political party and fight elections. The other was led by the hardliner Safdar Nagauri, who wanted an armed jihad.

By September 1999, Mobin was a Unani doctor. He had also deepened his association with SIMI. His father was happy that he had married and had five children. But at the same time, the police say he had become SIMI's treasurer, and was living at AMU.

In 2000, Mobin volunteered to be a bomber when attacks were planned in UP after the Ikhwan conference. He was assigned Agra, deputed with Hizb-ul Mujahadeen's Ali Mohammad and bomb expert Gulzar Wani, and received Rs 8,000 in installments. The bomb was assembled at an AMU hostel and taken to Agra by bus on July 28. On the way, they somehow broke the timer device. The plan failed. Mobin was asked to escape - and lie low.

Countdown to Independence Day

Within months, Haider's inverter shut down and he met the mesmerising Maulana near Parade Road. They began to spend time together, meeting Maulana's new friends, including one called Nazir Kashmiri. The Maulana,

One road, two lives

allegedly involved in several terrorist attacks since 1993, excelled at narrating horror tales of the oppression of Muslims in Kashmir and elsewhere.

"I loved listening to stories of militant heroes. I was also filled with rage," Haider would later tell his interrogators. By August, unknown to his family, he was ready. They were to carry out blasts around August 15. But before that, a dry run was required. Haider brought out his Maruti Gypsy in which he took Nazir Kashmiri and Maulana Mumtaz to a remote rural expanse near a railway track in Unnao.

Haider had stepped over the precipice. On August 14, he and the others took two bombs - one in a pressure cooker and the other in a wooden box - and buried them under gravel at the Aryanagar crossing. They heard the huge blast while passing by the Halett Hospital. Nazir asked to be taken to a place with a roof a kilometre away from Aryanagar. They went to a friend's house from where Nazir set off the second blast by remote control.

Mobin was working on another August 15 operation. He was in a rented room at Qasai Bada in Aligarh, making a timer-controlled bomb to be set off at Agra's cantonment. One afternoon, when Mobin had stepped out, a technical glitch caused a huge explosion, instantly killing four of his fellow militants.

On September 4, Mobin was arrested. Over the next year, Haider - who now carried a gun at all times - walked his way through a series of terror operations. On July 24, 2001, he was arrested near the Red Fort in New Delhi with RDX and hand grenades on him. He got a life sentence.

Months later, SIMI was banned by the Vajpayee administration and it went underground. The schism within was also complete - Nagauri and his cohort had transformed it into a conventional terror group.

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Before 8/8/08, here are our favorite eights

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

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FOURTH EDITION

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Byline: By Kathleen Nelson - ST. LOUIS Post-Dispatch

Body

The number eight is most auspicious to the Chinese, which is why they chose to open the Olympics on 8/8/08.

Each of the 10,000 or so athletes in Beijing has both a story to tell and one that will unfold this month and is hoping for a little bit of luck.

Inspired by the number, the opening date and the athletes, we selected the stories of eight U.S. athletes who are favored to medal, eight international athletes of the same caliber, and eight athletes whose stories transcend medals.

U.S. FAVORITES

KATIE HOFF SWIMMING

She'll be almost as omnipresent as Michael Phelps, competing in six events. Four years ago, she was the youngest American to compete in Athens. This year, Hoff, 19, is among the favorites for multiple golds.

SHAWN JOHNSON AND NASTIA LIUKIN GYMNASTICS

The pair are most likely to lead a talented squad to team and individual glory. Squeaky voices aside, their stories are interesting: Liukin, 18, is trained by her father, Valeri, a gold medalist for Russia in 1988 on the parallel bars. Johnson, 16, writes poetry.

MISTY MAY-TREANOR AND KERRI WALSH BEACH VOLLEYBALL

Certain segments of the population (MEN!!!) have no problem with NBC declaring beach volleyball the fifth "major" Olympic sport. If you must drool, let it be over this accomplished pair: defending gold medalists, winners of 101 consecutive matches and 18 successive titles on the pro beach tour.

JEREMY WARINER VS. LASHAWN MERRITT 400 METERS

Wariner had been nearly unbeatable since winning gold in Athens - until Merritt beat him in early June and at the Trials. Both should medal; the drama will be in the order of finish.

JENNIE FINCH SOFTBALL

Before 8/8/08, here are our favorite eights

Her stunning looks have made her the face of the U.S. squad, hoping to bid a bittersweet adieu to the Olympics by winning every gold medal since the sport's introduction in 1996.

MUNA LEE 100 AND 200 METERS

A surprise winner in the 100 at the Trials, the wispy Lee returns for her second Olympics. A native of Kansas City, Lee has rebounded from middling results in 2006 and '07 and a shoulder injury suffered in a car accident two weeks before the Trials.

THE SHOT PUT TRIUMVIRATE

Reese Hoffa won the Trials. Adam Nelson has earned two Olympic silver medals. Columbia, Mo., native Christian Cantwell is the world indoor champ. A medal sweep wouldn't be a surprise.

THE REDEEM TEAM

This clunky nickname will get mighty old mighty fast unless LeBron James, Kobe Bryant and the rest play to their potential and prove to be the best team in the world.

INTERNATIONAL FAVORITES

LIU XIANG - CHINA 110-METER HURDLES

The only male track gold medalist in China's history, Liu, 25, has less than 12 seconds to accomplish for the host nation what Phelps will attempt over eight races. Talk about pressure. The spoiler could be Cuba's Dayron Robles, who improved on Liu's world record in June, running 11.87.

YANG WEI - CHINA GYMNASTICS

Competing in his third Olympics, Yang, 28, is favored for gold in the all-around, which he has won at the past two world championships. But like most gymnastics fans, the Chinese don't care about world titles and technically difficult routines so much as winning when it counts - in the Olympics.

USAIN BOLT - JAMAICA 100 AND 200 METERS

Known more for his prowess at the longer distance, Bolt pulled a shocker by setting the 100-meter world record of 9.72 seconds in May. Just 21, Bolt will have a clearer path to completing the sprint double, since Tyson Gay withdrew from the 200 at the Trials because of injury, but still must face fellow Jamaican Asafa Powell in both races.

ROMAN SEBRLE - CZECH REPUBLIC DECATHLON

Silver medalist in 2000, gold medalist in 2004, Sebrle proved his durability last year, when a fellow competitor accidentally struck him in the shoulder with a javelin. Sebrle, 33, recovered in time to win the world title and is the only decathlete to amass more than 9,000 points. "When I step onto the turf of a stadium today," he told the Prager Zeitung, "I look around first."

ZHANG YINING - CHINA TABLE TENNIS

The host country should own these events. The world's top five women are Chinese. The top four men are Chinese. No one dominates more than Zhang, ranked No. 1 in women's singles and doubles, and the winner of two golds in Athens.

TIRUNESH DIBABA - ETHIOPIA 5,000 AND 10,000 METERS

Before 8/8/08, here are our favorite eights

What a pedigree. Her cousin, Dirartu Tulu, won gold in the 10,000 in Barcelona, and her sister, Genzebe, won this year's junior world cross country title. Dibaba, 23, has won the world cross-country championships three times and was the first athlete ever to win world titles at both distances in the same year.

STELIANA NISTOR - ROMANIA GYMNASTICS

The Chinese will be the biggest obstacle for the United States in the team competition, but Nistor, 18, has a chance to medal in each of the individual events. She enjoys practicing her English and could get many chances, especially after the uneven bars and balance beam.

ALAIN BERNARD - FRANCE SWIMMING

At 6-4 and 200 pounds, Bernard shouldn't be surprised to hear, "Dude, weightlifting is down the street at Beijing University." But don't be surprised if the beefy Bernard, 25, strikes a bodybuilder's pose on the podium after the 50- or 100-meter freestyle.

SENTIMENTAL FAVORITES

NADIR AL MASRI - PALESTINE 5,000 METERS

For nearly a decade, Masri has trained in his neighborhood in Gaza, which has been on virtual lockdown since **Hamas** seized control. Coming to his aid were Israeli human rights activists, who helped Masri, 28, secure his exit.

SHEILA TAORMINA - U.S. MODERN PENTATHLON

Gold medalist in the 4 x 200-meter freestyle in 1996, triathlete in Sydney and Athens, Taormina was ready for this five-pronged challenge: shooting, fencing, equestrian, 220-meter swim and 3K run. Taormina, 39, also fended off an attack from a stalker in 2002, but her biggest victory could be over depression, with which she has struggled for five years.

NATALIE DU TOIT - SOUTH AFRICA 10K OPEN-WATER SWIMMING

Three years after being hit by a car, Du Toit won five gold medals at the Paralympics in Athens and will be the first amputee to compete with able-bodied swimmers at the Olympics.

STEPHANIE RICE AND EAMON SULLIVAN - AUSTRALIA SWIMMING

A love story that seems to have gone awry. Sullivan, 22, will contend in the 50- and 100-meter freestyle. Rice, 20, is among the favorites in the 200- and 400-meter individual medley. After being likened to Becks and Posh, reports circulated last week that their relationship was over. The truth, and its effect on their performances, will be fun to follow.

SARA KHOSHJAMAL - IRAN TAEKWONDO

Banned from working out with men, she trains in her living room with her older brothers and competes in the traditional scarf. The first Iranian woman to qualify for the Olympics, Khoshjamal, 19, is a hero to girls throughout her country.

DANA HUSSEIN ABDUL-RAZZAQ - IRAQ TRACK

The only Iraqi woman to qualify for the Olympics, Hussein Abdul-Razzaq, 21, was not allowed to train outside the country, unlike her male counterparts. So, she practiced on the crumbling track at Baghdad University with little hope that the IOC would allow Iraqi athletes to participate. After initially banning the team, the IOC reversed itself last week.

Before 8/8/08, here are our favorite eights

OTYLIA JEDRZEJCZAK - POLAND SWIMMING

Gold medalist in the 200-meter butterfly in Athens, she sold the medal for about \$85,000, then donated the proceeds to an oncology clinic. A year later, Jedrzejczak was involved in a car accident that killed her brother. Grief-stricken and injured, she took a year off but returned to competition in 2006, winning silver and bronze medals at last year's world championships.

ERIC SHANTEAU - U.S. SWIMMING

One week before the Trials, Shanteau learned he had testicular cancer. His doctors cleared him to compete, and in an upset, he qualified for the 200-meter breaststroke. His doctors recommended surgery. Shanteau, 24, opted to compete first, though he vowed to pull out if his condition worsens.

Notes

BEIJING 2008

Graphic

PHOTO

PHOTO - KATIE HOFF The Associated Press PHOTO - JEREMY WARINER VS. LASHAWN MERRITT The Associated Press PHOTO - LIU XIANG PHOTO - USAIN BOLT

Load-Date: August 3, 2008

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Irish Independent

August 5, 2008 Tuesday

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Independent.ie 

Section: LETTERS

Length: 1284 words

Body

Complaints by members of the Government about Libertas funding of the 'No' campaign in the recent Lisbon Treaty referendum leaves them open to a charge of hypocrisy.

The recently published Standards in Public Office report expressed dissatisfaction at the fact that of the EUR11.8m spent during the last general election campaign, less than EUR2m could be publicly traced.

The fact that political parties spend multiples of what they declare as donations raises important issues about the functioning of our democracy.

The fact that political parties can get away with this and are not legally obliged to either publish annual accounts or declare the source of their funds is a scandal.

The fact that Libertas has taken the political parties on, and beaten them at their own game in the Lisbon Treaty referendum only adds a further dimension to the scandal.

It also highlights the hypocrisy of Government complaints about the lack of information on Libertas funding when exactly the same applies to all political parties.

Struggling on minimum wage

It is all very well for FAS's senior economist to preach what he most likely would not practise himself, namely that people must change their attitudes towards minimum wage jobs.

As FAS officials are well-paid people, they are immune to the struggle many face on a wage of EUR360 per week.

I know from speaking to many job-seekers that minimum-wage employers themselves are quite often the problem.

If they know that someone has qualifications, they won't employ them.

The qualified Irish person needs to earn money like everyone else. FAS should perhaps stop focusing on the speck in the eye of the minimum wage worker, and pay attention to the log in the eyes of the highly paid, such as themselves.

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Many people earn more than EUR40,000, but they are not worth the money. People like this should take a wage cut, and thereby create a job for someone else.

Ridding hospitals of infections

Congratulations to your writers for keeping the scandal of healthcare-acquired infections in the news.

It is indeed alarming to read of the rise to 95 per week of incidences of C difficile in Ireland (Irish Independent, August 1).

Of course we have no indication of the number of people who have died as a result.

I note that the European Centre for Disease Prevention has called for a review of standards of infection control and that a spokesperson from the HSE has said that we don't need such a review. On this occasion I have to agree with the HSE spokesperson. Indeed, we don't need any more reviews, reports, standards, recommendations --the offices in the Department of Health must be choc-a-bloc with these already, at enormous cost to the taxpayer.

What we do need is for the known standards to be enforced.

There is ample evidence that this is not happening in many of our hospitals, and no evidence at all that it is likely to happen on a wide scale in the near future.

GAA discipline

is simply a farce

In light of the Paul Galvin saga, it is clear just how convoluted and farcical GAA disciplinary procedures have become.

In what other sport can a player seemingly hop from one disciplinary body to another, making one appeal after the next, until he is eventually successful in having his sentence reduced?

What, can anyone tell me, is wrong with having one dedicated body to issue a sanction and one body thereafter to whom appeals can be made?

We do not see this sort of protracted saga developing in either rugby or soccer, the result being that players are willing to accept their punishment for any wrongdoing, if after one appeal they are not successful.

It is about time GAA authorities got a grip on their disciplinary procedures and put end to this sort of debacle which ultimately only makes them look amateurish and foolish.

Finally, in halving Paul Galvin's ban from six to three months the GAA have failed to take a stand on the issue of the manhandling of referees by players.

One can only wonder had the offending player been from one of the so called weaker counties would his case have been dealt with so favourably?

Now there's a question.

Iniquities of Celtic Tiger

Over the course of the Celtic Tiger we have seen the gradual destruction of values and the inherent qualities which distinctly made us Irish. We were once noted for our generosity of spirit and our genuine friendliness. But now we have become a society obsessed with money and totally centred on the self.

Our famed hospitality now only serves the big budget. Where tourists were once charmed, they're now alarmed at the extortionate prices we now charge.

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Business chiefs believe they're selling a product that is vitally based on the intrinsic nature of the Irish people.

But the influx of money in recent years has only served to distort people's perception of values and what really matters.

People only care about what they can achieve for themselves, while others are disregarded as useless commodities when they no longer serve a purpose in the economic grand plan.

The imminent recession can only act as a remedial force which can remedy what ills have befallen our society.

With the downturn in the economy, people should become more inward-looking and take a more enlightened approach to their needs and balance this with higher values so as to create a society which is not devoid of the spirit we once cherished.

Why Israel needs

to act over Iran

There has been much frenzied commentary and analysis in the international media, especially business and economics publications, about the possibility of an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear sites.

Economists warn of the direful consequences for the world economy, with oil prices soaring; increased instability in the Middle East and the Gulf region, and a major global recession that would diminish us all.

Many of these articles conjure up an impression of Israel as a paranoid nation that is eager to let loose against its enemies.

But surely you're not being paranoid when what you fear is real? The Iranian regime has repeatedly expressed the view that Israel should be wiped off the map --that it should cease to exist. The same regime has sponsored the activities of organisations in other countries that are pledged to the destruction of Israel, including Hizbullah and **Hamas**.

So when that regime is edging closer to enriching uranium, and therefore to the ability to produce nuclear weapons, is it not logical to expect that it will either launch a direct nuclear strike on Israel or arrange for a proxy terrorist attack involving a nuclear device?

The US administration in recent days is said to be seeking a rapprochement with Iran, and to be less keen than previously on military action to prevent it acquiring nuclear weapons.

Does that scenario sound familiar? During World War Two, pleas to the allied nations to bomb the death camps fell on deaf ears. Such action wasn't deemed a priority in terms of winning the war.

So innocent Jewish men, **women**, and children continued to perish.

I watched a documentary a few months ago on the Holocaust and a comment from a survivor who was interviewed really stuck in my mind.

He said: "If there had been a state of Israel in existence in World War Two, and if it had an air force consisting of only one plane, I believe that plane would have taken off to bomb Auschwitz."

Because there wasn't an Israel when the Nazis were committing genocide, the Jews were soft targets for them.

Just as Hitler could more easily have been stopped if the Western nations had tackled his regime at an earlier stage, such as his re-occupying of the Rhineland in 1936, Israel has the potential to stop the Persian tyrants in their tracks.

Sooner has to be better than later.

Hypocrisy over Libertas funding

Load-Date: August 5, 2008

End of Document

Comment & Debate: McCain's attack lines against Obama have already been written by Clinton: Now the phoney war is over. The election that counts has only just begun - and it will hinge on a battle of definition

The Guardian - Final Edition

June 4, 2008 Wednesday

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theguardian

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Length: 1210 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

When Gerald Ford took the oath of office at the end of the Watergate affair, he declared: "My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over." Barack Obama did not use those words in Minnesota last night, though plenty of his fellow Democrats would have found them apt. The longest, closest primary campaign in US history - a contest that cut deep into some of America's most neuralgic areas - has finally come to an end. The people of Montana and South Dakota concluded what the citizens of Iowa began exactly five months earlier, putting Obama within touching distance of his party's nomination for president.

The final hours did not run smoothly. Before the polls closed yesterday, news agencies reported that Hillary Clinton was ready to accept defeat. But then Clinton officials said the story was wrong, and that their fight goes on.

This is what people mean when they speak about fighting to the bitter end. Besides the mudfest at Saturday's Democratic rules committee meeting, the last days were marked by Bill Clinton giving an encore of his red-faced act, this time denouncing a journalist as "slimy" and a "scumbag", later prompting his aides to relay his regret for such "inappropriate" language. The dimming of the former president's reputation has been one of the sadder consequences of this endurance test of an election season.

And yet, even if Hillary does bow out soon, it is the very opposite of over. Forget how exhausted the key players are after the fight of their lives: the election of 2008 has only just begun. The battle that counts, the one whose reverberations will be felt across the world for the next four years, is the general election on November 4.

Barring a mass defection of Obama delegates to Clinton, that showdown will be between the Illinois senator and John McCain. If the world had a vote, it's pretty clear who would win: a YouGov survey of British voters this week shows Obama would rout McCain by 49% to 14%, and it's a fair guess that the constituencies of Africa North, Europe West and Asia Central would go the same way.

Comment & Debate: McCain's attack lines against Obama have already been written by Clinton: Now the phoney war is over. The election that counts has only just b....

Alas, there will be no such global ballot, and in the country that matters, the race is much tighter. As of now, despite poll numbers showing the Republican party at rock-bottom and George W Bush's presidency with negative ratings north of 70%, McCain and Obama are within just a few points of each other.

That this is true in what should be a banner year for the Democrats is not the only reason why several seasoned hands tell me they are "worried" about Obama's chances. First, they note that the senator has won the nomination on a losing streak or, at best, a mixed streak with too many defeats. The proportional system of delegate allocation has kept him in front even after losses in Texas, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Indiana, and thorough beatings in Kentucky and West Virginia. But to stagger across the primary finish line like this deprives Obama of the swagger to which any new nominee *should* be entitled. He does not have that winner's sheen that an early, easy victory would have brought.

More tangibly, he begins on the back foot, having failed to win over voters, especially the much-discussed white working class, who backed Hillary and who Democrats need if they are to take the White House. One analysis showed him failing to capture blue-collar voters in 26 of the 29 early primary states, and doing not much better in the later ones. And, of course, Obama must begin the hard work of winning back women, especially older women, who remained so loyal to Clinton when the media had, again and again, counted her out. That will mean more of what he's been doing in the last few days, lavishing praise on her resilience as a campaigner. He needs female voters to see that he has genuine respect for the woman who has already gone further in US politics than any other. He'll need to appoint senior women to his campaign team, too, perhaps poaching them from Hillaryland. Naming a woman as a running mate is unlikely: those I've spoken to say privately that putting an African-American and a woman on the ticket might just be too much change for the US electorate to stomach in one gulp.

But for all the efforts to apply healing balm after a bruising race, the Obama camp will strain not to point out that much of his problem is the damage inflicted on him by Hillary.

For the past three months, she has sought to do to Obama what Republicans have long tried, usually successfully, to do to Democrats: to paint him as an "elitist", an out-of-touch intellectual with radical ideas outside the mainstream of American life. Republicans destroyed Adlai Stevenson that way in the 1950s and famously did the same to George McGovern, Michael Dukakis, Al Gore and John Kerry, the last with brutal panache. "Hillary Clinton is the first Democrat I can think of to use that same approach against a fellow Democrat," says Jacob Weisberg, editor of Slate.

It means that McCain's attack lines against Obama are already written for him. He simply has to pick up where Hillary left off, presenting Obama as a black McGovern, pointing to his leftist friends, questioning his patriotism, casting him as the denizen of university towns remote from "the real America" - and with both an intolerance for high-carb breakfasts and a poor bowling arm to boot. Viewed like this, the conventional wisdom that the Clintons have done Obama a favour, by battle-hardening him in time for November, may be too hopeful. They may simply have blown holes in his armour, through which McCain merely has to aim straight.

The shape of the coming contest has changed in another way. At the start of the year, it seemed as if 2008 would pit two ideologically similar figures against each other. Obama was the post-partisan who would reach out to independents; McCain was the maverick Republican with a knack for appealing leftward. Both would end up in the centre.

That's not how it looks now. Obama has been exposed as the Democrat with the most "liberal" voting record in the senate, while McCain has sought to secure his conservative base by asserting his tax-cutting instincts and echoing Bush on the economy and healthcare. It means that the general election campaign begins with both sides behind traditional, partisan lines.

Nowhere is the gap between them clearer or wider than on the question that matters most to the global electorate watching this battle: US foreign policy. Just this week, McCain has ramped up the aggressive rhetoric on Iran while still clinging to the faith that made him predict in March 2003 that invading Iraq would be "one of the best things that's happened to America". Obama, meanwhile, suggests direct talks with Tehran and a withdrawal of troops from

Comment & Debate: McCain's attack lines against Obama have already been written by Clinton: Now the phoney war is over. The election that counts has only just b....

Iraq. McCain calls Obama the **Hamas** candidate and an appeaser; Obama says McCain offers nothing more than a third term of the Bush presidency.

The result is a contest whose stakes could not be higher and which will hinge on the battle of definition. Can Obama brand McCain as a crotchety, Meldrew-ish version of the discredited Dubya? Or can McCain cast Obama as a naive novice who belongs in the student seminar room? The phoney - if gripping - war is now all but over. The decisive conflict is about to begin.

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End of Document

Meaningful messaging; Souktel is using cellphones to deliver crucial communications

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National Edition

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Section: FP WEEKEND; Pg. FW7

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Byline: Vanessa Farquharson, Financial Post

Body

"LOL! K GTG C U L8R" is probably one of the more common text-messages being transmitted between cellphones in North America these days. Since it first became popular about eight years ago, SMS (short message service) has been used mostly by teenagers for last-minute scheduling, clandestine gossiping or as a way to pass the time while standing at the bus stop.

But in other parts of the world, where cellphones are used more often than the Internet or traditional landlines, text-messages are starting to carry a lot of weight: They transmit crucial information about jobs, food supplies and emergency resources.

Souktel, a non-profit organization based out of Ramallah, in the West Bank, is at the forefront of this trend. It uses text-messaging to provide two essential services: connecting local residents with jobs and connecting aid workers with those in need.

Founded by an American, a Palestinian and a Canadian -- 28-year-old Jacob Korenblum of Toronto -- it just launched its official Web site at www.souktel.org and celebrated its 1,000th customer.

With features like mini-CVs and classified ads, alert systems and condensed surveys, Souktel is helping recent university graduates find work, businesses find employees and charities find families struggling to meet basic needs.

"Our service uses text-messaging -- on any old, simple crappy cellphone -- to enable people to get information about jobs and emergency aid," explains Mr. Korenblum, who developed his business model just over three years ago while on the Reynolds Foundation fellowship for social entrepreneurship at Harvard. "From the beginning, it was important to stick with cellphones because Internet usage is quite low here, with no more than 30% of households in the West Bank having access to the Web; 80% have cellphones though, so we honed in on that, developed the technology at MIT and finished the software here."

The reason mobile phones are so prevalent in this region, says Mr. Korenblum, is because the unit cost is about \$15, plus incoming texts are free and most pay-as-you-go packages have no fixed contract, which is preferable for those with no fixed income. To use the Internet, on the other hand, one must either buy a computer and face high import tariffs -- it's about US\$1,000 for a laptop or a desktop, on top of a \$40 per month connection charge -- or go

Meaningful messaging; Souktel is using cellphones to deliver crucial communications

to an Internet cafe, where there are a limited number of terminals, restricted hours and, for women, it's usually not an option.

Landlines are also pricey as there are no flat rates, calling cellphones is costly and households may have entire extended families under one roof, which means dozens of people could be vying for a single phone at once. As well, in rural areas, the infrastructure is such that it's easier to put up a cellphone tower than it is to cover an entire region with cables.

"Mobile technology and cell-phone-based software is still an emerging market in the world, which is why young people are our main client base," says Mr. Korenblum. "They just get the technology, plain and simple. It was a bit more challenging trying get our seed funding because many investors found it difficult to wrap their heads around the concept of a mini-CV or mini-classified ad on a phone. But now we have a track record of success, matching 10 people to a job every week, so we're getting more attention."

To give a better idea of what exactly these mini-CVs and job descriptions would entail, here's an example of a potential SMS exchange between an employer and employee, after both have registered for Souktel's service:

From Souktel to job applicant: Where can you work?

- 1- Nablus
- 2- Jenin
- 3- Bethlehem
- 4- Ramallah
- 5-More

This would be one of a series of questions, which the recipient would answer by typing the appropriate key. In the end, a mini resume is formed with all relevant information such as age, skills, education, et cetera, and sent back to Souktel. The employer would eventually receive something like this:

From Souktel to employer: Top 3 CVs matching your job ad

- 1 - 0599245789
- 2 - 0599661661
- 3 - 0598745965

Call 0599245789: Young man seeks farm job in Jenin. Has high school ed; skills in milking machine operation. Can work f/t, all wkdays.

The employer would then phone the applicant to set up an interview in person and the two of them would take it from there.

Souktel's AidLink system works in a similar fashion, with agencies setting up SMS mailing lists of all the cellphone numbers they need to contact. They can then create alerts to send to everyone in a certain area, such as:

Emergency food baskets ready for all new mothers in North and Central Region. Come to main mosque at 3 p.m. on Tue with ID card. Call Suha at 0599-221667 if need more info.

For the most part, Souktel's text-messages are sent out in complete but simple sentences, but they have adopted a few popular SMS abbreviations that convey as much information as possible in as little space.

Meaningful messaging; Souktel is using cellphones to deliver crucial communications

"What's interesting is that it's actually creating a new lexicon of abbreviated Arabic words," says Mr. Korenblum. "Chat and SMS has given birth to this new trend of writing Arabic with English letters, and the numbers 2 and 3 replace things as well."

Souktel is still a relatively young organization but has already weathered its fair share of turmoil: The election of **Hamas** in 2006 and its subsequent fall the next year, a rare and unexpected snowstorm this January, which shut down most of the West Bank for three days; and the recent violent attacks in Gaza.

"Doing business in a conflict or post-conflict zone, there'll be sudden spikes in volume of people using our service during crucial times," says Mr. Korenblum. "We're definitely an emergency-response enabler, so we have to make sure we're up and running consistently throughout everything that comes up."

Although based in Ramallah, with smaller offices in Canada and the United States, Souktel has just completed a round of pilot testing in Central Asia and is now making its service available on an international level.

"We're really excited about that," says Mr. Korenblum. "It's difficult, though, because we see a lot of for-profit applications with this technology and we're eager to explore some of those avenues, but we also see extremely socially valuable options that maybe aren't so profitable. Everyone always says if you have something good, it must be scaled up as broadly and quickly as possible, but I think we have to be very careful about that."

"I see a lot of businesses go wrong by exporting their model into a completely different culture and society," he adds. "So we need to be very intentional and careful, making sure whatever we do is a good idea for that specific market and demographic. A silver bullet for the Middle East may not be the same thing for another region."

Either way, the success of Souktel is a sure sign that the future of text-messaging -- not just as a quick form of communication, but as a crucial one -- is looking strong, and it's something those in the developing world should take note of.

"We're helping to revive an economy that's suffering because of violence," Mr. Korenblum says. "That's something no one from any political background can quarrel with -- it's enabling economic growth to help make a society productive."

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Graphic

Color Photo: Benoit Faiveley; Social entrepreneur and Canadian Jacob Korenblum is a co-founder of Souktel. With 80% of households in the West Bank owning mobile phones, Souktel seeks to connect people. ;

Load-Date: March 22, 2008

Israelis Transfixed and Confused by Obama

New York Observer

March 13, 2008

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Length: 1293 words

Byline: Joshua Mitnick

Body

TEL AVIV-As if staring at each other across the front page of the newspaper, the 10-year-old boy bleeding from a Gaza rocket attack looked up into the controversial photo of the Illinois senator wrapped in a white turban.

"A Hillary Clinton Production," proclaimed the headline in the tabloid Yediot Ahronot, Israel's top-selling daily paper. "Obama, the Muslim."

The next day, however, Obama was back on the front page of Yediot, this time declaring, "I'm a friend of Israel," in an exclusive interview.

The Democratic primary has captured the attention of the locally focused Israeli media, with Clinton-Obama coverage rivaling the daily violence of the Middle East conflict and a handful of political corruption scandals for airtime. For Israelis, the contest pits Clinton, almost a favorite-daughter candidate, against Obama, the political star whose Middle East positions are less well known and, therefore, more worrisome.

In a country that relies on its alliance with the U.S. as an existential asset, the coming of a new presidential administration will to a large extent determine local agendas-that is, containment of Iran and the tenor of peace talks with the Jewish state's Arab neighbors. While the last two American commanders in chief are remembered for having cozy ties with Israeli prime ministers, Israelis also remember the friction with the administration of George Bush Sr. in the early 1990's.

"I would say that their interest at this point is more personal rather than issue-oriented," said Jacob Eilon, the nightly news co-anchor for Israel Channel 10, who was sent to the U.S. to cover the Super Tuesday voting. "It has always been about who is better for Israel. Hillary Clinton is perceived as friendly-Obama is still a mystery."

Remembering Clinton's visits to Israel during her husband's presidency, and Bill Clinton's words of consolation after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the aura of the Clinton family still strikes deep emotional chords with Israelis.

In the other corner, there's the Illinois wunderkind. In contrast to the popular enthusiasm he's aroused in America, Obama has yet to win over Israelis, many of whom complain they are unfamiliar with his views on the Middle East save for a comment that he'll talk with hostile leaders like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

"The enemies of the U.S. are our enemies, you know, like Hamas, Al Qaeda and Iran," said Victor Alfassi, a butcher in Tel Aviv's Carmel open-air market. "His dialogue will hurt American interests and the Jewish people."

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In Israeli politics, the color and chaos of the souks are the boilerplate backdrop for a political campaign to show it has the support of the Israeli street. The catcalling stall workers are overwhelmingly of Middle Eastern origin and view politics through the prism of conservatism, class and ethnicity—a mix that has translated into votes for the Likud.

But that doesn't mean that everyone in the souk buys the smear stories about Obama's ties to the Muslim world, or the speculation that he'd favor the Palestinians at Israel's expense.

Examining the newspaper with the picture of the turbaned senator, Yitzhak Lilian said, "He looks like a Sudanese. But I wouldn't disqualify him for what he wears."

Lilian, 67, who runs a souk shop that sells DVD's, says he believes that the U.S.-Israel alliance is too tight for any one president to drastically change. What does worry him, though, is the Illinois senator's lack of experience. "He's not yet mature enough to lead a superpower that is the leader of the free world," he said. "Look at our experience with Benjamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak. They were both too young and made rash decisions."

Gabriel Sheffer, a professor of political science at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, acknowledged that the initial impression of Obama was that he wasn't pro-Israeli.

"But now I think it's changing a little bit," said Gabriel Sheffer, a professor of political science at Hebrew University. "Barack Obama is looked upon more positively by more and more journalists. People are looking at him more favorably, and think that he won't be so bad for Israel."

In recent weeks, Obama has vowed before American Jews and Israelis that he is actually safely within the mainstream of Democratic Party policy on the Israeli-Arab conflict. Sounding like a regurgitation of AIPAC in the interview with Yediot Ahronot, he spoke of an "unshakeable commitment to the security of Israel" and to the "shared interests, shared values" and "shared history" between the two nations.

He's also gotten some key endorsements from American Jewish figures like former California Congressman Mel Levine, who said the Illinois senator insists that Israel remain a Jewish state.

"There was fear of the unknown, but he has said a few things that have ameliorated that," said Alon Pinkas, a former Israeli consul general in New York. Public opinion experts in Israel say that the threat of a nuclear Iran ranks among the top Israeli concerns.

"If there's anything that could rankle Israelis about an Obama presidency, it is the question about whether he would be tough on Iran," said Dahlia Scheindlin, an Israeli election pollster. "Iran plays the role of Israel's perennial existential threat."

And certainly, that's a concern that cuts across political lines in Israel, from the right-wing Likudniks who might be less inclined to support Obama, to the Israeli left, which might be more likely to embrace him.

Ephraim Sneh, a parliament member from the left-wing Labor Party, said that while he isn't concerned about the identity of the winner of the race, Israel hopes the next president of the U.S. will stand up to Iran in the same way that Churchill faced Germany during World War II.

In an interview with the Ha'aretz newspaper, Obama adviser Samantha Power—who has since departed the campaign after calling Hillary Clinton a "monster" in an interview with a Scottish newspaper—said the senator supports a direct meeting with the Iranian president to "increase the chance for mobilizing international sanctions."

Café Tamar on Tel Aviv's trendy Sheinkin Street is famous as a bastion of old Israeli-left bourgeois, where patrons in their 50's and 60's sip cappuccino under posters of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Nava Shrieber, a 60-year-old museum curator, and a friend agreed that Obama's good looks would help him in the election. They also debated whether it's more important to have a female or a black president. Shrieber, argued for Obama because he represents the outsider, while Hillary Clinton represents the "Ivy League."

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Despite that, Shrieber described Obama as "scary" because of his inexperience in foreign policy. "Especially what he said about Iraq: At first he was squarely behind [the war] and then he faded away. He has charisma, but there's nothing behind it."

At another table, Roni Mordikovich concurred. Even though Obama represents youth, renewal and the American value that anyone can rise to the top regardless of skin color, he thought his candidacy is a potential problem for Israel.

"We don't know that much about him. We don't have information. We don't know what his attitude toward the Arab world is, or Iran. Clinton, from that perspective, has more experience."

Back in the Carmel souk, Avner Tzadok said he was amazed at Obama's surge to the front of the Democratic pack. Just like Israelis aren't ready for a prime minister of Middle Eastern Jewish descent, Americans won't be so fast to anoint a black president, said Tzadok, the son of immigrants from Yemen.

"It's like if a Moroccan were elected prime minister. It will take another five or six terms. Israelis are racist people, and so are the Americans. The whites won't agree to make a black their boss."

Load-Date: March 14, 2008

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Katsav and the media: A reckoning

The Jerusalem Post

February 29, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1232 words

Byline: CALEV BEN-DAVID

Highlight: BETWEEN THE LINES. Had the former president remained largely silent while his attorneys negotiated his plea bargain, and simply expressed contrition afterwards for whatever offense he may have committed, it's possible he might have emerged from this affair with some small degree of his dignity intact

Body

'You didn't let the facts confuse your aims. Your sense of justice, of truth, have been overridden. You didn't stop for a minute to ask, maybe this is, after all, a libel. None of you looked directly at the simple facts. None of you made a single investigation into the claims. Not a single newspaper, TV station, radio station, investigated the claims. You crossed every ethnical journalist line. I know what hurts you. You wrote when I was elected as president, that this is 'the end of Zionism.'"

So declared former president Moshe Katsav during his unforgettable tirade, broadcast live from Beit Hanassi on January 24, 2007.

Regarding that last remark: It was in The Jerusalem Post that this headline had appeared; but like so much else in this sordid saga, Katsav got it wrong. As this paper noted in response: "Contrary to the implication Katsav sought to create... this article was not a personal attack on him; writer Amotz Asa-El was arguing that there had been a 'spit in the face of a Zionist icon' - Shimon Peres, the defeated candidate - 'by non- and sometimes anti-Zionist small-time politicians.'"

While most of the coverage this week naturally focused on the outrage from opponents of the state's controversial plea bargain with Katsav, after the High Court of Justice refused to overturn it, the media also took time to examine its own considerable role in this affair as it hopefully draws to a close.

On Channel 1's current-affairs program, Politika, former Katsav media advisers Ronen Tzur and Nissim Douek delivered their own knocks at the press, lambasting the numerous allegations of sexual assault and rape from various women in their boss's employ over the years that were reported and broadcast - most of which fell far short of the sexual harassment and indecent behavior charges to which the disgraced president eventually pleaded guilty, in exchange for a relatively mild, one-year suspended sentence.

So is the media, in fact, also guilty in this case? Did it indeed "cross every ethical line" and help railroad an innocent man?

Well, there's no question that much of the reporting of the Katsav story was excessive, both in content and in terms of prominence, including the coverage given some of the more tenuous allegations made against the former

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president. Some of the individuals working on behalf of the complainants - in particular, attorney Kinneret Barashi - also seemed a little too eager to get in front of the TV cameras at every opportunity.

And yet again, the presumption of innocence any accused individual deserves in this society was damaged by numerous leaks from the police and prosecutors' office - though Katsav is hardly the first official to suffer from that problem, and can hardly claim some kind of unique prejudice in this regard.

Despite all that, in this case I see no reason why the press also needs to accept any kind of plea-bargain deal to avoid being brought up on more serious charges. If the media is not entirely innocent in this affair, its measure of guilt is certainly nothing compared to that of Katsav and his allies.

Former Channel 2 anchor Gadi Sukenik - who was singled out by Katsav in his Beit Hanassi speech - also appeared on Politika and ably defended his work on this story. He made the simple point that even if one does accept that the former president is guilty only of the charges to which he admitted, this by itself means he was lying through his teeth the entire time he was hypocritically assuming a posture of moral indignation as he lashed out against a "media lynch."

Even worse, some of Katsav's supporters didn't hesitate to feed the press with unsubstantiated rumors and innuendo about some of the women accusing their former boss of sexual misbehavior in order to discredit them, as they lashed out at his accusers for supposedly doing the same.

Katsav's misbehavior while in office, even in the diminished form which he pleaded guilty to, is inexcusable. But had the former president taken a different communications strategy while dealing with the charges against him - had he remained largely silent while his attorneys negotiated his plea bargain, and simply expressed contrition afterwards for whatever offense he may have committed - it's quite possible he might have emerged from this affair with some small degree of his dignity intact, and retained some sympathy from the public, deserved or not.

As it is, his press conference at Beit Hanassi must surely rank as the most embarrassing and ill-considered public address ever made in this country. I can't understand how his former communications advisers can even bear to show their faces in public after having been part of that train wreck. It wasn't the media that brought Katsav down, but his own actions, and the way he responded after they came to light.

Whether the way in which he initially got elected really represented "the end of Zionism" is debatable. But surely the way he in which he departed the official highest office in this land - especially his cringe-inducing performance a year ago in front of the television cameras - must surely represent one of the low points of public life in the Zionist state.

ON MONDAY morning, the first international conference of the new Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism held a session on "Anti-Semitism in the Media and the Internet" at the Foreign Ministry, attended by representatives of the many governmental offices and non-governmental Diaspora organizations that deal with this issue.

One of the speakers was Melanie Phillips, the outspoken Daily Mail columnist who in recent years has become a voice in the wilderness decrying the anti-Zionist attitudes so prevalent among her professional peers and the wider British intelligentsia. Noting the continuous active efforts by Israel's Arab enemies and their allies to delegitimize the Jewish state, Phillips deplored the tendency among the hasbara establishment to remain largely reactive in its efforts to counter such propaganda, and its "inability to react quickly on its feet against such challenges."

Ironically, at the exact moment Phillips was speaking in Jerusalem, Hamas was trying to organize its efforts to have thousands of Gazans march on the fence separating Gaza from Israel, in a possible repeat of the events at the Egyptian border last month. With the international media gathered at the Gaza crossings, this event could have been a public relations disaster for Israel, providing footage of IDF soldiers forced to fire on Palestinian rioters that would have certainly ended up on the very news reports and Internet sites that the experts gathered at the Foreign Ministry were at that moment decrying.

Katsav and the media: A reckoning

As it fortunately turned out, the Gazan crowds failed to turn out in force, and the real violence against civilians that day took place in Sderot, where a 10-year- old boy was seriously hurt by a Kassam.

Naturally, that item was largely buried by the foreign press in their reports about the rally.

Without taking away anything from the good work being done by the activists attending the Jerusalem conference, I couldn't help thinking that this event was itself a symptomatic of the problem - the Jews hold conferences, while their enemies take to the streets and draw the TV cameras on them. Perhaps, at least, the Foreign Ministry would do better to hold its next conference on anti- Semitism down in Sderot.

Calev@jpost.com

Graphic

2 photos: MOSHE KATSAV. Is the media, in fact, also guilty in this case? WEAKER-THAN-EXPECTED human chain in Gaza this week. The Jews hold conferences, while their enemies take to the streets and draw the TV cameras on them. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski; AP)

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End of Document

Envoy Blair welcomes Palestinian 'progress' during first walkabout

The Independent (London)

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First Edition

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The INDEPENDENT

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Byline: Donald Macintyre in Nablus

Body

Having seen the British come and go once before in his long life, Hassan Sweid was unfazed by the sudden descent of an ex-prime minister of the United Kingdom into his tiny workshop in the heart of Nablus's old city yesterday. Lacking the immediate services of a translator, Mr Sweid, 75, politely told the international Middle East envoy Tony Blair only: "I am a tailor."

But as the Blair caravan walked on through the alley, Mr Sweid, who was a high school student when the Union Jack was lowered for the last time at the end of the British mandate 60 years ago, was uncompromising about what he might have said if there had been more opportunity.

"We have been under aggression from the time of the British until now. But then we were men fighting colonialism. Now we are women. They [Israel] rule us with fire and iron."

Mr Blair's visit to the old city - the past scene of near-nightly Israeli incursions and some of the most lethal fighting of the past seven years - was his first encounter with the Palestinian street in the raw since his appointment last year, and not everyone was as reticent with him as Mr Sweid had been.

Video stall owner, Saleh Taqtaq, 43, who also does a brisk trade in key rings bearing "martyr" portraits of Palestinians killed in the conflict, told him: "Look at these pictures. They were slaughtered by the Jews. Are there terrorists here, when you are walking freely down our streets?"

Unwittingly, Mr Taqtaq was touching on a key reason for Mr Blair's visit yesterday - namely the deployment of hundreds of Palestinian security forces here late last year by the Ramallah-based Prime Minister Salam Fayad to reverse the modern reputation of Nablus - once the West Bank's flourishing economic capital - as one of its most lawless as well as militant cities.

After talks with the Nablus Governor Jamal Muheisein, Mr Blair pointed that his very presence was an indication of the improved security the Palestinians are obliged to provide under phase one of the road map.

Envoy Blair welcomes Palestinian 'progress' during first walkabout

"I think it is important to recognise that what has happened here in Nablus over these past few months is, of course, precisely what phase one of the road map asks for," he said.

It was therefore "important" for there to be a response by Israel "not only" in removing Jewish settlement outposts, as it is also obliged to do under the road map, but "in time" lifting restrictions on Palestinian movement and access.

Mr Blair, who made a point of seeing at first hand the Hawara checkpoint - one of the most hated in the West Bank by Palestinians - warned that this would not happen "overnight" but needed to do so "bit by bit".

As Israeli officials cited Monday's suicide bombing in Dimona, that produced a cool response from the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. His spokesman, Mark Regev said: "We agree that the PA (Palestinian Authority) has started to move on implementing obligations under the road map, but obviously much more still has to be done."

Mr Blair's view of the changes was strongly reinforced yesterday by shopkeepers in and around the casbah who said that security had considerably improved with gunmen no longer roaming the streets.

Menswear shop owner Hussein Masri said: "We don't have shooting all the time any more. The fighters have surrendered their arms so I don't know why the Israeli forces keep coming into the city at night. Maybe not all the fighters have given up their arms but I don't know."

But equally, most complained that while security had sharply improved, the economy - a key issue on Mr Blair's agenda - had not.

Hassan Akr, 32, whom Mr Masri pays \$400 per month to sell clothes, said: "I can't afford to get married, I can't get a house.

"I would try to go to the United States but I can't leave my parents alone."

Like his boss, Mr Akr was sceptical about Mr Blair's capacity to bring change. "I don't believe there will be peace. I don't think Israel wants peace and I think the negotiations will fail."

At an olive oil soap factory - one of only two compared with 35 before the Six Day War - Mr Blair wrapped and glued a bar of the historically prized product with some efficiency. He was told by the manager Yael Qubbaj that "checkpoints, incursions and closures" had halved its annual production to 300 tons since the beginning of the intifada in 2000.

The 130-year-old factory, which employs 21 people, is only kept going by the generosity of its wealthy Abu Dhabi-based Palestinian owner, Farouk Tuqan. Mr Qubbaj said the closures had hit both imports of raw materials and exports of the finished product.

Doubts about the vital security role of the Hawara checkpoint were reinforced by the fact that it was possible to avoid it on the way out of the city yesterday by taking a lengthy 12-mile ride in a Palestinian taxi on country dirt roads.

Mr Blair's appearance before Nablus's small but proactive Palestinian press corps yesterday was preceded by a lengthy argument between the city's photographers over the ideal background against which to portray him.

Pictures of both Yasser Arafat and his successor Mahmoud Abbas were eventually hoisted on to the red curtain behind the podium. A suggestion by one pressman that a third portrait of the de facto **Hamas** leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, be added, was not taken up, sparing the envoy undoubted embarrassment.

And the widespread scepticism that Mr Blair could succeed where a queue of envoys had failed before him was tempered by traditional Palestinian hospitality.

Despite confessing later that business was "very bad", sweet shop owner Ghazi Sweilem, 67, was deeply reluctant to accept the 50 shekels pressed on him by an aide to Mr Blair for the kilo of halkom bought by the envoy.

Envoy Blair welcomes Palestinian 'progress' during first walkabout

"He is our guest," he said. "He should not be paying."

Would Mr Blair's mission succeed? "Inshallah," he replied. God willing.

The route that leads to Palestinian statehood

When Tony Blair talks about the "road map", he has a particular one in mind. For the past seven months he has been the envoy of the Middle East Quartet, the international coalition grouping the US, Russia, UN and EU - the guarantor of the so-called "road map" for peace.

Despite the fact that the strict timeline set by the group went out of the window soon after the Quartet's founding document was issued, in September 2002, the road map set out concrete steps by both Israelis and Palestinians in order to achieve a permanent two-state solution.

It remains the only strategy leading towards statehood for the Palestinians - the only formula fully endorsed by the international community, although it has evolved over time.

Even now, both sides have stumbled on the first step, with the Israelis calling on the Palestinians to heed the document's provisions on ending terrorism, while the Palestinians are urging the Israelis to halt Jewish settlement construction, in line with the Quartet demands.

Phase II provides for a transition to a Palestinian state with provisional borders, while Phase III crowns the process with permanent status agreement and a second international conference that would reach agreement on the most tricky core issues including the right of return of refugees and the status of Jerusalem. Mr Blair was given a strictly defined role by the Quartet, focusing on bolstering the Palestinian economy, governance and security. The Quartet has endorsed the results of last November's Annapolis meeting in which Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed to resume talks with a view to concluding a peace deal by the end of this year: before George Bush leaves office.

Anne Penketh

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Soldiers of Allah - Correction Appended

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Byline: By IRSHAD MANJI

Irshad Manji, a fellow with the European Foundation for Democracy, directs the Moral Courage Project at New York University.

Body

ARGUING THE JUST WAR IN ISLAM

By John Kelsay.

263 pp. Harvard University Press. \$24.95.

Before the Iraq invasion, a young imam offered some chilling advice to Muslims at the University of Toronto: if they could not fight the jihad against America with their souls or their sons, they should fight with their money. The Muslim Students Association told campus authorities that the imam did not represent the true spirit of Islam. With that, the case was closed.

"Arguing the Just War in Islam" re-opens such debates. John Kelsay, a professor of religion at Florida State University, shows that today's freelance fatwa-hurlers rarely capture the best of Islamic thought, but are not wholly divorced from it either. Their pronouncements attempt to pass for "Shariah reasoning," a tradition of reconciling the Koran's passages and the Prophet Muhammad's examples to changing times.

For Muslim militants, however, the times do not change. Because Islam is humanity's "natural religion," evolution ended in the seventh century. That means the Islam of 1,400 years ago must be true everywhere and forever. "The militant vision," Kelsay observes, "is one in which premodern precedents are not so much interpreted as applied." No wonder a 20-something imam in the cosmopolitan West can feel utterly entitled to champion values straight out of tribal Arabia.

To his credit, Kelsay refuses to whitewash the role of religion in fostering the violence he discusses. "Those who wish to argue that Islam has nothing to do with the attacks of 9/11 or with the tactics of Iraqi 'insurgents' will find no comfort here," he warns early on.

Yet his analysis also respects the nuances of Shariah reasoning. Kelsay appreciates Islamic history and delves into detail -- though it is often tedious -- about how theologians, jurists and dissidents decided what constitutes a

Soldiers of Allah

just war. Like their Christian counterparts, Muslims have asked and asked again: When may battle be waged? Can noncombatants ever be targets? How much force is proportional? Does negotiation take precedence over a quick and easy victory?

Kelsay could have brought these questions to life had he given us something -- anything -- about the personalities of the questioners and not merely the process they followed. Stick with him, though. By forensically dissecting the development of Shariah reasoning he illuminates the situation we now face, in which classical Islamic scholars are trumped by bloodthirsty bandits who pose as thinkers.

Osama bin Laden is hardly the first of them. Consider the assassins of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president who made peace with Israel in 1979. His murderers' manifesto tried to justify Sadat's killing with Shariah reasoning. Their case was weak -- and they knew it. So they turned themselves into tabloid terrorists, exploiting emotion, inflating language and sensationalizing their target's crime.

In short, Kelsay points out, the thugs resorted to "emergency reasoning." According to their fevered testimonial about Sadat, "the enemy now 'lives right in the middle' of Islamic territory." Emergency reasoning jettisons the basics of justice along with logic. The charter of Hamas tells slaves they may fight Zionists without their masters' permission -- thereby accepting bondage in Islam even while preaching liberation from oppressors.

By contrast, traditional Shariah reasoning is sober enough to cut both ways. Take the just-war criterion of protecting innocents. One mainstream Muslim scholar has acknowledged that, in Kelsay's words, a child's death may be "foreseeable but unavoidable, as when an enemy's military resources are deployed in the midst of a civilian population. ... Soldiers whose actions take place under such conditions are excused from the guilt associated with unjust killing." That ruling would let Israeli defense forces off the hook for collateral damage in their 2006 war in Lebanon, since Hezbollah deliberately operated in residential Beirut.

To get out of embarrassing pickles like this, the most populist interpreters of just war in Islam go for broke. The televangelist Yusuf al-Qaradhawi is one example. Skirting both tradition and reason, he intones that "necessity makes the forbidden things permitted." The "forbidden" includes suicide, conveniently redefined as martyrdom. Deep Shariah reasoning takes another tabloid turn.

Kelsay proves that we can understand the shifting rationales behind Islamist violence without excusing that violence. But his generosity also leads him, prematurely, to proclaim Shariah reasoning an "open practice." Were this true, we Muslims would have already had our liberal reformation. As Kelsay himself notes, unconventional thinkers in Islam pay heavy tolls, from aborted careers to prolonged prison terms to outright execution. An open practice? From the author's lips to the Almighty's ears.

Kelsay would retort that mass movements like Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood and Pakistan's Jamaat-i-Islami were founded by ordinary folk, a schoolteacher and a journalist respectively. Each of them seemingly supported the democratizing of interpretation. After all, they benefited from it.

But their campaigns did not democratize Shariah reasoning at all. As puritan movements, they further restricted who could participate in shaping Islam. Early on, the Muslim Brotherhood closed down bookstores and other dens of free thought. The Jamaat-i-Islami declared a minority Muslim sect inauthentic. To this day, the Islamic world's only Nobel laureate in science, a member of the banned sect, cannot be buried with proper religious rites in his home country, Pakistan.

Nor can moderate Muslims be counted on to rescue Shariah reasoning from militants. The sheik of Al Azhar University in Cairo, widely regarded as the highest seat of learning in Sunni Islam, never directly challenged the manifesto of Sadat's assassins. Kelsay rightly wonders, "Why not insist that militants like bin Laden or al-Zawahiri cease their advocacy of military operations, or that they confine themselves to making the case for reform through normal political channels?"

He provides a fascinating answer: moderates can share key premises with militants. The moderates whom Kelsay has studied "do not in fact dissent from the militant judgment that current political arrangements are illegitimate."

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Which is not to say they have sought real democracy. Some moderates agree with militants that "democracy implies a kind of moral equivalence between Islam and other perspectives. And such a situation is dangerous, not only for the standing of the Muslim community, but for the moral life of humankind."

The hope rests with "Muslim democrats" who will pluck the Koran and the Prophet out of a tribal time warp. Kelsay focuses on Muslims in America, recognizing three male scholars whose work ranges from online consultations about the future of Shariah to arguments for harmonizing Islam with women's equality and freedom of conscience. He then urges the West to prosecute its war on terror by demonstrating rather than defying democracy. Doing so will help Muslim democrats get heard within their communities -- a necessity for all of us, Kelsay suggests, because these Muslims might be the only people who can rehabilitate democracy's appeal after the serial hypocrisies practiced under its banner by Washington, among others.

It is a provocative conclusion, but an incomplete one. Muslim democrats will also have to confront Koranic passages that give militants an escape hatch. The most famous verse tells believers that slaying an innocent is like slaying all of mankind unless it is done to punish villainy. Radical Muslims seize on this loophole. Moderate Muslims sanitize it. Reform-minded Muslims must reinterpret it.

How this happens could well be the next chapter in reclaiming Shariah reasoning and the richness of Islam itself.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

A review on Jan. 6 about "Arguing the Just War in Islam," by John Kelsay, misstated the circumstances of the burial of the Islamic world's only Nobel laureate in science, Abdus Salam, who belonged to a banned sect. He was buried in his home country, Pakistan, with full religious rites, but the authorities later erased the word "Muslim" from his headstone. It is not the case that "to this day" he "cannot be buried with proper religious rites" in Pakistan.

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Graphic

PHOTO (PHOTOGRAPH BY CHANG W. LEE/THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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End of Document

G2: 'I'm wildly emotional - in a very quiet way': Yisrael Campbell is not your average Orthodox Jewish comedian - he was born a Catholic, for a start. Now starring in the Guardian's new Sounds Jewish podcast, he talks to Tanya Gold about booze, finding God and his four circumcisions

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Byline: Tanya Gold

Body

As far as we know, Lenny Bruce never had sex with an Orthodox Jew, but if he had he would have produced Yisrael Campbell. The child of this improbable union is sweating on stage before me, underneath the 18th-century robes and black hat of a true believer.

But he is quipping, not praying. "I could do this routine in Hebrew," he says with a self-deprecating wince, "but it would be 35 words long." He plays with his long black side-curls - "They're the beginning of a comb-over" - and follows the rhythm of Jewish comedians everywhere. He starts with a whisper, then he waggles his arms, grins and soars up to a shout. "The Nazi Pope!" he announces. "Oh yeah, they say he quit the German army in 1945. Hitler quit the German army in 1945 - 1945 was a bad a year to be in the German army."

Sitting backstage, staring into the eyes of this calm 44-year-old, I realise why this is, for him, an important joke. Yisrael's real punchline is that he grew up a Catholic in 1960s Philadelphia. "I hated it because nothing ever happened there," he says. "So I moved to Jerusalem, where too much happens."

When I first heard this, I couldn't believe it. I have been a Jew all my life, and pride myself on my impeccable Jewdar. And this man is as Jewish as anyone I have ever seen. It is not just his outfit: it is his face. He looks so Jewish. He talks so Jewish. He is so Jewish. How is it possible he was born into another world? "I'm the first-born son of a manic-depressive Italian woman and a pathologically silent Irishman," he explains. "This makes me wildly emotional . . . in a very quiet way. My aunt is a nun. Which makes Jesus my uncle." He slugs back a Coke. "But I was Catholic enough to know I was going to hell."

Before she gave birth to Yisrael, or Chris, as he was known then, his mother had a crisis of faith. She entered a convent, and she "saw the wizard behind the screen", the mechanics of Catholicism behind the spirituality. "She was angry with God, she was angry with the Pope. She left the faith and she never found a spiritual solution." So he grew up with a pathologically furious mother raging at the non-existence of God - she sounds oddly Jewish too.

His first religious experience was alcohol. Campbell was 13 when he took his first communion in beer. "It was my own spiritual crisis," he says. "What I was searching for in alcohol and drugs," he says, "was what I found in religion."

G2: 'I'm wildly emotional - in a very quiet way': Yisrael Campbell is not your average Orthodox Jewish comedian - he was born a Catholic, for a start. Now starr....

After he had dried out and moved to Los Angeles, where he was trying to become an actor, a girlfriend handed him a copy of Leon Uris's novel Exodus. It is the story of the founding of the Jewish state, told through rose-tinted spectacles. He clutched it and "had visions of waiting while a beautiful woman with long dark hair rode towards me on a horse. I had fantasies of plucking avocados out of the earth. I didn't know they grew on trees."

So he replaced his addiction to alcohol with an addiction to God. Over the next 10 years he skated from liberal Reform Judaism to Conservative Judaism to Orthodox Judaism - or, as the Orthodox describe this trajectory, wrong-wrong-right. He told his mother recently that he is thinking of becoming a rabbi. "You'll do anything to avoid getting a proper job," she told him.

He began to churn through rabbis, finding he quickly tired of them: they never offered enough ritual. He was circumcised four times. The first time was as a baby, when his foreskin was cut away. Then each time he upgraded to a new level of Judaism they insisted on ritual bloodletting of the penis. "Four times isn't a religious ritual," he says, "it's a fetish."

Orthodox Jews often ritually cleanse themselves in a pool of water called a mikvah . Yisrael's first mikvah was the palatial pool in Bel Air. "They didn't have a wave machine, but you could see where they would put it if they did." When he followed the Zionist Yellow Brick Road to Israel seven years ago, he discovered the Bel Air mikvah had been heaven. "The Jerusalem mikvah is full of big fat hairy Jews, and you can wait for them to get out but there's no point because more will come in. So I go in and I say my prayer. My prayer is, 'Please don't let them touch me. And don't let me touch them.'"

His other major problem in Israel has been the response of the El Al check-in desk to a man dressed as an Orthodox Jew whose passport was in the name of Chris Campbell. "They didn't ask to check my luggage," he says. "They asked me where the bomb was."

So he changed his name to Yisrael and formed a comedy troupe called the Israel-Palestinian Comedy Tour. It was a rag-tag army of two other Jews (one a black convert) and a Palestinian called Ray Hanania, who announces at the start of their act: "I don't think of you as an audience, I think of you as potential hostages."

When the tour began in January, they were the closest thing the Middle East had to a peace process. Hanania would stand on stage and say, "My friend wants to know why we're not playing occupied Palestine. I say - I'm in Tel Aviv, it is occupied Palestine." Then Campbell launched on to the stage and prodded Hanania in the chest. Hanania prodded back, and they fell to the floor while the compere declared, "Ladies and gentlemen, we hope you have enjoyed the show."

He really has acquired the manner of an Orthodox Jew: he shakes my hand, but warily - Orthodox Jews don't shake strange women's hands because the Bible forbids "endearing contact" between strangers - and only because he doesn't want to embarrass me, he admits later. He has that fixed, distant beneficence of a man of God. I tell him I'm a mamzer , the product of a forbidden relationship - to the Orthodox, I am an outcast because my grandmother did not divorce her first husband in Jewish law before she married my grandfather. I am not allowed to marry an Orthodox Jew, and neither are any of my descendants. He looks at me and - with genuine pity and horror, as if he can see my soul floating off in a bubble - he says, "Oh my God."

And he sits there, remote as a distant planet under his hat, a serene smile on his face. The gags have fled.

I yearn to have Lenny back. Campbell is no fun off-stage. As he talks on in sentences soaked in Orthodox platitude, I think back to his routine. "Do you remember when the Israeli army killed a Hamas bomb-maker? He has one arm and no legs. If you went to master bomb- making class and the teacher had one arm and no legs, wouldn't you want to defer?" And with that thought, he ambles out the door and back to Israel - where he is pursuing his strange, successful dream of being more Jewish than the Jews *

On the web

G2: 'I'm wildly emotional - in a very quiet way': Yisrael Campbell is not your average Orthodox Jewish comedian
- he was born a Catholic, for a start. Now starr....

You can hear Yisrael Campbell on the Guardian's new monthly podcast, Sounds Jewish, online from today
guardian.co.uk/podcasts

Load-Date: December 17, 2007

End of Document

Opinion: In the public interest: Why the prosecution of this man should be dropped

The Observer (London)

December 2, 2007

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TheObserver

Section: OBSERVER COMMENT PAGES; Pg. 10

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Body

On Thursday, a bookish civil servant called Derek Pasquill will be remanded by Westminster magistrates to the Crown Court to face six charges of breaking the Official Secrets Act. Anyone old enough to remember Soviet moles of the Cold War will think they can predict the rest of the story.

The alleged spy will be accused of betraying his country to an enemy which loathes liberal democracy, open elections and human rights. The prosecution will reveal he converted to totalitarianism as a student and worked to get himself into a powerful position where he could best serve his new masters. Shocked by the duplicity of an outwardly respectable man, the judge will send him down.

But the Cold War is long gone and nothing about the Pasquill case is predictable. Far from betraying his country, the prosecution will accuse him of defending Britain from those who mean it nothing but harm. Far from betraying liberal principles, the prosecution will accuse him of exposing appeasers in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office who sponsored Islamists working to create a sexist, racist, homophobic and totalitarian empire.

The government alleges he was behind the leak of documents to The Observer and New Statesman that revealed how New Labour brought Islamists to the heart of policymaking.

In domestic policy, the tilt towards fanaticism was evidenced by Labour's decision to turn supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood and its sister organisation Jamaat-i-Islami on the Muslim Council of Britain into the sole authentic voice of the British Islam. If they had been white, they would have been condemned as far-rightists. The Brotherhood was founded by Hassan al-Banna, an admirer of European fascism. In the Sixties, its chief ideologist, Sayyid Qutb, began the wave of murder that is sweeping the globe when he decided all existing Muslim and non-Muslim governments were pagan states that must be attacked with extreme violence. In what was then British India, Jamaat's founder, Maulana Maududi, was the first to propose that the world should be ruled by an Islamic totalitarian state.

Supporters of both parties say they now want to take power by peaceful means, but remain the sworn enemies of leftists across the Muslim world. Few knew until the leaked documents were published that a centre-left Labour government was appeasing the Islamists. The dominant figure in a group the FCO established - 'Engaging with the

Opinion: In the public interest: Why the prosecution of this man should be dropped

Islamic World' - was Mockbul Ali, its 26-year-old 'Islamic issues adviser'. As a student at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London, he promoted the Muslim Brotherhood's spiritual leader, the Qatari preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi - and continued to support the cleric when he joined the Civil Service.

Although Qaradawi justified suicide bombing in Iraq and Israel, and had the standard medieval superstitions about women, gays and Jews, Ali lobbied to have him admitted to Britain. His view was that, apart from suicide bombings in Israel, Qaradawi had consistently condemned terrorism. He assured his superiors that although Qaradawi's views were not those of the government, they were 'shared by a majority of Muslims in the Middle East and the UK'.

As informed advice to ministers, this was nonsense. The majority of British Muslims are no different from their apolitical fellow citizens. At the time he was writing, a Populus poll found that 16 per cent justified suicide bombings.

Qaradawi was duly admitted to Britain, to the dismay of Arab liberals who had the right to expect a Labour government to be on their side.

Ali moved on to Delwar Hossain Sayeedi, a Jamaat MP in Bangladesh. Eric Taylor, a Home Office official, worried that the Bangladeshi human rights organisation, Drishtipat, alleged that Sayeedi had claimed that the UK and the US 'deserve all that is coming to them' for overthrowing the Taliban, compared Hindus to excrement, and appeared to defend attacks on Bangladesh's Ahmadiyya Muslim minority. Given that Sayeedi's speaking tours in Britain had been accompanied by reports of violence against Bangladeshi elders, he wondered if he should be readmitted to the country. Ali asserted that there was little reason to worry and Sayeedi should be considered a 'mainstream' figure.

Ali was hardly a lone loose cannon. All around him, diplomats were seized by the urge to appease. In one document, Angus McKee, of the Middle East and North Africa department, said Britain should cultivate the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and its Palestinian subsidiary Hamas and consider giving them taxpayers' money. 'Given that Islamist groups are often less corrupt than the generality of the societies in which they operate, consideration might be given to channelling aid resources through them, so long as sufficient transparency is achievable,' he wrote.

What is so striking about the wrong turn the FCO took is its naivete. It's not simply that Saudi Arabia and Iran prove that the more Islamist a regime the more corrupt its officials, but that McKee and his colleagues talked as if the 20th century had not happened. The FCO seemed to think by offering totalitarians tea and sympathy they would realise their mistake, convert to democracy and recognise the rights of women.

The Royal Court theatre in London has revived *The Arsonists*, Max Frisch's absurdist classic on the rise of communism, to satirise today's liberal delusion that Islamists don't mean what they say. In the play, a middle-class couple bend over backwards to be kind to arsonists who make it perfectly clear they hate them and want to blow their house up.

The FCO was no different and you don't have to take my word for it. Sir Derek Plumbly, British ambassador to Egypt, watched the contortions of his colleagues with amazement.

'I detect a tendency to confuse "engaging with the Islamic world" with "engaging with Islamism" and to play down the very real downsides for us in terms of the Islamists' likely foreign and social policies, should they actually achieve power,' he wrote in 2005. 'I suspect that there will be relatively few contexts in which we are able significantly to influence the Islamists' agenda.'

So it was to prove. Morally and practically, appeasement was a failure.

Pasquill was suspended from the FCO early in 2006. It took the authorities 18 months to charge him and a full trial may not be until the middle of next year - or later.

This is an official secrets case like no other because while he was wondering whether he would end up in jail, New Labour changed its mind. The leaks and protests from liberal-minded British Muslims persuaded Ruth Kelly, David Miliband and Jacqui Smith to stop engaging with Islamists.

Opinion: In the public interest: Why the prosecution of this man should be dropped

Pasquill is accused of leaking against a policy the government admits was wrong. Ministers have told my former colleague Martin Bright, who broke the story, that reading the documents changed their minds. On a second issue, the documents revealed that the FCO didn't know - and didn't want to know - whether the Americans were using British airspace for the 'extraordinary rendition' of suspects. Ministers again admit that their deliberate ignorance was also a mistake.

The government might defend the prosecution of Pasquill by saying the confidentiality of discussions in Whitehall must be protected and law must take its course. But after the loss of the child benefit records, New Labour is in no position to lecture others on the need to defend confidentiality. It would be the grossest hypocrisy for a government that casually allows junior officials to download the unencrypted confidential details of 25 million people to claim that the full weight of the law must be used to protect its secrets. There cannot be one rule for them and another for the rest of us.

In any case, official secrets cases are political because the Attorney-General must approve them. Before Tony Blair resigned, Lord Goldsmith, the then attorney, ordered that police must stop their inquiries into the corruption surrounding arms deals to spare the blushes of the Saudi regime. That same regime pours anti-democratic and anti-liberal propaganda into British mosques. It would not only be hypocritical but revolting for law officers to spare Saudis who want to fuel fanaticism while imprisoning a public servant for the alleged crime of trying to fight it.

After weeks of disastrous news, New Labour has very few friends left. It will have fewer still if it doesn't drop the case against Pasquill.

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End of Document

Johns Hopkins students, faculty react to Md. peace talks

University Wire

December 7, 2007 Friday

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Byline: By Payal Patnaik, The Johns Hopkins News-Letter; **SOURCE:** Johns Hopkins U.

Dateline: BALTIMORE

Body

If last week's Middle East peace conference in Annapolis proved anything, it's that Israel and Palestine are like a divorced couple living in the same house.

That's what Steven David, director of the International Studies program at Hopkins, said at a talk on the conference Monday night.

His was just one of the many opinions held by Hopkins faculty, students and national experts about the conference, held at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md. last week.

According to James Lindsay, a visiting fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, there is at least one consensus view regarding the conference: Many are relieved to see the process rebooted after such a long interruption.

In a series of meetings on Nov. 27, President Bush began talks with Palestinian and Israeli leaders for the establishment of a peace settlement; the talks were between Bush, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

On the Homewood campus, students gathered to hear International Studies program director Steven David give a talk about the Annapolis peace conference. He briefly described the history of tension between the two groups in addition his elaboration of the issues at stake addressed at the peace conference.

David opened the discussion saying, "The first thing we have to do is recognize that there is a right and a wrong on both sides, so essentially we're looking at right versus right."

He described the sense of loss that the Palestinians have felt and their want for their own country, while Israel has strong religious ties, and as the only Jewish state, is "central to Jewish identity."

The two sides of the conflict have caused the two societies to grow in parallel without much interaction but with much tension. The general public reaction has been that the conference achieved what it set out to do, although its initial goal may have been small scale to begin with.

"It was successful within the modest limits that were set for it - it didn't achieve much, but it didn't set out to achieve much," David said. "It jumpstarted a process that had been moribund, and it's a real test of whether that process takes off as there are still major problems with terrorism, the future of Jerusalem and other major problems that have not been addressed."

Johns Hopkins students, faculty react to Md. peace talks

President of Coalition of Hopkins Advocates for Israel Jordan Libowitz agreed.

"They weren't trying to get any peace accord out of it. It was to start peace talks and it certainly did that. It also brought some countries to the table that had never been there before, like Saudi Arabia and Syria. This conference, more than anything, was about opening doors," he said.

But sophomore Ben Silverstein disagrees. "Palestine wasn't really represented there (Abbas was there, but the Hamas was not invited) so the democratic government of Palestine was not even present," he said.

Silverstein, who is Jewish, pointed out, "I was raised hearing the Israeli side, but I don't understand how anyone can hear their [the Palestinian] side and not feel sympathetic just because there is a small contingent that have become suicide bombers."

He added, "I would say that Palestinians are among the most oppressed people in the world right now, and because of the politics of terrorism, they're not recognized as oppressed because of the terrorism tactics used."

David added that the significance of the Annapolis conference lies in the fact that there has not been a meeting of this kind the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference. "Because [the Annapolis peace conference] is the only game in town, if you care about the settlement in the Middle East, there's nothing that's been going on until this," he added.

Lindsay also discussed a United Nations report on "softer, cultural things, not harder things like nuclear weapons."

The cultural situation in the Middle East, such as in global commerce and gender issues, may pose a problem since Americans hope that ending the state of war between Palestinians and Israelis would generally result in a democratic state, which would in turn involve more votes, protect minority rights and protect the rights of women.

The disparity between the western view of democracy and the deep religious roots that are entrenched in the Middle East may pose cultural problems for the peace talk, he said. Based on what was said in the conference, mixed views remain about the future of the peace talks.

"We see leaderships of both sides that are very weak and very fragile and it's not clear what they can bring for their people and even if they do come to an agreement, there's a lot to be pessimistic and modest about," David said.

David believed that Israel's move to build settlements in the West Bank and Gaza instead of military bases was poorly planned. Because the settlements have sprung up the past several decades, Israel will have more difficulty in giving up land for peace.

Ilana Ellenberg, the Grinspoon Israel Advocacy intern with Hillel and CHAI, said, "Hostilities are definitely lingering [from previous peace talks] but Abbas is definitely more westernized and I think he will be definitely more progressive. But that being said, there are a lot of people who would disagree with me and say that he's just the same as Arafat."

The Bush administration will play the monitor role and push and prod a bit, according to David. "They have apparently abandoned the previous posture of staying away and are now seeking active involvement," he said.

"This is a difficult problem because it's difficult for Americans to pressure one or the other side. Americans are willing to make suggestions, but parties themselves should be able to work out a compromise," Lindsay said.

David said that only if the U.S. played an assertive role and dictated the outcome of peace would a compromise be reached because of the weak leadership in both countries. America's involvement in state-building would create a situation in which people would feel secure.

According to David, the most reasonable compromise would be something similar to what was decided at the Camp David Accords: Israel gives up all of Gaza and virtually all of the West Bank while exchanging some land with Palestine, as well as parts of Jerusalem shared.

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Jerusalem would be the capital of the new Palestinian state, but Palestinians would have to accept no rite of return of refugees.

Silverstein believes that giving Palestine east Jerusalem would be taking a big step forward.

The American public opinion is overwhelmingly in support for Israel, which is not mirrored in the rest of the world. Because of the fading memory of the Holocaust and reawakened anti-Semitism, many Europeans are now more against Israel, David said.

"If you look at an Arab textbook there is no Israel on the map. This isn't peace, but ceasefire," he said.

"I think the talks are worth a shot and worth a try. I'm not optimistic but I think you've got to try though I wish it had been done earlier," David said.

"Was there anything new? No, it boils down to the same things, like Jerusalem, young refugees, final borders of the West Bank as well as an end to hostilities. There was some progress, such as peace accords with Egypt and Jordan so that could be seen as a development in the right direction," Libowitz said.

He added, "You can't say Israel and expect everyone to think the same thing. People ally themselves with different political parties, with different movements, and when we talk about this conference, people view it in different ways, some more optimistic than others, but I think everyone wants peace. There's an old saying that goes: If you put two Israelis in a room you get three political parties."

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Hollywood Goes To War

New York Sun (Archive)

October 25, 2007 Thursday

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Length: 1348 words

Byline: MICHAEL FUMENTO

Body

Critics have labeled the new movie "Rendition" a "political thriller." Whether it thrills or not is subjective. But "political"? Absolutely. It's merely the latest in an unbroken series of major films about the war on terror that range from those seeking to assure us that Islamist terrorism isn't the threat we might think, to those depicting the terrorists as no worse than those who fight them - and by implication the American people as a whole.

In 1942, Hollywood went to war. It began pumping out countless movies designed both to entertain the public and bolster its will to fight. A lot of them were cheap, hokey, or both. But even in a nation that seemingly needed little reminder of the dastardly attack on Pearl Harbor or the evils of the Nazis, they kept drilling home the message that we must persevere no matter the costs or the duration. Well that they did. President Franklin Roosevelt lived in constant fear that the public would turn against the war. Indeed a Gallup Poll taken just five months before Germany's collapse and long after the American public began learning of the horrors of the Holocaust, showed that about one-fourth of Americans did not want to drive on to unconditional surrender.

Fast forward that reel to the post-9/11 era. Just how many Hollywood movies (not documentaries) have been made in which the bad guys are Islamist terrorists that do not specifically concern the Sept. 11 attacks? If you have to guess, guess "none."

Consider the film that came out this June, "Live Free or Die Hard." Early on in the story the FBI believes a massive cyber-attack is the work of Islamists. But it's the Department of Homeland Security that proves to be more or less responsible. Turns out, the agency had rejected an excellent idea from an employee who, in comic book style, becomes an insane evil genius complete with a beautiful kungfu-expert sidekick.

In one of last year's most critically acclaimed films, the severely disjointed "Babel," what is treated as a terrorist shooting of an American tourist woman in Morocco proves to have been accidental. But the Moroccan police, fearful of losing tourist dollars, stage a desperate manhunt that ultimately leads only to the shooting of a cute little boy.

Consider, too, the odyssey of the conversion of Tom Clancy's massive bestselling 1991 book, "The Sum of All Fears," in which a nuclear bomb destroys an American city, into the 2002 film of the same name. In the book and the original script, the bad guys were Islamist terrorists. Little did Mr. Clancy know how realistic his choices of villains were: Federal court hearings in February 2001 revealed that as early as 1993, Osama bin Laden offered \$1.5 million to buy uranium for a nuclear weapon.

But ultimately the Paramount movie depicted the bomber as yet another comic book character villain, an Austrian neo-Nazi. (Though at least he never says, "Vee haff vays uf making you talk!")

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Mr. Clancy, who unfortunately had no control over the process, took a swipe at director Phil Alden Robinson on the special features section of the DVD. Mr. Robinson, for his part, made the incredible claim on the DVD extra that the change was in the name of realism.

In reality, the Council on American-Islamic Relations had lobbied to change the villains and won. "I hope you will be reassured that I have no intention of promoting negative images of Muslims or Arabs," Mr. Robinson wrote to them, "and I wish you the best in your continuing efforts to combat discrimination." Paramount's CEO at the time, Sherry Lansing, also suggested that she would steer clear of movies with Muslim villains.

Indeed, one of the few competent characters in "Live Free or Die Hard," the Deputy FBI Director, looks Arab. In reality, he's a New Zealander of Maori descent but indeed played an Arab in the film "Three Kings."

As for CAIR, former FBI assistant director and chief of the FBI's counterterrorism section, Steven Pomerantz, has charged that the organization has "effectively given aid to international terrorist groups." In June federal prosecutors named CAIR an "unindicted co-conspirator" in a plot to fund the designated terrorist organization Hamas. CAIR's 1996 publication, "The Price of Ignorance," listed "incidents of anti-Muslim bias and violence" that included the trial of Omar Abdel Rahman. Mr. Abdel Rahman was convicted of conspiring to blow up the Lincoln Tunnel and other New York City landmarks.

By cooperating with organizations like CAIR, Hollywood kowtows to groups that aid and abet terrorists.

The most one-sided of these films, however, are "The Kingdom" and "Rendition."

In "The Kingdom," Islamist terrorists blow up 200 American men, women, and children. They are not even affiliated with the military, but rather with Saudi oil production. A small team of FBI agents are allowed into the country to catch the killers. The Saudi police torture an innocent man and both Saudis and Americans turn bad guys into sieves rather than trying to capture one to interrogate him. Still, these don't particularly slam the viewer over the head and the film is a fairly straight-forward action film with a bit of forensics tossed in.

Until the last few seconds, that is. That's when we discover that the FBI agents, and America as a whole, are really no better than the terrorists. Both sides profess as their ultimate aim simply killing everybody on the other side.

Meanwhile, "Rendition" stars top box-office draw Reese Witherspoon, with the reference in the title being to "irregular" or "extraordinary rendition."

Ms. Witherspoon's husband in the film is an Egyptian-born American and "dedicated family man" who is clearly innocent of any wrongdoing. U.S. authorities nonetheless snatch him from American soil and deliver him to a country where he's horrifically interrogated. The authorities deny any knowledge of the incident. They are liars and they are torturers-by-proxy.

In reality, "rendition" merely means moving someone from one country to another outside formal extradition laws. The process could be abused, but you'll find it defended in the pages of the Washington Post by a senior fellow from the liberal Brookings Institution.

You can't argue that Hollywood's only motivation in bashing anti-terrorist efforts is money. By the end of its opening weekend, "Rendition" was clearly already a flop.

Moreover, it's hardly the case that Islamists don't make believable and captivating villains, much less more believable than evil cyber-geniuses and neo-Nazis. Islamists have killed about 3,000 American civilians on 9/11, killed almost 200 people in the Madrid Train Bombings, and 52 more in the London subway bombings.

Islamic terrorists routinely explode bombs in markets and launch chlorine gas attacks. They build torture chambers and make and display videos of beheadings in which the victim screams in agony as his head is sawed off with a dull knife. Even their foiled plots are often bizarre, such as Richard Reid's "shoe bomber" attempt. These guys are a scriptwriter's dream. Quentin Tarantino couldn't think this stuff up.

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As to not wanting to stereotype either Arabs or Muslims, the vast majority of whom want nothing to do with violence done in Mohammed's name, has it occurred to the Tinseltown terror apologists that nobody suffers more from Islamic terror than Muslims themselves? Islamist terrorists everyday kill and maim Iraqis and Afghans. Afghans were forced to suffer for years under the Taliban terror regime. Now the terrorists have blown up at least 136 Pakistanis and injured 400 more for the "sin" of greeting former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Was there what the Islamists call an "infidel," such as a Christian or Jew, among them?

Whether or not CAIR cares about them, we should. So should the moguls in La La Land. Instead, they're giving us the equivalent of 1943 movies equating FDR with Hitler.

Hollywood truly has declared war on the global war on terror.

Mr. Fumento is a Washington, D.C.-based freelance writer who specializes in health, military, and terror issues. He has been embedded three times in Iraq and once in Afghanistan.

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End of Document

This is apartheid?

The Jerusalem Post

August 12, 2008 Tuesday

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Length: 1506 words

Byline: WARREN GOLDSTEIN

Highlight: The writer is chief rabbi of South Africa.

Body

Two weeks ago the editor of the largest newspaper in South Africa, The Sunday Times, wrote an article saying that Israel applies apartheid to Palestinian Arabs. In this scandalous accusation, he joins Jimmy Carter and others who have defamed the Jewish state.

The apartheid label is very dangerous. If it sticks, Israel's ability to defend itself diplomatically and militarily will be severely weakened. International pressure on South Africa's apartheid government eventually played a major role in ending its power. The apartheid label is calculated to break the resolve of the Israeli people, who are called upon to make terrible sacrifices for our Jewish state. Who wants to die for apartheid?

As Jews, we must fight this kind of mass defamation of our people. Israel's security and Jewish lives all over the world depends on it, as well as our historic God-given mission of being "a light unto the nations." To say that Israel is an apartheid state is as wildly outrageous as the blood libels of Europe.

To answer the editor of South Africa's Sunday Times, I wrote an article which he kindly published in last week's newspaper. Here follow its arguments:

TO ACCUSE Israel of apartheid is to diminish the victims of the real apartheid - the men, women and children of South Africa, who suffered for centuries under arrogant, heartless colonialism, and then for decades under the brutal policies of racial superiority, oppression and separation inflicted by the National Party. If everything is apartheid, then nothing is apartheid.

In the State of Israel all citizens - Jew and Arab alike - are equal before the law. Israel has none of the apartheid legislative machinery devised to discriminate against and to separate people. It has no Population Registration Act, no Group Areas Act, no Mixed Marriages and Immorality Act, no Separate Representation of Voters Act, no Separate Amenities Act, no pass laws or any other of the myriad apartheid laws.

On the contrary: Israel is a vibrant liberal democracy which accords full political, civil and other human rights to all its people, including its one million-plus Arab citizens, many of whom hold positions of authority throughout the Jewish state - including that of cabinet minister, Knesset member and judge at every level of the judiciary, the Supreme Court included.

All citizens vote on the same voters' roll in regular, multiparty elections, and there are Arab parties and Arab members of other parties in the Knesset. Due to Israel's proportional representation system, Arab voters, although

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a minority, have often been partners in various coalition governments and influenced major long-term decisions affecting the country.

Arabs and Jews live and work together, share all public facilities, including, importantly, hospitals and schools, and also malls, buses, cinemas and parks. Israel protects religious freedom and has been very sensitive and respectful in its management of the holy sites of all religions, granting easy access to everyone.

Arab Israelis, like all their compatriots, can express themselves and act freely as members of a transparent and open, democratic society, where criticism of the government in an aggressively free press is the norm.

IN FACT, Israeli Arabs enjoy more freedom and rights than do any other Arabs in the Middle East, where autocratic governments suppress democracy and freedoms, such as freedom of expression and of association, including outlawing labor unions. Israel is the only truly free democracy in the Middle East.

If there is apartheid in the Middle East, then it is the apartheid in Arab states against Jews, Christians and women, who are all denied the most basic human rights and treated as second-class citizens.

Most Arab governments do not even allow Jews to visit, let alone live. In fact, more than 800,000 Jews have been expelled from Arab countries over the last five decades, where they lived peacefully for centuries, albeit with inferior status.

In 1967, as a result of a defensive war thrust upon it, Israel captured the territories known today as the West Bank and Gaza. Since then the status of these territories and their occupants has been unclear. It is incorrect legally, factually and even morally to speak of an occupation, which implies there was once a Palestinian entity in these territories, and that this is now occupied by Israeli forces.

Before 1967 the West Bank was controlled by Jordan, and Gaza by Egypt. We should not speak of the "occupied territories," but more accurately of "disputed territories."

THERE HAS never been a Palestinian state in all of history. By contrast, the State of Israel is the third Jewish state on the same land, the first dating back 3,280 years to when Joshua led the Jewish people into the land of Israel. Furthermore, Israel has strong claims to the West Bank, which is part of the biblical Israel that the Jews have always lived in. One of the holiest sites of Judaism is there - Hebron, where the founding fathers and mothers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca and Leah, are buried.

Apart from the city of Jerusalem, the ancient capital of the Jewish people from the times of King David, the West Bank and Gaza were never annexed, pending the resolution of their status. For decades Israel tried to negotiate with various parties to permanently resolve the future of the disputed territories, but is still in search of a genuine peace partner to represent the Palestinian Arabs.

Yasser Arafat demonstrated his inability to relinquish his dream of destroying Israel when he rejected prime minister Ehud Barak's incredibly generous offer at the Camp David talks in 2000 - a rejection which even Prince Bandar, the official representative of Saudi Arabia at the talks, described as a crime.

And now Hamas, which states in its founding constitution its aim of destroying Israel completely, is the democratically elected majority party of the Palestinian people.

AS AN example of what they are talking about, the apartheid accusers point to Israel's security fence and checkpoints, which limit the movement of people from the disputed territories into the internationally recognized borders of the State of Israel. In this they are also wrong.

After the collapse of the Camp David talks, Arafat and other Palestinian groups dispatched suicide bomber after suicide bomber into Israel, targeting Jewish civilians. In the past eight years, terrorist attacks have led to more than 1,300 civilians being murdered and 10,000 wounded by the human guided missiles of the Islamic suicide bombers.

This is apartheid?

Given Israel's relatively small population, proportionately, such carnage in South Africa would mean more than 10,000 murdered and more than 80,000 injured. What would we South Africans do if so many of our fellow citizens were blown up by suicide bombers? Appreciate for the moment what this would mean in the context of the US, where the murder of about 3,000 people at the World Trade Center bombings led to the invasion of two countries. Proportionately, had the US sustained similar casualties to those suffered in Israel, almost 80,000 Americans would have been killed and about 600,000 injured.

THE TRAUMA inflicted on the Israeli people from the relentless barrage unleashed by the Palestinian leadership, enjoying widespread support from its people, is indescribable. Israel erected a security fence to shield it from the attacks launched from the disputed territories across its internationally recognized borders. Every sovereign country is legally and morally entitled to erect a fence to defend its people from attacks launched from the outside.

The fence has been remarkably successful and has reduced successful suicide bombings by up to 90 percent. Israel relies on the most fundamental moral and legal principle - the right to self-defense. Never before in recorded history has any nation endured such civilian casualties and responded with such restraint.

The security fence is a defensive instrument, and the most humanitarian one possible in a situation where the alternative is heavy military action which would result in the death of thousands.

None of this has anything to do with apartheid, and everything to do with an ongoing war over the disputed territories, and over the very existence of the Jewish state. After nearly 2,000 years of exile, persecutions and genocides, the Jewish people are surely entitled to a tiny strip of country to call their own.

If there is an analogy to the South African situation, it is that Israel is like the African National Congress, which was forced into the armed struggle because it had no partner for peace. As soon as the National Party came around to wanting genuinely negotiations, the situation was resolved. Our South African experience has taught us that you cannot make peace unless both parties to the conflict wish to resolve it.

When the Arab world is ready to make peace, Israel will be there. Let us all pray to God that this happens soon so that the misery and suffering of all can be brought to an immediate end.

Graphic

Photo: CAVE OF the Patriarchs, Hebron. Before 1967, Jordan controlled the West Bank and Egypt controlled Gaza, so these are not occupied territories, but disputed territories. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Letters from the people

Anchorage Daily News (Alaska)

August 4, 2008 Monday

FINAL EDITION

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Section: NATION WORLD; Pg. B5

Length: 1394 words

Body

Four-wheelers damage creek

Irresponsible four-wheelers are ruining Montana Creek. These operators are driving up and down the creek, destroying fragile fish habitat. No trail? No problem! Just make your own. Mow down any tree in front of you and turn black spruce bogs into muddy quagmires. A four-wheeler in the wrong hands is just a miniature bulldozer and, sadly, Montana Creek is just one of the habitats being slowly destroyed across Alaska.

-- Kevin Vrem

Anchorage

Governor deserves an apology

I owe an apology to Gov. Sarah Palin for my remarks in the Saturday paper regarding her not attending the Miss Alaska pageant.

I got a call from someone who explained to me that while Gov. Palin was downtown the afternoon of the pageant, she immediately caught an airplane to go work on far more important issues dealing with the welfare of Alaska.

I happen to be a very big fan of Gov. Palin and sincerely apologize for not checking with her office about her schedule that day before I started "bashing her in the newspaper."

The point I was trying to make is that no coverage from the news or paper seems to show a real lack of respect for a scholarship program that showcases some pretty extraordinary Alaska women.

-- Judi Spry

Anchorage

Nuclear holocaust -- never again

On Aug. 6 and 9, we will commemorate the 1945 nuclear holocaust inflicted needlessly on two Japanese cities with zero threat to American troops. In the years following, those two bombs set off an insane arms race that spawned cluster bombs and eventually spread into outer space. Today, we waste trillions of dollars to maintain and renew these weapons.

Letters from the people

These weapons don't defend our country. Instead, they spread to China, Russia, France, Great Britain, India, Israel and Pakistan. And, about 240 are stashed in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. The more nations with nukes, the more they threaten our national security.

Sixty-three years ago, we refused to negotiate the terms of Japan's surrender. We chose instead to squander 200,000 lives in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and many more later to cancer, mutations and birth defects. We can't let that ever happen again.

-- Ruth Sheridan

Anchorage

Photo caption dismays reader

I was very dismayed by the Daily News caption on a large picture of Palestinians using slingshots to fire rocks at Israeli troops in Monday's paper. Your caption read, "Palestinian youth protest Israeli barrier in West Bank."

I am wondering if the Daily News would use the same headline if youth in Anchorage "protested" in the same manner. Rocks fired from slingshots are deadly missiles. They are weapons that can kill. I have no doubt the Palestinian issue needs to be resolved and there are two sides to the issue. However, your redefining the word "protest" seems a bit slanted.

It is awful that the youth of the West Bank and Gaza have grown up in bad conditions. Israel has some fault in this but let us not forget the ultra rich Arab countries that have purposely neglected to help their fellow Arabs with the money needed to improve their living conditions.

This neglect led to Palestinians voting in a **Hamas** government which approves of suicide bombers and refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist.

This results in walls being built for Israeli citizens' protection. This isn't the first poorly written caption by the Daily News, but I request that you please look more carefully at the picture before you apply a caption next time.

-- Michael Kaplan

Eagle River

Dog Jog makes a big difference

On Saturday Friends of Pets held their Dog Jog. The money raised helps countless abandoned animals in need of a new home. As a rescue volunteer, seeing the never ending problem of homeless animals can be disheartening. What a wonderful sight it is to see hundreds of dogs who are loved, and have found their forever home Thanks to all who attended which included many volunteers. Together we are making a difference.

-- Elaine Aldorfer

Eagle River

Prison medical care not very good

A couple of months back someone wrote in stating that if a person wanted free medical care, go to prison. This person obviously has never been subjected to the perils of Alaska Department of Corrections medical care. I have.

Upon my induction into what I consider the "House of Pain," I informed the medical department that I had an ongoing medical condition that would require surgery due to an on-the-job accident that the company's insurance would cover. I was deemed to have what the Department of Corrections refers to as "nonessential" health care needs.

Letters from the people

Six years later, I was allowed the surgery after enduring incredible amounts of pain and suffering. I had to have four discs extricated with a hammer and chisel and a titanium plate screwed to my upper spinal column. The surgery came at a very steep price. I now have loss of feeling in my left arm and both hands.

-- Darren S Teasley

Anchorage Correctional Complex-East

Anchorage

Bear numbers must be reduced

Three Hillside bear attacks this summer!

Perhaps we could substitute that lead with "three attacks by psychotic man with knife" or "three attacks by rabid dog." Maybe that would get our officials' attention and provoke a measured response to re-instill a natural avoidance and fear that the bears have in the real Bush because they are once a year hunted and some killed.

I have biked and run in the Hillside area since 1976 with little anxiety and very few bear sightings. I recently took my granddaughter on a beautiful hike around Spencer Loop with definite caution and apprehension.

If Fish and Game feels we should be prepared (per biologist Rick Sinnott), then my options appear to be either not enjoy the outdoors close to my home or take my 12-gauge shotgun loaded with slugs on a short day hike.

Our parks in the city are not, nor were they intended as bear sanctuaries. If a psychotic person was "surprised or defending his territory," that would not even be proposed as a rational reason to leave him in the park.

A limited hunt or official culling of a few bears and moose in the area each year would solve this problem. Bears and moose are smart and learn quickly.

These attacks will continue unless we institute some type of remediation.

-- Randy Taylor

Anchorage

Alaska needs better recycling

My wife and I are third-time visitors to your beautiful state starting in 1977 as part of our honeymoon. We were, and remain, in awe of the grandeur and vastness of it combined with the uniqueness and energy of your citizens. However, one thing has consistently troubled us. As avid recyclers, we have a difficult time recycling while visiting. The only recycling seems to be with aluminum cans and even with that we often need to search to find where to deposit them. Everything else, including glass bottles, plastics and tin cans, all appear to be headed for the landfill (although post offices seem to take some paper).

When asked about this, most replies seem apologetic, sometimes sheepish, by mentioning that it is just not economical. Since there must be some economics in recycling aluminum cans, why not at least discourage the sale of glass beer and soft drink bottles to minimize the throwaways or have a deposit at time of purchase to encourage returns?

Litter is never becoming anywhere and least of all in this most beautiful part of the world. Given what we have learned about the resourcefulness of your citizens, this issue hardly seems insurmountable and you can only add to the attractiveness of your state.

-- Jim and Chris Hoepfner Calgary, Alberta

There's no room for error now

Letters from the people

I don't know trooper Mike Wooten. I never met the man. But (if) he has any brains at all, he will be an exemplary trooper from now on, because everything he does will be subject to question by all concerned.

-- Dale Jones

Palmer

Forget Palin; investigate Wooten

Instead of spending \$100,000 investigating Gov. Sarah Palin's honesty, shouldn't we be spending \$50,000 investigating Mike Wooten? I, as a law-abiding citizen, say "Three cheers for the governor and Mr. Palin and all the little Palins." Legislators are going at this situation backward.

-- D.E. Wood

Seward

Joe Contraire

Joe cackles with delight at ADN's namby-pamby comments about the Monegan affair. His solution involves liberal amounts of freezing cold water.

adn.com/opinion

Load-Date: August 5, 2008

End of Document

THEY ALL PRAY IN CITY OF STRIFE

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

July 6, 2008 Sunday

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Section: PERSPECTIVE; Pg. 1P

Length: 1439 words

Byline: KATHLEEN OCHSHORN

Highlight: Living in separate worlds of time and place, residents of Jerusalem seek a peace of their own.

Body

The Western Wall is divided, men to the left, and women to the right in a smaller section. Some of the faithful slip prayers folded on bits of paper into the cracks in the wall. This site is holy to Jews because it is the retaining wall of the Temple Mount where the Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D., once stood.

I imagined the messages on those folded prayers passing through different layers of carved stone on their way to heaven. And since the top layer of stone on the Western Wall dates from the time of the construction of al-Aqsa Mosque, situated above the wall, perhaps all the prayers, Jewish and Muslim, commingle as they make their way to heaven. I could only hope that some were prayers for peace.

This area above the Western Wall that the Jews call the Temple Mount, Muslims call Haram as-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary). It is also the site of the Dome of the Rock, which is built on the slab of rock where Christians and Jews believe that Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac, and where Muslims believe the prophet Mohammed ascended to receive instructions from Allah.

A couple of hundred meters away in the Christian quarter, six diverse Christian communities struggle at times over contested space in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, believed to be built on the site of Christ's crucifixion, entombment and resurrection.

Along with 10 other American and Canadian academics, I was recently privileged to go on a walking tour of the old, walled city of Jerusalem. This was part of a Council on International Educational Exchange International Faculty Development Seminar on Conflict and Cooperation in the Middle East in Amman, Jordan, and Jerusalem. Our guide in the Old City, Daniel Rossing, has 40 years of experience working on conflict resolution in Jerusalem, most often with Jews and Christians.

Rossing says the way the Christian sects have worked out a complex sharing of turf in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, divvying up responsibilities for particular pillars, windows, chapels - even lightbulb-changing duties - is a good example of conflict management in action. He sees hope in this "realm of the in between," taking his inspiration from the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, who wrote that meaning is to be found in dialog between "I and Thou."

Rossing has often been a facilitator of compromises, once convincing a Romanian Orthodox church, awkwardly situated on the Tribes of Israel Street, to turn the new crosses on the roof 90 degrees, making them less visible,

THEY ALL PRAY IN CITY OF STRIFE

after the ultra Orthodox Jews across the street complained the crosses were an affront. As he points out, "Here symbols and gestures are more important than words."

According to Rossing, in Jerusalem, groups live together but separately, sometimes in a time warp, in different centuries. For example, he says some Orthodox Jews are really living in 17th century Poland. And while all the groups see themselves as victims, they really exist simultaneously as the powerful and powerless, the majority and the minority.

For example, Roman Catholics in Jerusalem number about 3,000, but they are part of a 1-billion strong church. One-third of the city is Palestinian Arab and two-thirds is Jewish, a population powerful in the local framework but that understandably sees itself as a threatened minority in the Middle East.

When I arrived in the region, I was very sick of the "identity politics" of our own primary season, where exit polls were homing in on the narrowest groups of voters, appearing to tear our divided country further apart.

But in the Middle East, identity politics is the serious stuff of daily life. It is tied up with language and accent, with holy sites, and with clothing - including the most specific details, like the white socks and short black pants or round fur hats worn by some Orthodox men. In Jerusalem, people are talking in millennia of history, tying their roots to the specific village their family lived in 500 years ago.

For the outsider, the exotic mix of cultures in the Old City of Jerusalem can be intoxicating. You hear the passionate call to prayer as you wander the narrow stone streets of the souk, where stalls hawk everything from grape leaves, to underwear, to pyramids of spices. Women in hijab stroll past Franciscan priests in long brown robes, Orthodox men with sidelocks, the odd Coptic priest, and the occasional tourist wielding a digital camera. In the Christian quarter, you can buy icons and crucifixes or watch as a penitent drags a cross up the Via Dolorosa; in the Armenian quarter, they sell handmade jewelry.

We were in a food market when the streets were suddenly packed solid with Muslims returning from Friday midday prayers.

It was an older crowd. Single Palestinian men under the age of 35 are not allowed to attend al-Aqsa Mosque, where the second intifada erupted in 2000 after a visit to the Temple Mount by Ariel Sharon. This was just before Sharon was elected prime minister of Israel. He was accompanied by a Likud Party delegation and hundreds of Israeli police; and while he did not enter the mosque, some Palestinians considered the visit a provocation.

Israelis and Palestinians both claim Jerusalem as a capital. Though the Israelis passed a law making it the capital in 1980, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has implied that he would be willing to give certain areas of predominantly Arab East Jerusalem to the Palestinians, a move that is controversial in Israel.

Jerusalem, positioned at the epicenter of three great monotheisms that share many beliefs, is a big piece of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the larger conflicts of East vs. West. The tension in the Old City is visceral.

Abdelsalam al-Majali, former Jordanian prime minister and peace negotiator, explained, "The Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East is not local. It is part and parcel of all the cold and hot wars of the 20th century."

He feels the Israelis and Palestinians have exhausted options and that the majority of Israelis want peace and that it's in the interest of the United States to solve the problem.

When we visited a refugee camp in central Amman, Jordan, run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, we saw the toll this conflict has taken on the 4.5-million Palestinian refugees scattered throughout Jordan, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Lebanon and Syria. Many of them have been waiting to return to Palestine since 1948.

On every side, some hold out greater hope that civic society will finally move the leaders in more productive direction, or find better leaders. Many people we met were spending their lives working for peace and dialog through interfaith organizations. In Jordan, we visited the Bee Research Unit, where Dr. Nizar Haddad is bringing Arab and Israeli researchers together to promote scientific cooperation and to encourage beekeeping. As he says,

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"Bees just contribute." And raising them requires no land, little investment and can provide nourishment and income for the poor. His slogan is "Bees for Peace."

At the Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information, the co-director Gershon Baskin explained that he had just returned from taking wounded Israeli and Palestinian soldiers to Bosnia for meetings. All the Palestinians had served time in jail and one of the Israelis was a warden in one of those jails. In the end, the veterans couldn't agree on terms but agreed on two states for two people. The Palestinians wanted the occupation to end and the Israelis wanted the violence to end.

Though this two-state solution has been at the heart of the peace negotiations, there is emerging interest in a single state solution, a democratic and secular state that unites Israelis and Palestinians.

This path is gaining favor among Palestinian intellectuals who fear the ascendancy of **Hamas** in Gaza, with its fundamentalism and sharia law. The combined Arab population of Israel and the occupied territories would mean that the Israeli Jews would be a minority in a single state, and Gershon Baskin believes that only the two-state solution can work to avert violence on a scale like Bosnia.

But this single-state idea is actually an old idea and one supported by Martin Buber earlier in the 20th century. He advocated a binational Jewish-Arab state based on mutual respect, and supported the idea all his life.

Jerusalem can be seen as a symbol of the possibility of the kind of dialog Buber advocated. The very monuments point to a shared heritage. King David, Christ and Mohammed have all walked its stone streets.

Kathleen Ochshorn teaches English and writing at the University of Tampa, where she also edits fiction for the Tampa Review.

Load-Date: July 6, 2008

The neocon hand in Obama's victory

Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)

June 6, 2008 Friday 4:11 PM EST

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Length: 1383 words

Byline: Report from Daily Mirror brought to you by HT Syndication.

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, June 6 -- It's Barack Obama. America made history on Tuesday when for the first time a non-white entered the fray as the candidate of a main political party at the November presidential election.

The victory of Obama after a hard-fought battle with Hillary Clinton, the favourite just 17-months ago to win the Democratic Party's race for the presidential candidate, is indeed a milestone in the evolution of US politics.

The victory probably heralds the beginning of the Barack Obama era. In the pre-Obama era, many a black in the United States could only dream of having a non-white as a presidential candidate. They had little hope that they would live to see this day. The blacks have only seen early exits at the party nomination level in their previous attempts to run for the White House. In the 1980s, civic rights leader Jesse Jackson made two for the Democratic Party ticket and both times left early in the race. Prior to him, there were Douglas Wilder (1992), Shirley Chisholm (1972) and Al-Sharpton (2004), all Democrats. Chisholm was the first **female** black candidate. There were a few who sought the Republican Party's nominations, too. But no black breasted the tape at the party race. Obama did. His victory perhaps shows that race is no longer an issue in US politics.

But the victory was not offered to him on a platter. Hillary could have won the nomination and made history as the first **female** President of the United States, if only she had the support of the powers behind the scenes. What decided Obama's victory was not the popular vote, but the votes of the so-called super-delegates, which include the high and the mighty in the Democratic Party with connections to corporate America.

While at the primaries and the caucuses, the voters were influenced by a candidate's policies and the voters' prejudices regarding race and gender, at the super-delegate level, the force behind the vote in the past was corporate America. In the Bush era, a much bigger force -- the neocon lobby -- asserted itself in writing the destiny of the United States. The neocons' definition of US national interest makes corporate America happy, the religious right happy and, of course, Israel happy. The neocons had a gay time during the presidency of George W. Bush, a willing partner, who offered his administration's plum posts to neocon bigwigs. The neocon's business of dominating the world and making the United States rich at the expense of the misery of the rest of the world is still not finished. With just seven months remaining for the Bush presidency to end, it is na?ve to expect that the neocons would wind up their Project for the New American Century (PNAC), even though they have bloodied Iraq and buried whatever moral principles that governed international relations.

It is easier for these neocons to manipulate and coax the 800-odd Democratic Party superdelegates than the millions of Democrats who vote at the primaries and the caucuses.

The neocon hand in Obama 's victory

As a cynic who is wary of neocons, this writer is of the view that the neocons had a hand in Obama's victory.

Obama was largely a little known politician until he delivered the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic Party Convention. The speech catapulted him to the frontline and made him a heartthrob in American politics. A few months later, Obama, a former law professor at the University of Chicago, became the fifth black American senator in US history, winning a 70 percent landslide at the congressional elections. Till the last minute, there wasn't a Republican candidate for the Illinois seat Obama won? Why? Since then, he has been touted as the possible Democratic Party candidate for the 2008 election. If one were to become the front runner of the party within two years of making a speech and winning a Senate seat, then the rise of that person needs serious inquiry.

Obama enjoyed the support of the US corporate media, another tool in the hands of the neocons. His blackness was wiped away with the media highlighting the fact that though he had a Kenyan black father, his mother was white.

Even his admission of smoking cocaine and marijuana during his youth did not earn him negative publicity in the US media. His opponents then brought his Muslim connection. Some compared Obama with Osama and pointed out that he had a Muslim middle name -- Hussein. They even said that Obama, during his childhood days in Indonesia, attended a Madrasa, a school, according to neocons, where extremist thoughts were planted in young minds. But with the help of the 'friendly' media, Obama overcame these taunts with much ease. He was not short of funds either while the Clinton camp often appealed for more funds to run the campaign.

Now that Obama has won the Democratic Party's nomination, what comes next? He will have to face a formidable foe in John McCain of the Republican Party at the November elections. McCain is white and Protestant. He also subscribes to the neocon plan. Have the neocons engineered an Obama victory so that McCain could win the presidential race despite the Americans' disenchantment with the present Republican administration?

They probably reckon that the Americans will not elect a black as president. But this is a gamble. So the neocons have drawn their plan in such a way that they stand to gain whoever wins. Of course, they will prefer McCain to Obama.

However, in Obama the neocons have a president who will attempt to show that he is not what he had been accused of being during his battle to win the Democratic Party nomination. He was branded as a national interest liability because of his Muslim middle name, his Muslim father and his childhood days in Indonesia. He was taunted as 'Hussein' and the right wing Republicans went to the extent of publishing a picture showing Obama in a traditional Somali Muslim dress -- a picture taken in 2006 during an African tour.

Though Obama is a member of the United Church of Christ in Chicago and has never worshipped at a mosque, he will have to double his efforts to prove he is not what he was accused of being. Here lies the danger of Obama playing into the hands of the neocons.

Though, like Clinton, he campaigned on a platform that opposed the Iraq war, Obama has already signalled his willingness to toe the neocon line as far as Israel is concerned.

His declaration of victory coincided with the convention of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), better known as the Jewish lobby. Obama, Hillary Clinton, McCain, Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert were all invitees for the great show.

Clinton in her speech at the AIPAC convention said, "I know Senator Obama understands what it is at stake here. ... I know that Senator Obama will be a good friend to Israel."

What Clinton said at the AIPAC show has little relevance as she has lost her political clout after her defeat, unless she is chosen as Obama's running mate. But what Obama said must have pleased the crowd. In fact, his speech was so effective that it won him new converts who were sceptical about his earlier pro-Israeli statements, especially those he made during his battle for the party nomination.

The neocon hand in Obama 's victory

He referred to a dirty email campaign doing the rounds among the Jews in America. The email said Obama was a captive of Palestinian ideology and was a secret Muslim. He dismissed such fears and said he came from a family which helped liberate Jews from the Buchewald concentration camp in Germany.

"As president I will never compromise when it comes to Israeli security," he said and assured the AIPAC that he would sign a deal to provide US\$ 30 billion in military aid to Israel for it to gain "a qualitative military advantage."

He also said he would not negotiate with **Hamas** and Hezbollah, though he would talk to Iran on America's terms.

"It will be tough and principled diplomacy with the appropriate Iranian leader at a time and place of my choosing -- if, and only if -- it can advance the interests of the United States," Obama said adding, "I will always keep the threat of military action on the table."

Haven't the neocons, the religious right and the Israeli lobby got their presidential candidate in Barak Hussein Obama?

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Is Tzipi Livni man enough to be prime minister?

The Jerusalem Post

May 14, 2008 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 3

Length: 1311 words

Byline: CALEV BEN-DAVID

Highlight: The foreign minister would do well to draw on the inspiration of Golda Meir when it comes to playing party politics. Analyze this...

Body

In Golda, a new biography of Golda Meir, author Elinor Burkett writes of her feisty subject's frustration when confronting the sexism that at times kept her from receiving major leadership positions, including when she was stopped from becoming head of the Jewish Agency in 1946, when most of the other Zionist movement leadership had been arrested by the British.

"The religious Zionists, a key part of the coalition that enabled Labor to govern, balked. 'Kudos to a smart and energetic woman,' read an article in Hatzofeh, an Orthodox newspaper. 'But it is impossible to put Golda at the head of the most important thing of the Jewish people. This is not a position for a woman.'" Similar objections kept her off the government's first proto-cabinet in 1948, and defeated a plan to install her as Tel Aviv mayor in the 1950s.

Golda got the last laugh, of course. The tough broad hailed by David Ben-Gurion as "the only man in my cabinet" (or words to that effect, as the reputed original quote can't be reprinted here) outlasted and out-persevered her detractors, finally ascending to the Prime Minister's Office in 1969 thanks to the sudden death of Levi Eshkol and her emergence as an elder stateswoman compromise- candidate between warring factions of the Labor Party.

Golda was hailed as a feminist pioneer, one of the very first **female** leaders of any modern government to ascend to the top without benefit of a family or marital connection. In retrospect, though, her tenure in the Prime Minister's Office seems far more of a happenstance aberration in local politics than a forerunner of things to come.

More than three decades later, no other woman has ever come close to Golda's prominence in Israeli public life - until now. As Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's legal and political hurdles keep growing, so do the odds that in the coming months he will be succeeded, at least temporarily, by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni.

And maybe not just for an interim period, if Olmert should resign in the event of an indictment being issued as a result of the latest corruption allegations against him. The FM surely had to be pleased with poll results published this week that showed her as not only the preferred choice both within and without Kadima, but surprisingly even leading the party to victory in a general election over a Binyamin Netanyahu-led Likud and an Ehud Barak-led Labor.

Is Tzipi Livni man enough to be prime minister?

Still, Livni's succession will not go unchallenged within Kadima, where Interior Minister Meir Sheetrit has already declared his determination to push for a party primary in which he will compete with her for the leadership spot. Transportation Minister Shaul Mofaz and Public Security Minister Avi Dichter are also seen as likely contenders.

What role, if any, would her gender play in Livni's chances to follow Golda's path to the top slot? Would she even be facing an internal party challenge if she wasn't a woman?

Times have changed since Golda's day, in ways that favor Livni's prospects. Although the haredi Shas faction, a key to the current coalition, may not tolerate any **females** among its own MKs, sources in the party have told the press they are prepared to serve in a government headed by a woman (unofficially, the party does have influential **female** voices in its ranks, although it helps to be a daughter or a daughter-in-law of Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef).

Most of the major secular parties boast senior **female** representation, such as Education Minister Yuli Tamir of Labor, and her Likud predecessor Limor Livnat, another change for the better since Golda's day.

But in the intervening years, Israel has actually slid backwards in comparison with other Western democracies. **Female** representation on the parliamentary and ministerial levels has definitely fallen below the standards set by North America and Europe; for example, more than half of Spain's new cabinet is **female**, including the defense minister.

Livni, like Golda, would only attain the top spot at first by default, filling a sudden vacancy without having to win a general election. In contrast, leaders such as the UK's Margaret Thatcher and Germany's Angela Merkel triumphed in clear-cut electoral victories, while Hillary Clinton has proved herself a serious contender for the US presidency in a way that no woman has done so for the Israel premiership since Golda. Even such developing societies as Liberia and Chile have now elected **female** leaders untainted by the type of dynastic connections that have previously aided such **women** as Indira Gandhi and Benazir Bhutto to gain power.

Livni had her own advantageous familial connections, starting out in Likud politics as a "Herut princess," the daughter of Revisionist movement hero Eitan Livni. But her relatively swift rise to the top is credited more to her own smarts, toughness, and most of all a loyalty to Ariel Sharon that paid off big time when the Kadima split from Likud enabled her to leapfrog a few political stations.

Livni's recent rise in the polls can likely be credited to a reputation for avoiding the kind of borderline wheeling-and-dealing that has made trouble in the past (and present) for Olmert, Barak and Netanyahu, and the fact that she emerged relatively unscathed from the Winograd Committee's report on the Second Lebanon War.

By itself, though, that hardly qualifies one to become prime minister, and it is not without justification that the more experienced Sheetrit, Mofaz and Barak view themselves as more appropriate replacements for Olmert than their younger colleague.

The latter two especially, if and when the time comes when they find themselves in contention with Livni, will surely draw on their extensive military resumes to argue they make more suitable candidates for prime minister than the FM.

And here, in a nutshell, is why Livni's gender is going to matter at some point, if Olmert's political situation further deteriorates. Security credentials still matter greatly in this society, and not without reason, especially as Israel finds itself having to contend with the growing challenges of **Hamas**, Hizbullah and Iran. Indeed, the failures during the Second Lebanon War are widely blamed in part on the fact that no one among the senior political leadership had the kind of top-level security background that might have enabled them to knowledgeably challenge the battle strategy pursued by then- IDF chief Dan Halutz.

Unfortunately, no Israeli woman is going to get the chance to earn those kind of stripes until the military takes even greater feminist strides forward than the political establishment, which isn't going to happen until there are more

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women in top governmental posts to lobby for those changes - the kind of circular-reasoning trap, all too common in military thinking, that Joseph Heller memorably dubbed as a "Catch-22."

Livni does in fact have her own security background to draw on; unfortunately, this being some kind of classified service in the Mossad, it's a little difficult for her or anyone else to draw on it as a political advantage.

So, how her candidacy as Olmert's most likely replacement is judged in the public arena during the coming weeks and months will prove an interesting test of just where the status of women, at the very highest of leadership, stands in the Israel of today.

Regardless of that, and however else one judges her performance in the offices she has held, there is no question the foreign minister will now have to demonstrate better skills of a purely political nature than Livni has thus far shown herself capable of, if she is to take advantage of her coming moment in the sun.

At least in this, if nothing else, Tzipi Livni would be wise to look back on the example of Golda Meir - a woman who played the game of Israeli party politics with a hand no less shrewd, and no less tough, than any man in these parts before or since.

calev@jpost.com

Graphic

2 photos: In retrospect, Golda Meir's tenure in the Prime Minister's Office seems far more of a happenstance aberration in local politics than a forerunner of things to come. (Credit: Archives photo. Ariel Jerozolinski/The Jerusalem Post)

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LETTERS FROM READERS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

April 25, 2008 Friday

THIRD EDITION

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. C10

Length: 1428 words

Body

Failure to understand that downtown's problem only is growing pains

The Post-Dispatch speculates that "What we might have downtown is a failure to succeed" (April 20). Oh boy.

The three examples in the story, as it turns out, were all doomed projects for various reasons from the beginning. Consider:

- Centene: Clayton, not eager to lose a major corporation, probably put its creative feet to the fire after learning of Centene's decision to relocate to downtown St. Louis. Whether Centene intended it or not, downtown became a pawn in Centene's quest to achieve its initial goal: the Clayton property. Centene was not part of the original plan for Ballpark Village. Its inclusion came only in September. The ensuing chess game was well worth the effort; a successful venture would have become an unexpected bonus for downtown. That the bonus did not materialize is disappointing, but it can not be called a failure.

- The Skyhouse: The developer says the project was abandoned because it was unable to obtain financing despite its "high pre-sales," but the amount of pre-sales has been debated. The Skyhouse's hefty price tag did not include parking, which would have been \$20,000 per space. Skyhouse developers said, "This is the way we do it in Chicago." To be successful, this group needed to focus on how we do it in St. Louis. Here, we like our parking included in the price. Unrealistic expectations certainly are causes for failing, but for the developer. Downtown merely was the setting.

- Ford Condos: The developer was indicted for fraud. How this can be labeled as downtown's failure is baffling.

For those of us who bother to read between the lines (as one frequently must do with Post-Dispatch stories), we understand that occasional fraud, corporate chess games and unrealistic ideas of developers are inevitable in any blossoming community. It signals activity, and activity signals growth.

A more appropriate headline would have been, "What we might have downtown are growing pains!"

Linda Dahlheimer | St. Louis

No laughing matter

Regarding the April 18 "Punch Line": Editorial cartoonist R.J. Matson apparently finds humor in destroyed lives of many and uses the admonition of Pope Benedict XVI to the U.S. bishops to vent.

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The pope met with victims to express his shame at what had happened to them. He stated his expectations that the bishops exercise vigilance in excluding pedophiles from the priesthood. The ongoing pain expressed by the victims says loud and clear that any monetary loss to the church is far less important or significant than the loss of childhood innocence and the barrier it causes to a wholesome, productive adulthood.

A serious, toned comment from Mr. Matson in any other section of the Post-Dispatch could be viewed as legitimate. If his point was about an inadequate response by church hierarchy, touché. If he were a high-school freshman trying his hand at journalistic humor, his presentation might be less offensive, but he certainly would be rejected for publication in any legitimate newspaper worldwide.

Shame on Mr. Matson and the Post-Dispatch!

Helen DiCrocce | Webster Groves

No vindication

Lowell Pearson, Gov. Matt Blunt's general counsel, follows the usual administration tactic of telling only part of the story in his letter "Absolute vindication" (April 22). In criticizing the April 17 editorial that called the governor's claim of absolute privilege in a defamation lawsuit "absolute hogwash," Mr. Pearson notes that St. Louis University law professor John Ammann said in an earlier Post-Dispatch news story that absolute privilege is the standard argument government officials invoke when they are in legal trouble.

Mr. Pearson, however, neglected to relate the remainder of Mr. Ammann's comment that there is little Missouri case law supporting executive privilege and that our courts might not look favorably on the governor's claim, given the facts of this case. Given the professor's complete legal analysis, Mr. Pearson's claim of vindication is simply more administration hogwash.

State Rep. Jake Zimmerman | D-Olivette

Renewable resource

Last year at Earth Day, some friends and I did a street theater protest against Solutia and AmerenUE. We surrounded their table areas with "Earth crime scene tape" and "arrested" them with Earth police badges and bicycle helmets. We read them their rights, including the right to remain silent, and read the charges against them. The actions brought crowds of witnesses.

This year, I could not find Solutia, but Ameren had a large tent. I guess the outcome of the action was not environmental friendly in that the new security guards posted at both sides of the tent probably did not ride bicycles to get there. Ameren may be taking a little too seriously the proverb that fear is the ultimate renewable resource.

Jon Jung Echols | St. Louis

Follow the money

George Johnson's commentary was a sad attempt to get research funding through fear-mongering ("Is BPA the reason women get breast cancer?" April 21). He was able, through fact distortion, to fit the square peg of Bisphenol A into the round hole of estrogen. Mr. Johnson knows that the stereochemistry of molecules is important in how they react to one another and that comparing the structure of BPA to estrogen is a big stretch,

He tries to frighten us into thinking the BPA is in all plastic products. It is used in the manufacture of polycarbonates and epoxys. The largest use of polycarbonates is in the manufacture of compact discs and digital video discs. Epoxys are used as a barrier in the lining of cans. Although 6 billion pounds of epoxys and polycarbonates sounds like a lot, they comprise only 0.6 percent of the trillion pounds of plastics produced each year.

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The amount of BPA that leaches from epoxys and polycarbonates is measured in parts per trillion, which are 1,000 times smaller than parts per billion. Mr. Johnson says that's not much. If I decreased the size of his car by 1,000 times, would he say it's not much?

Deep Throat said to "follow the money." When we get to the last paragraph of Mr. Johnson's commentary, we get to what really is important: government-funded research. Mr. Johnson knows that if he scares enough people, he might get more government funding.

Sam Longstreth | St. Louis

Brentwood Plastics

Treatment, research needed

In his commentary "Is BPA the reason women get breast cancer?" (April 21), George Johnson wrote: "Most government-funded breast cancer research has focused on the search for more effective treatments; much less money is spent on searching for the causes of breast cancer."

The National Breast Cancer Coalition has been striving for six years for quality legislation to be passed that will create a national strategy for investigating the impact of environmental factors on the development of breast cancer. Even with 67 senators and 258 representatives signed on as cosponsors of the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act, the current Congress has failed so far to pass it. Yes, we need effective treatment, but viable scientific research is needed to determine the causes of this disease. Future generations across not only our nation but also the entire planet will benefit. Breast cancer knows no boundaries.

Sue Baebler | Huntleigh

President Emeritus, St. Louis Breast Cancer Coalition and Missouri Field Coordinator, National Breast Cancer Coalition

Productive skills

"From prison to theater" (April 16), about the former prisoner who is now acting in local theater, showed the positive impact programs such as Prison Performing Arts can have on incarcerated adults and juveniles.

There are those who think we are coddling prisoners by providing them with activities they enjoy. In fact, it clearly is programs such as Prison Performing Arts that give prisoners the skills to become productive, law-abiding citizens once they leave prison. We should applaud and encourage such programs in our prisons; in the long run, they benefit all of us.

Patti Teper | St. Louis

Decrying dialogue

Why are some members of Congress up in arms about former President Jimmy Carter meeting with the leaders of Hamas and Israel? Someone needs to do it. While other world leaders are pointing fingers and calling names, Mr. Carter is trying to broker peace or at least open lines of communication.

How far removed from solutions are we when our leaders decry dialogue between two enemies? Calling someone a terrorist won't make him go away. What could be the worst outcome of Mr. Carter's visit and negotiations? Truce, cease fire or, dare I say, peace?

Steve Winkler | St. Louis

Load-Date: April 25, 2008

LETTERS FROM READERS

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'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

The Jerusalem Post

July 25, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 2992 words

Byline: MICHAL LANDO

Highlight: In an interview with 'The Jerusalem Post' to sum up his tenure as Israel's ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman waxes diplomatic in assessing the 'glass building' where he spent the last six years. INTERVIEW

Body

'I wear two hats here: one is representing Israel at the UN - which is difficult enough; the other, which is even tougher, is representing the UN in Israel,' says Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Dan Gillerman. He is sitting in his office a few hundred meters from what he often refers to as the "glass building" - the UN headquarters in New York City. It is an office he will be vacating at the end of the month, to make way for law professor Gabriela Shalev, Israel's first female envoy to the UN.

Gillerman's nearly six-year tenure saw the Hamas takeover in Gaza, the Second Lebanon War and ongoing threats from Iran to wipe Israel off the map.

"If I had to judge by winds and feelings that accompanied me, the UN was a place where I would be abused, attacked and criticized, and the feeling was that there wasn't much to be done about it," says Gillerman. "The only option was to lie back and take it. But I didn't come here to lie back and take it. I came here to make a difference."

Making a difference included forging relationships with representatives from Arab countries that have no diplomatic ties to Israel. Indeed, a farewell event held last week at Gillerman's residence was attended by ambassadors from dozens of countries, including a large number of Arab envoys. Present were the ambassadors of Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Oman - and even Palestinian Observer Riyad Mansour, who regularly butted heads with Gillerman at Security Council meetings.

Among Gillerman's other accomplishments: a stint as vice president of the General Assembly (the first Israeli to be elected to this post in 55 years); the passage of a Holocaust remembrance resolution; and an agricultural technology resolution, the first resolution to be initiated and put forth by Israel.

Though this hasn't made Israelis "fall in love" with the UN, Gillerman hopes the advances he has made have managed to alter Israel's perception of the international body.

"One thing people have to understand is that when you talk about the UN being anti-Israel, basically you have to understand that the UN is only a building on First Avenue," says Gillerman. "It's as good as its member states, and its member states are only as good as the world we live in. And in the world we live in today there still is an automatic, immoral majority against Israel, so you are fighting an uphill battle. It's a slow, very difficult, sometimes Sisyphean battle, but if you persist, you can achieve things that seem unachievable."

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

It is this attitude that perhaps explains Gillerman's sheepish acknowledgement that he has enjoyed "every minute" of his service at the UN, despite its being widely considered the most difficult diplomatic post.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post mere days before leaving this post, Gillerman quips: "When you work for the government, you are not supposed to enjoy yourself. Had I said that before, I probably would have been recalled long ago."

Has there really been any change at the UN with regard to Israel during your tenure as ambassador?

The most interesting part of my job was the relationships I forged with Arab and Muslim ambassadors, some of whom still remain nameless, because my relationship with them is discreet, and some of whom are public knowledge, like the Pakistani ambassador. My relationship with him started in clandestine bars and dark hotel lobbies, and evolved into an open relationship. We managed to bring dividends to both countries, which far outweigh the significance of the number of hands raised at any vote at the UN. I also forged relationships with the Omani, Qatari and Moroccan ambassadors. These relationships were not reflected in votes, but I don't think votes are the most important thing. You can bring dividends to your country in many areas not reflected in votes.

We [the Israeli mission] decided to stop being a one- issue mission. For too long, Israel has been accused of being concerned only with the conflict. We wanted to bring to the awareness of our colleagues and the world what a beautiful country of excellence and innovation and creativity Israel is, and to get into areas where Israel is contributing to the world and could contribute to the UN.

We also decided to reach out to as many countries as we could - not solely to rely on the US mission for information, but eventually to be in a position where we could provide the US with information, and we did do that.

The UN has long been perceived as ineffective. What is your view?

There was a time when the UN was perceived as irrelevant, unimportant and ineffective. And in many ways, in different places, it still is very ineffective. The inability of the UN to act and have a serious presence in Darfur, for example, is shameful, horrendous and scandalous. On the other hand, the UN passed Resolution 1559, which put an end to the Syrian presence in Lebanon, and Resolution 1701 brought an end to the Second Lebanon War. And the UN adopted three different resolutions on Iran, some quite tough. In addition, the UN is marking the Holocaust for the first time in history in a very moving, significant and important way.

One of the paradoxes today is that though we live in a one-superpower world, the tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever before. Even the US is seeking consensus - is seeking this multilateral umbrella - maybe because of the Iraq experience. Even the Bush administration, which sometimes did not have the highest regard for the UN, is seeking this legitimacy of multilateral consensus on Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran more than ever before. In this respect, if anything, the UN has become more central and more relevant. I just wish it were also more effective.

You refer to UN resolutions relating to Iran and Lebanon. But have they really been effective?

Resolution 1701 was perceived as a major diplomatic achievement for Israel, because in previous wars, while we did have resounding and outright victories on the ground, they were never followed by political or diplomatic achievements. Here, while we may not have had a resounding victory on the ground, we did have a very significant diplomatic achievement, which not only put an end to the war, but also had elements of dramatically changing the situation on the ground... Until July 12, 2006, southern Lebanon was a Hizbullah land - a state within a state. Hizbullah could do whatever it wanted out in the open, and no Lebanese soldier would dare venture. Suddenly, there were 30,000 soldiers there.

But Hizbullah has rearmed in the meantime, hasn't it?

Resolution 1701 was supposed to limit the actions of Hizbullah and prevent it from rearming. It did not achieve that. Hizbullah today has rearmed to the point that it is possibly even better equipped than it was before the war. The resolution also imposed an embargo on arms shipments to militias in Lebanon - namely Hizbullah - which was a huge achievement, but that wasn't implemented either. 1701 also demanded the immediate release of Eldad Regev

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

and Ehud Goldwasser who, tragically, were returned two years later in coffins. So the implementation of 1701 is far from satisfactory. In fact, it's very disappointing. But the elements were there, and still are. One of the things I keep telling the Secretary General Ban ki-Moon and others is that it is up to them to implement it. It is the Security Council who passed it, and the Security Council cannot afford for it to be just another piece of paper, because in the end, when there is another flare-up in Lebanon, and there very well may be, the UN will be to blame...

What should the Security Council be doing?

They should be much more proactive - more aggressive in going after Hizbullah in detecting and identifying arms depots. They should be going in there, not just relying on Lebanese armed forces to do so, who often work in collusion with Hizbullah. The UNIFIL soldiers were not sent there to give out chocolates to children or write traffic tickets. They were sent there to carry out a mandate which was very clearly defined...

What about Iran?

There is no doubt that Iran is the greatest threat to world peace and security and the survival of civilization as we know it. It is very important to stress that Iran is not just an Israeli matter. In fact, if you ask the Saudis or some of the Gulf countries, they are probably more worried about Iran than we are. There is a huge difference between North Korea and Iran, because while North Korea attained nuclear weapons out of desperation, Iran is seeking them out of aspiration. They want to realize their 2500-year-old dream of a Persian Empire, taking over the Arab and Muslim countries, exporting Shia extremism. The UN passed three resolutions with quite tough sanctions. I believe the Iranians are rattled by those resolutions, not indifferent to them. I think they are mainly rattled by the unanimity of the stand of the international community. I don't think Iran wants to be a pariah state, isolated and boycotted. Still, this has not stopped them from enriching uranium and from seeking nuclear weapons. Therefore, the international community should be much tougher. Frankly, I don't know whether we have time for diplomacy to make Iran stop. I hope very much that we do. I still believe in diplomacy; that's why I am here. But if diplomacy fails, Iran must understand that the world, not just Israel, will not stand for a nuclear Iran, and that all options are on the table.

What do you make of recent claims that Israel is planning an attack?

We are sitting a few hundred yards from the Security Council, and I am still very much engaged in a diplomatic effort. I also believe Israel should not be perceived as being at the forefront of this conflict with Iran. There is nothing the Iranians would like better than to turn this into an Iranian-Israeli conflict, or even an Islamic-Jewish one. This is so far a conflict between Iran and the rest of the world. We should make sure it stays that way.

How is it that, despite having a Holocaust resolution, the UN continues to host Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly denied the Holocaust and calls for Israel's destruction?

I must say I was very disappointed when he came here the first time. I was more disappointed when he came a second time. And I am shocked that, after everything he is saying, he is allowed to come here again. I know that the UN has to allow everybody in, and that they have allowed butchers and killers and assassins in before, but I think that in the case of a person who publicly vows to wipe another member state off the map, and who denies the Holocaust while preparing the next one, the UN should not allow him in.

On a different topic, why does UNRWA persist in perpetuating, rather than solving, the refugee problem?

The refugee problem is a horrible one, and the fact that the Arab countries and the Palestinian leadership have kept these refugees as hostages for so many years, some of them wearing the keys of their homes they will never return to on their necks, made to believe that one day they may return - which is a total impossibility - and the very dire conditions in which they live, is a horrible testament to the cynicism and brutality of the Arab world which not only doesn't care about the refugees, but uses them. That's why we have third- and fourth-generation refugees living in such squalid conditions.

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

I don't think there is any other people in the world who have remained refugees for so many years. Take Israel, which started with 600,000 people and today numbers over 7 million Jews. It absorbed refugees from all over the world, including from Arab countries. Even the Arab Israelis live in far better conditions and have many more rights and better education than any of their brethren in the Arab countries.

But I think we should ask ourselves what would happen if there were no UNRWA. At the moment, the only organization that takes care of the refugees' basic health, food and education needs is UNRWA. So, though we may not like some of UNRWA's statements and activities, it is carrying out a very important duty that nobody else is doing.

Is there no room for a change in its mandate?

When people talk about a two-state solution, they mean that Israel is the solution for the Jewish refugees, and Palestine is the solution for the Palestinian refugees. The international community could easily solve the refugee problem, and I don't think it would take very much money or resources to do so. The real question is, where are the Arab countries? Some of the Arab and Muslim countries are the richest countries in the world. Some of the world's economies are undergoing very difficult times, while these countries are getting richer by the minute. They have unlimited resources. They spend billions of dollars on real estate and financial institutions all over the world, including in the US. If they care so much about those poor refugees, why don't they do something about the problem? The reason is because they don't really care, and because it suits them to hold this open wound as an alibi for their anti-Israelism.

The same goes for the peace process. I believe we are at a point in time where we do have a chance to finally settle the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Never before have so many different parties converged with this common interest.

When I returned from the Annapolis summit, I was cautiously optimistic, because, to me, the most important thing that emerged there was the fact that so many Arab and Muslim countries seemed to form a coalition of moderates against Iran, and indicated support for the process. This was very encouraging, because for a very long time the most frightening thing to me was the eerie silence of the Arab world. What we are witnessing today is no longer what Samuel Huntington called a "clash of civilizations." What we are witnessing today is a clash of "civilization" in the singular, because when you look at world we live in, most of the bloodshed and violence occurs within Islam. Not only are most terrorists Muslims, but the vast majority of their victims are Muslims, as well. The frightening thing is that you don't see a single Muslim leader - secular, political, religious, academic - get up and say, "Enough is enough. What are we doing killing each other?"

It's almost as though when Jews kill Muslims it's a massacre; when Christians kill Muslims it's a crusade; and when Muslims kill Muslims it's the weather channel - nobody cares.

In Annapolis, I thought they finally started caring, not because they fell in love with Israel. They came out of fear - fear of Iran, of Shia extremism - and out of the realization that they had a chance, maybe for the first time, to be much more pragmatic and realistic about settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so that they could align against the real danger, Iran.

Do you speak about this in your private conversations with other ambassadors?

It comes up all the time, but there is this perpetration of the ritual of victimhood, which somehow they don't want to give away. I even told this to my Palestinian colleague, Riyad Mansour, with whom I have a very good relationship. We can go at each other's throats in the Security Council, but after that, we can also talk to each other as two human beings, which I think is one of the luxuries of the UN.

Could the UN have done anything differently regarding Regev and Goldwasser?

Secretary General Ban ki-Moon has a lot of sympathy and admiration for Israel and the Jewish people, and has done as much as he could. He had his own negotiator working on the case, together with the Germans. He has

'The tendency towards multilateralism is greater than ever'

briefed the families many times, spoken to the prime minister and foreign minister several times, and was very deeply involved and committed. He had a picture of the soldiers on his table to remind him, and showed a lot of compassion for them. During one meeting, he had tears in his eyes when Karnit [Goldwasser] spoke.

Is he more sympathetic to Israel than his predecessor?

I had a lot of respect for Kofi Annan. He was a very able diplomat, and a very charismatic secretary general. Some Israelis had their misgivings about him. He made some mistakes and some unfortunate statements, but at times he was very helpful - and always very gracious and helpful to me. He was very instrumental in bringing about the Holocaust remembrance resolution, and on the whole I think he was very decent and fair. I think Ban ki-Moon has greater compassion and friendship for Israel, even from the days when he was the Korean foreign minister.

There seems to be a lot of concern about your successor. Does it make a difference that she is a woman?

I very much respect Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni's choice, and have a lot of confidence in her judgment. I also respect her desire for the post to be filled by a woman. This may send out a different message, maybe even soften Israel's image a bit. I assure you Gaby Shalev will be a very successful ambassador, regardless of her gender. She is a person of extremely high intellect, very capable, very highly regarded within the legal community, and aside from all that, she is also very nice. She is of such high caliber and intelligence that she would never undertake this if she didn't think she could succeed. I believe she can do it, though she may do it differently. I will be happy to help her in any way I can, and am in close contact with her.

What are the main challenges she faces?

She is entering the post during a very difficult and interesting period. But then, for Israel, it's always difficult and interesting. She is coming when Iran is still very much on the agenda; when there is a change of administrations in Washington; when there are indirect peace talks with Syria; when threats and dangers of Hizbullah in the North and Hamas in the South are very real and sometimes existential - when the world is probably at its most dangerous since the Cold War or even World War II.

Graphic

2 photos: DAN GILLERMAN. 'If anything, the UN has become more central and more relevant. I just wish it were also more effective.' GILLERMAN'S WARNING. 'There is nothing the Iranians would like better than to turn this into an Iranian-Israeli conflict, or even an Islamic-Jewish one.' (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

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Under a 7-year attack, Israeli town's identity is formed

Deseret Morning News (Salt Lake City)

April 6, 2008 Sunday

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Byline: Ethan Bronner New York Times News Service

Body

SDEROT, Israel -- This long-neglected immigrant town a mile from Gaza, pounded by Palestinian rockets for the past seven years, is taking on a new identity, edging into the center of Zionist consciousness as a symbol of the nation's unofficial motto: "Never Again."

Like the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem, Sderot is now a must-see stop for those who support Israel or are being urged to do so. Several groups have set up offices to arrange visits to a damaged home or a trauma center. Foreign diplomats have been bused here by the government; a U.N. officer says he has brought top officials here five times; Sen. John McCain came last month; Sens. Barack Obama and Hillary Rodham Clinton, residents say, cannot be far behind.

Israelis and their supporters are lining up to volunteer. Money is pouring in for bomb shelters, social services and an Orthodox religious seminary.

"For years, the government and others thought of Sderot not as a national problem but a local one," Mayor Eli Moyal said, just before the ribbon-cutting for an elegant first aid and ambulance center built with money donated largely by American Jews. "They now understand that if Sderot falls, Israel falls."

The sense that Sderot is actually Israel's front line in its battle for legitimacy and self-respect has gained real currency, just as in the Arab world the suffering of Gazans has taken on a special significance. For Israelis, the conviction of Sderot's importance began growing with the huge increase in rocket fire since the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and after the 2006 war with Hezbollah, which sent thousands of rockets into northern Israel.

With both **Hamas** and Hezbollah gaining strength on Israel's borders and developing rockets with longer ranges, Sderot, its advocates say, is a bitter sample of what more prosperous and distant parts of Israel may face if the threat here is ignored. And to a growing number across the political spectrum, it has inspired a collective rescue operation.

"In Tel Aviv, you have great cafes, nice clothes and you live an illusion as if everything is all right," reflected Ilanit Swissa, a theater director and one of about a dozen liberal intellectuals setting up camp in Sderot who moved here a few months ago to work with high school actors. "But it is not true. Here I feel like I am contributing something. We are at war and you feel it here."

Surrounded by orange groves and wheat fields, guarded above by a military blimp that sets off an alert with each rocket launched from Gaza, Sderot has been a tough place to live. There have been days when more than 50 rockets have landed in or near the town, bringing panic, destruction and occasionally death to a town of 20,000 that

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is heavily populated with Israeli minority groups -- Moroccans, refugees from Central Asia and Ethiopians. Panic is widespread. Businesses have closed. Three thousand residents have left.

Residents have grown accustomed to -- though hardly comfortable with -- the constant sound of a townwide alert known as "Code Red," produced when the blimp detects an incoming rocket. Once the alarm has gone off, there is 20 seconds to get to a shelter before the rocket hits. Given such a short warning, kindergartners are kept inside all day rather than risk their failing to move quickly.

Hundreds of rockets are on grim display in the courtyard of the police station. The town itself, while typical of many its size in Israel, is pockmarked with rocket holes and shelters and has developed a fierce black humor about its predicament, with sculptures made of rockets in a number of places.

A sense of pride in Sderot's gritty refusal to yield and an interest in finding ways to protect and enhance the town have spread rapidly. World WIZO, a Zionist women's group, found that Sderot campaigns elicit visceral support from donors.

"We printed T-shirts saying 'Sderot Needs You.' In one day, we raised \$1 million," said Helena Glaser, the group's president. The other day, David W. Lentz of Livingston, N.J. was pounding the pavement here with fellow Israel advocates, looking for ways their community could help.

That same afternoon, a busload of Jewish fundraisers were inspecting new care centers they had sponsored, passing some of the dozens of bomb shelters, some of them donated by evangelical Christians; a rabbi was going over plans for a \$5 million seminary, financed mostly from abroad.

For people who live and work here, all the attention, especially from wealthy outsiders, can seem overwhelming. Several said they were unable to get anything done.

"It has gotten out of hand," said Dror Marsha, the director of the local volunteer center. "It has become a trend -- a good trend -- but I can't handle it. We have 1,000 volunteers a month now." Two years ago, he said, the number was 200.

Among the projects donated by evangelical groups are some of the nearly 80 small shelters and bus stops that double as shelters as well as a set of "resilience centers" to coordinate social services. Run by the Israel Trauma Coalition, a project of the UJA-Federation of New York, the resilience centers send social workers on house calls, provide training for single parents and offer workshops for the elderly and new immigrants.

Apart from the donations and support from the outside, another big change in Sderot in the past year has been economic, and the surprising reason for that is the Israeli evacuation of Gaza. Until 2005, there was an industrial park just inside Gaza of companies jointly owned by Israelis and Palestinians. With the withdrawal, the companies relocated to Sderot and employed locals, bringing the city's unemployment rate from a crushing 20 percent in the late 1990s to a near national low of 3.5 percent, according to Shalom Halevy, a municipal spokesman.

Still, 30 percent of Sderot's population show symptoms of stress, five times as many as in similar populations in Israel, according to studies carried out by Marc Gelkopf of Haifa University. Many families sleep in one room together for fear of missing an alarm.

As much as Sderot is a symbol, it is also a kind of Rorschach test -- a screen onto which various political factions project their hopes and fears. For the right, it is evidence that only force will stop the rockets; for the left it is evidence that force is not the answer and that the rockets cannot be stopped without a new approach.

One attempt at a new approach involves a group in Sderot that has started holding discussions with Palestinians in Gaza via speakerphone. The group, Another Voice, is urging a cease-fire. There is also a new blog, a discussion between a resident of Sderot and one of Gaza, both anonymous.

Under a 7-year attack, Israeli town's identity is formed

But for Rabbi David Fendel, who has run a 500-student yeshiva here for years, the rockets are proof that withdrawing Israeli settlers and soldiers from Gaza was foolish. He has raised millions of dollars to build a new yeshiva. The point of his project is to make a statement to those who wish Israel ill.

"The Palestinians are trying to turn this into a ghost town," he said as he stepped through the construction site of his school. "We're not going to let them. We're going to make it a dynamic center of Zionism, Torah and building."

The building here is a bit unusual -- the new yeshiva study hall will have 1,500 tons of concrete in its ceiling as protection against the crude homemade rockets known as Qassams and other rockets that assault the city on a nearly daily basis from Gaza.

Fendel recognizes that there is plenty of work ahead. He is marrying off his eldest of seven children in the coming weeks. But even though his son and future daughter-in-law will live here at the yeshiva, the wedding will not be here because so many guests are afraid to come.

Avi Farhan, who was a settler in the Sinai before it was returned to Egypt and then in Gaza before the Israelis withdrew, said he agreed with Fendel that the withdrawal was a mistake. Standing on a bluff near his new apartment, he can see what remains of his former Gaza settlement, now a staging ground for rocket fire.

"From my old house, they can now shell my new house," he said ruefully.

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A Town Under Fire Becomes a Symbol for Israel

The New York Times

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Dateline: SDEROT, Israel

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A Town Under Fire Becomes a Symbol for Israel

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Apart from the donations and support from the outside, another big change in Sderot in the past year has been economic, and the surprising reason for that is the Israeli evacuation of Gaza. Until 2005, there was an industrial park just inside Gaza of companies jointly owned by Israelis and Palestinians. With the withdrawal, the companies relocated to Sderot and employed locals, bringing the city's unemployment rate from a crushing 20 percent in the late 1990s to a near national low of 3.5 percent, according to Shalom Halevy, a municipal spokesman.

Still, 30 percent of Sderot's population show symptoms of stress, five times as many as in similar populations in Israel, according to studies carried out by Marc Gelkopf of Haifa University. Many families sleep in one room together for fear of missing an alarm.

As much as Sderot is a symbol, it is also a kind of Rorschach test -- a screen onto which various political factions project their hopes and fears. For the right, it is evidence that only force will stop the rockets; for the left it is evidence that force is not the answer and that the rockets cannot be stopped without a new approach.

A Town Under Fire Becomes a Symbol for Israel

One attempt at a new approach involves a group in Sderot that has started holding discussions with Palestinians in Gaza via speakerphone. The group, Another Voice, is urging a cease-fire. There is also a new blog, a discussion between a resident of Sderot and one of Gaza, both anonymous.

But for Rabbi David Fendel, who has run a 500-student yeshiva here for years, the rockets are proof that withdrawing Israeli settlers and soldiers from Gaza was foolish. He has raised millions of dollars to build a new yeshiva. The point of his project is to make a statement to those who wish Israel ill.

"The Palestinians are trying to turn this into a ghost town," he said as he stepped through the construction site of his school. "We're not going to let them. We're going to make it a dynamic center of Zionism, Torah and building."

The building here is a bit unusual -- the new yeshiva study hall will have 1,500 tons of concrete in its ceiling as protection against the crude homemade rockets known as Qassams and other rockets that assault the city on a nearly daily basis from Gaza.

Rabbi Fendel recognizes that there is plenty of work ahead. He is marrying off his eldest of seven children in the coming weeks. But even though his son and future daughter-in-law will live here at the yeshiva, the wedding will not be here because so many guests are afraid to come.

Avi Farhan, who was a settler in the Sinai before it was returned to Egypt and then in Gaza before the Israelis withdrew, said he agreed with Rabbi Fendel that the withdrawal was a mistake. Standing on a bluff near his new apartment, he can see what remains of his former Gaza settlement, now a staging ground for rocket fire.

"From my old house, they can now shell my new house," he said ruefully.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Money is pouring into Sderot for bomb shelters and social services. Some shelters have been donated by evangelical Christians.(PHOTOGRAPH BY RINA CASTELNUOVO FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Senator John McCain, the presumptive Republican nominee for president, visited the town and its rocket display last month.(PHOTOGRAPH BY URIEL SINAI/GETTY IMAGES)(pg. A8) MAP: Sderot is heavily populated with Israeli minority groups. Map details area of GAZA STRIP (pg. A8)

Load-Date: April 5, 2008

Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb

The Sunday Times (London)

February 17, 2008

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Section: OVERSEAS NEWS; News; Pg. 25

Length: 1373 words

Byline: Uzi Mahnaimi Tel Aviv, Hala Jaber Beirut and Jon Swain

Body

NOTHING seemed very remarkable about the short, bearded man who mingled with other guests on Tuesday evening at a reception in Damascus, the Syrian capital, to mark the 29th anniversary of Ayatollah Khomeini's Iranian revolution.

Yet before the night was over he was dead in the twisted wreckage of his car and the inevitable assumption was that Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence service, had killed him with an ingeniously planted bomb.

The news spread rapidly that the dead man was Imad Mughniyeh, an elusive figure known as "the Fox" who had been one of the world's most feared terrorist masterminds.

Robert Baer, a former CIA agent who spent years on his trail, said Mughniyeh was "probably the most intelligent, most capable operative we've ever run across".

As the Israelis rejoiced, Iran and Hezbollah, the militant Shi'ite group, which together had harnessed Mughniyeh's expertise, mourned his death at a huge funeral in Beirut, where he established his terrorist network.

Mughniyeh's mother, Um Imad, sat amid a sea of black chadors, a lonely, sombre figure as mourners held their hero's picture aloft.

"If only I had more boys to carry on in his footsteps," she sighed, confessing that she did not have any pictures of him, even from his childhood, as he had taken them away. He was the third of her sons to die in a car bombing.

With a price of \$25m (£ 12.7m) on his head, he was always vigilant. Some say he had had plastic surgery to alter his face in an effort to elude the Americans and Israelis who blamed him for plane hijackings and other bloody attacks which killed hundreds of their citizens in the Middle East and as far away as South America.

He had grown accustomed to living dangerously and there was no reason he should have feared for his safety last Tuesday as he sipped fruit juice at the party at the Iranian cultural centre. Mughniyeh was on fairly good terms with everybody present -almost all the leaders of the Damascus-based militant groups were represented.

At 10.35pm he decided to go home. Having exchanged customary kisses with his host, Hojatoleslam Ahmad Musavi, the newly appointed Iranian ambassador, Mughniyeh stepped into the night.

Minutes later he was seated in his silver Mitsubishi Pajero in a nearby street when a deafening blast ripped the car apart and killed him instantly.

Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb

According to Israeli intelligence sources, someone had replaced the headrest of the driver's seat with another containing a small high-explosive charge. Israel welcomed his death but the prime minister's office denied responsibility.

Hezbollah accused the "Zionist Israelis" of killing its "brother commander" but believed the explosive had been detonated in another car by satellite.

One witness said: "I held his head in my hands, kissed him farewell. His face was burnt but intact and he had received serious injuries to his abdomen."

Whatever the truth about the bomb, Mughniyeh, 45, died as he had lived - violently. He was a product of the Lebanese civil war that transfixed western governments 25 years ago.

Born in a south Lebanon village, the son of a vegetable seller, Mughniyeh joined Force 17, Yasser Arafat's personal bodyguard, when scarcely out of his teens.

After the Palestine Liberation Organisation was forced to leave Lebanon in 1982, he stayed behind and joined Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shi'ite Islamic group that emerged in 1985 as a militant force resisting Israeli occupation.

He came to the attention of Sheikh Mohammed Fadlallah, Hezbollah's spiritual leader, and rose quickly up the ranks. He was shaped into a remarkably effective terrorist as, under the auspices of Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the organisation grew into one of the deadliest forces fighting Israel and America.

Western terrorism experts say he was the dynamo behind some of Hezbollah's most lethal operations. These included the bombing of the American embassy in Beirut that killed 63 people and the attacks on the US marine and French paratrooper barracks that left more than 200 dead. It was Mughniyeh's decision to kidnap Terry Waite, the Church of England envoy, as he tried to broker the release of other captives.

Another notorious act attributed to him was the hijacking of a TWA flight when an American passenger, a US navy diver, was shot and his body thrown onto the runway.

In the 1990s Israel made him a priority target for his involvement in two attacks in Buenos Aires -the 1992 Israeli embassy bombing, which killed 29, and a 1994 suicide bomb attack on a Jewish community centre, in which 85 died. Then he went to ground. The FBI placed him on its most-wanted list but had to use a 20 year-old photograph for its reward posters.

Despite these difficulties, the CIA came close to capturing him. The Israelis were also hot on his trail. "We tried to knock him down several times in the late 1980s," revealed David Barkay, a former major in unit 504 of Israeli military intelligence who was in charge of Mughniyeh's file.

"We accumulated intelligence on him, but the closer we got, the less information we gleaned -no weak points, no women, money, drugs -nothing."

Mughniyeh lost two brothers, Jihad and Fuad, in car bomb explosions in Beirut. In 2000 he was targeted by an Israeli sniper in southern Lebanon. But in Meir Dagan, who became head of Mossad in 2002, he faced a committed opponent under whose leadership the organisation built a strong record in assassinating Israel's enemies.

Israel fought a bitter 34-day war against Hezbollah in 2006 to eradicate it in southern Lebanon. It believes that Mughniyeh was instrumental in rebuilding the group after the war, re-arming it with Iranian-made Fateh 110 rockets which are capable of hitting Tel Aviv and which it fears could be equipped with chemical weapons.

Informed Israeli sources said that at the time of his death Mughniyeh was working for the Syrians on a terrorist attack against Israeli targets. This was to avenge Israel's airstrike on what was believed to be a secret nuclear site in Syria last year.

Israel kills terror chief with headrest bomb

Since Mughniyeh's death, Israeli embassies and Jewish institutions around the world have been on high alert. "I've no doubt the Syrians and Iranians will retaliate," said Barkay.

Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's general secretary, warned in a fiery oration at Mughniyeh's funeral that Israel had committed a "major stupid mistake". It was now "open war", he said.

In Lebanon, a close friend of Mughniyeh was certain that he would be avenged by Hezbollah in an attack that, ironically, he had prepared himself before his death.

"Most likely the retaliation when it comes will be one that had been planned and masterminded by Imad himself," said Anis Al-Nackash, a Lebanese expert on Hezbollah.

He said Mughniyeh had prepared a variety of "spectacular" attacks to be executed by Hezbollah if one of its top leaders was assassinated. These were now being dusted off and updated.

On the day Mughniyeh was buried, Ehud Olmert, the Israeli prime minister, summoned Dagan from his cottage in Galilee to Jerusalem.

"It was a one-on-one meeting," said a source. But it is believed that Dagan was complimented by his boss and told that he would stay as head of Mossad until the end of 2009.

Time will tell whether, as Israel fervently hopes, Mughniyeh's death has gravely weakened his organisation or if the effect has merely been to harden Hezbollah's resolve.

Taken out

The Israeli security service, Mossad, is thought to have killed six other militants abroad since Meir Dagan became director in August 2002:

December 2002 Ramzi Nahara, Israeli agent who defected to Hezbollah and planned attacks against Israel. Dagan knew him personally. Killed in Lebanon by car bomb

March 2003 Abu Mohammed Al-Masri, Al-Qaeda member building cell to target Israeli border with Lebanon. Killed by car bomb in Lebanon

August 2003 Ali Hussein Saleh, Hezbollah explosives expert. Killed by car bomb in Beirut

July 2004 Ghaleb Awali, Hezbollah official with links to activists in Gaza Strip. Killed by car bomb in Beirut

September 2004 Izz el-Deen al-Sheikh Khalil, **Hamas** official liaising between headquarters in Syria and members in Gaza and West Bank. Killed by car bomb in Damascus

May 2006 Mahmoud Majzoub, Islamic Jihad official liaising with Hezbollah. Killed by car bomb blast in Lebanon

Load-Date: February 17, 2008

Christians Anonymous

The Jerusalem Post

February 1, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 10

Length: 1450 words

Byline: DAVID SMITH

Highlight: Increasingly ignored by Jews and marginalized by Muslims, Christians continue to leave the city

Body

Anonymous. The word comes to mind when researching Jerusalem Christians, likely the world's oldest Christian community.

Finding hard statistical data on native Jerusalem Christians is no easy task. Demographic statistics at the Jerusalem Municipality categorize them as "non-Jews," lumping them together with Muslims, Druse and expatriate Christians.

While the municipality kept statistics on its Christian population until 1995, it no longer considers such a division necessary, according to a city spokesman.

Balancing municipal numbers with data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (a bit tricky because the city makes no distinction between native and expatriate Christians while the CBS is concerned with the Jerusalem district, not the city), one finds the numbers have slightly increased since 1967.

The CBS proposes that there are presently 12,600 native Jerusalem Christians (mostly Arab and Armenian Christians); the Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies has found about 14,000.

Perhaps more important than the numbers is the proportion of Christians relative to the other faiths in the city since 1967. While the Christian population has increased slightly, Muslim numbers quadrupled and the Jewish community increased by 75 percent, rendering Christians about 2% of the total.

The disparity is most clearly seen in Jerusalem's Old City, where the number of Christians has dropped by about 400 but the percentage has decreased from 30 to 18. Even the Christian quarter is almost 25% Muslim, while shops in the area are 90% Muslim.

MORE TELLING than the demographics is the vulnerability perceived by the Old City Christians, which contributes to their anonymity. No members of the Christian community interviewed were willing to use their own names.

Last August, when a shooting in the Christian Quarter between a Muslim assailant and Israeli security guards resulted in 11 wounded - most of them Jerusalem Christians - many Christians felt the incident illustrated their predicament.

Samir, a professional working in the Old City, says: "We're trapped between two larger peoples that don't like each other... and they don't like us either."

Christians Anonymous

"To the Arabs, we're Christians, which means Crusaders, and to the Israelis we're Arabs, which means terrorists," adds Jack, an Old City shopkeeper. "We're not able to trust anybody. I haven't been to confession in 15 years because I don't trust any priest!"

One indication Christians are sensing their diminished presence is their willingness to marry outside their denomination. Children are raised according to the denomination of the father.

Typically Christian girls never married Muslims, "but now you hear about it every few months," says George, who works in the Old City. "There aren't enough boys to go around."

Maria, a Syrian Orthodox resident of the Old City, agrees that there are more boys than girls, but attributes the intermarriage to "the naivete of those girls."

Two Roman Catholic brothers said they can't find wives in Jerusalem "because all these girls want to leave. If you want to stay in Jerusalem you can't find a girl to marry you."

Maria agrees. "Most, maybe 80% of the girls, would like to leave."

She adds that she is among this majority. "I wouldn't hesitate [to leave Jerusalem]," she says.

Maria says Christian girls face unique problems in Jerusalem because "in the market, the Muslim boys say things they would never say to Muslim girls." She adds that occasionally, in the crowded market after Muslim prayers on Fridays, "someone will reach out and [inappropriately] touch" a Christian girl.

Another symptom of Christian insecurity is the low birthrate among Christian women; it is the lowest of the three communities and decreasing drastically. In 1995 the average Christian woman bore 2.7 children, but in 2006 that number dropped to 2.1 - representing a 22% decrease in a decade.

In November the Interior Ministry reported an increase "in the hundreds" of Arab applications for Israeli citizenship. Most experts agree the increase stems from speculation that east Jerusalem might fall under Palestinian Authority control.

Based on the well-publicized Christian exodus from Bethlehem and persecution against Christians in Gaza - both cities under PA control - it is assumed many of these applications are from Christians.

In Hamas-run Gaza, Christian worker Rami Khader Ayyad was murdered in October after an elderly Christian woman was beaten, robbed and accused of being an "infidel." And in the past year, both a church and the Bible Society bookstore have been firebombed.

Most Christians report some harassment when residing in a Muslim neighborhood, saying that Muslim children enter their gardens and they are helpless to expel them. One local Christian, Salim, says a local entered his home and knocked his grandmother to the floor while trying to steal her jewelry. In response, the local mukhtar (head of the Muslim community) advised him to install burglar bars, he says.

Another Jerusalemite Christian, Samir, moved from the Muslim majority neighborhood where he and his mother lived to a Jewish neighborhood "where nobody knows who you are" as a result of Muslim hostility. Now married and living near his mother, he says he would leave Jerusalem but needs to take care of her. Still, he says he has made preparations to leave by getting licensed to practice his profession in Canada.

While the implications of Christian exodus have been only talk and speculation to date, Samir thinks Palestinian governance of east Jerusalem would be "the feather [translating from Arabic] that breaks the camel's back."

Other interviewees agreed, insisting Christians would "automatically leave" or would prefer Israeli citizenship, although older interviewees suggested Christians would try to live under Palestinian rule "and then make up our minds."

Christians Anonymous

While most called Israel a better option, all recognize that, as Arabs, they are the object of racism in Israel as well. Jack cites administrative hassles, but says if an Israeli friend goes with him, he gets better service. He also believes Arabs are discriminated against in the job market. Samir says he is hassled at checkpoints and the airport.

A recent survey by the Israeli Association of Civil Rights bears out such allegations.

CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE are also unaware of Palestinian Christians. Samir says he meets Americans in the Old City who are shocked to find he is both Arab and Christian.

All interviewees concur that this anonymous Christian community is characterized by lack of support from sister churches.

"Jews [worldwide] support the ultra-Orthodox who don't work but just study and have five children to a family. The Muslims have large extended families who help each other out, and even they receive help from churches. We're a small community and don't receive anything," says Jack. "We don't want handouts, but they could help establish businesses or provide scholarships."

Justus Reid Weiner, a human rights lawyer, recently echoed these remarks while addressing the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Weiner says there will be no more Christians in the PA-controlled territories in 15 years unless Western institutions help with jobs.

"The systematic persecution of Christian Arabs in Palestinian areas is being met with nearly total silence by the international community, human rights activists, the media and NGOs," he says.

Weiner attributes this silence to local Christian leaders who "sing the PA's tune."

Prof. Petra Heldt, who teaches "Christian Communities in Jerusalem" at Jerusalem University College, says this loyalty to the PA stems from "the dhimmi atmosphere." (Dhimmi is the protective status given to non-Muslim minorities in exchange for loyalty and subjugation to the Muslim majority.)

"The world only hears the party line, which says that everything is fine with the exception of Israel," says Heldt. "Since the real suffering of the Christians has very little to do with Israeli politics, and the reality is not talked about, nobody really knows."

Interviewees were divided by age on the question of leaving Jerusalem, with younger people seeing emigration as a legitimate option and the older generation considering it "disgraceful."

Hanna, an east Jerusalem businessman who once gave a Bible to Yasser Arafat, says: "I have a calling in order to serve God in what I am doing now and remain a good witness to non-Christians here."

"If you are a loyal Christian you will definitely not leave this country... you will stay," he continues. "If you leave, you will betray both your faith and your nation."

Another local businessman agreed, saying he would remain regardless of who governs. "I don't care if their big sheikh comes, I'm staying!"

Graphic

3 photos: Muslim girls walk past the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate near the place a terrorist was killed after he stole an Israeli guard's gun and began a shooting spree resulting in 11 wounded. Facing page, above: The shooting began in front of Abu Omar's grocery store in the market, where a terrorist shot a guard in the shoulder. Soldiers

Christians Anonymous

confer during routine rounds through the Christian Quarter. The Mosque of Omar, named after the commander of the Muslim forces that conquered Jerusalem in 638 CE.

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Party Like It's 2008

The New York Times

May 11, 2008 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Byline: By FRANK RICH

Body

ANOTHER weekly do-or-die primary battle, another round of wildly predicted "game changers" that collapsed in the locker room.

Hillary Clinton's attempt to impersonate a Nascar-lovin', gun-totin', economist-bashin' populist went bust: Asked which candidate most "shares your values," voters in both North Carolina and Indiana exit polls opted instead for the elite and condescending arugula-eater. Bill Clinton's small-town barnstorming tour, hailed as a revival of old-time Bubba bonhomie, proved to be yet another sabotage of his wife, whipping up false expectations for her disastrous showing in North Carolina. Barack Obama's final, undercaffeinated debate performance, not to mention the Rev. Jeremiah Wright's attempted character assassination, failed to slow his inexorable path to the Democratic nomination.

"It's still early," Mrs. Clinton said on Wednesday. Though it's way too late for her, she's half-right. We're only at the end of the beginning of this extraordinary election year. While we wait out her self-immolating exit, it's a good time to pause the 24/7 roller coaster for a second and get our bearings. The reason that politicians and the press have gotten so much so wrong is that we keep forgetting what year it is. Only if we reboot to 2008 will the long march to November start making sense.

This is not 1968, when the country was so divided over race and war that cities and campuses exploded in violence. If you have any doubts, just look (to take a recent example) at the restrained response by New Yorkers, protestors included, to the acquittal of three police officers in the 50-bullet shooting death of an unarmed black man, Sean Bell.

This is not 1988, when a Democratic liberal from Massachusetts of modest political skills could be easily clobbered by racist ads and an incumbent vice president running for the Gipper's third term. This is not the 1998 midterms, when the Teflon Clintons triumphed over impeachment. This is not 2004, when another Democrat from Massachusetts did for windsurfing what the previous model did for tanks.

Almost every wrong prediction about this election cycle has come from those trying to force the round peg of this year's campaign into the square holes of past political wars. That's why race keeps being portrayed as dooming Mr. Obama -- surely Jeremiah Wright = Willie Horton! -- no matter what the voters say to the contrary. It's why the Beltway took on faith the Clinton machine's strategic, organization and fund-raising invincibility. It's why some

Party Like It's 2008

prognosticators still imagine that John McCain can spin the Iraq fiasco to his political advantage as Richard Nixon miraculously did Vietnam.

The year 2008 is far more complex -- and exhilarating -- than the old templates would have us believe. Of course we're in pain. More voters think the country is on the wrong track (81 percent) than at any time in the history of New York Times/CBS News polling on that question. George W. Bush is the most unpopular president that any living American has known.

And yet, paradoxically, there is a heartening undertow: we know the page will turn. For all the anger and angst over the war and the economy, for all the campaign's acrimony, the anticipation of ending the Bush era is palpable, countering the defeatist mood. The repressed sliver of joy beneath the national gloom can be seen in the record registration numbers of new voters and the over-the-top turnout in Democratic primaries.

Mr. Obama hardly created this moment, with its potent brew of Bush loathing and sweeping generational change. He simply had the vision to tap into it. Running in 2008 rather than waiting four more years was the single smartest political decision he's made (and, yes, he's made dumb ones too). The second smartest was to understand and emphasize that subterranean, nearly universal anticipation of change rather than settle for the narrower band of partisan, dyspeptic Bush-bashing. We don't know yet if he's the man who can make the moment -- and won't know unless he gets to the White House -- but there's no question that the moment has helped make the man.

For five years boomers have been asking, "Why are the kids not in the streets screaming about the war the way we were?" The simple answer: no draft. But as Morley Winograd and Michael D. Hais show in "Millennial Makeover," their book about the post-1982 American generation, that energy has been plowed into quieter social activism and grand-scale social networking, often linked on the same Web page. The millennials' bottom-up digital superstructure was there to be mined, for an amalgam of political organizing, fund-raising and fun, and Mr. Obama's camp knew how to work it. The part of the press that can't tell the difference between Facebook and, say, AOL, was too busy salivating over the Clintons' vintage 1990s roster of fat-cat donors to hear the major earthquake rumbling underground.

The demographic reshaping of the electoral map, though more widely noted, still isn't fully understood. From Rust Belt Ohio through Tuesday's primaries, cable bloviators have been fixated on the older, white, working-class vote. Their unspoken (and truly condescending) assumption, lately embraced by Mrs. Clinton, is that these voters are Reagan Democrats, cryogenically frozen since 1980, who come in two flavors: rubes who will be duped by a politician backing a gas-tax pander or racists who are out of Mr. Obama's reach.

Guess what: there are racists in America and, yes, the occasional rubes (even among Obama voters). Some of them may reside in Indiana, which hasn't voted for a national Democratic ticket since 1964. But there are many more white working-class voters, both Clinton and Obama supporters, who prefer Democratic policies after seven years of G.O.P. failure. And there is little evidence to suggest that there are enough racists of any class in America, let alone in swing states, to determine the results come fall.

As the Times columnist Charles Blow charted last weekend, Mr. Obama's favorable and unfavorable ratings from white Democrats are both up 5 points since last summer in the Times/CBS poll -- a wash despite all the hyperventilating about Mr. Wright and Bittergate. (By contrast, Mrs. Clinton's favorable rating among black voters fell 36 points while her unfavorable rating rose 17.) Gallup last week found that after the Wright circus Mr. Obama's white support in a matchup against Mr. McCain is still no worse than John Kerry's against President Bush in 2004.

But this isn't 2004, and the fixation on that one demographic in the Clinton-Obama contest has obscured the big picture. The rise in black voters and young voters of all races in Democratic primaries is re-weighting the electorate. Look, for instance, at Ohio, the crucial swing state that Mr. Kerry lost by 119,000 votes four years ago. This year black voters accounted for 18 percent of the state's Democratic primary voters, up from 14 percent in 2004, an increase of some 230,000 voters out of an overall turnout leap of roughly a million. Voters under 30 (up by some 245,000 voters) accounted for 16 percent, up from 9 in 2004. Those younger Ohio voters even showed up in larger numbers than the perennially reliable over-65 crowd.

Party Like It's 2008

Good as this demographic shift is for a Democratic ticket led by Mr. Obama, it's even better news that so many pundits and Republicans bitterly cling to the delusion that the Karl Rove playbook of Swift-boating and race-baiting can work as it did four and eight years ago. You can't surf to a right-wing blog or Fox News without someone beating up on Mr. Wright or the other predictable conservative pinata, Michelle Obama.

This may help rally the anti-Obama vote. But that contingent will be more than offset in November by mobilized young voters, blacks and women, among them many Clinton-supporting Democrats (and independents and Republicans) unlikely to entertain a G.O.P. candidate with a perfect record of voting against abortion rights. Even a safe Republican Congressional seat in Louisiana fell to a Democrat last weekend, despite a campaign by his opponent that invoked Mr. Obama as a bogeyman.

A few conservatives do realize the game has changed. George Will wrote last week that Mr. Obama was Reaganesque in the stylistic sense that "his manner lulls his adversaries into underestimating his sheer toughness -- the tempered steel beneath the sleek suits." John and Cindy McCain get it too, which is why both last week made a point (he on "The Daily Show," she on "Today") of condemning negative campaigning. But even if Mr. McCain keeps his word and stops trying to portray Mr. Obama as the man from Hamas, he can't disown the Limbaugh axis of right-wing race-mongering. That's what's left of his party's base.

Now that the Obama-Clinton race is over, the new Beltway narrative has it that Mr. McCain, a likable "maverick" (who supported Mr. Bush in 95 percent of his votes last year, according to Congressional Quarterly), might override the war, the economy, Bush-loathing and the bankrupt Republican brand to be competitive with Mr. Obama. Anything can happen in politics, including real potential game changers, from Mr. McCain's still-unreleased health records to new excavations of Mr. Obama's history in Chicago. But as long as the likely Democratic nominee keeps partying like it's 2008 while everyone else refights the battles of yesteryear, he will continue to be underestimated every step of the way.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

DRAWING (DRAWING BARRY BLITT)

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Iranians raise the spectre of Hitler

Daily Mail (London)

October 1, 2007 Monday

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Section: IRE; Pg. 47

Length: 1577 words

Body

IRANIAN leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's visit to New York reminds us that under his tyrannical regime, Iran is the only aspirant nuclear power to repeatedly and openly proclaim - as did Hitler - its intention to eliminate another people, the Israelis.

When, in 1947, all the Arab regimes jointly rejected UN Resolution 181 - which decided Palestine should be shared between an Arab and a Jewish state - they launched an unending war on Israel's very existence.

Nothing has stopped Palestinian Arabs forming their own state, either then or since, except their own self-defeating incompetence.

The significant point about the case of Mordechai Vanunu, the Moroccan-born Israeli technician who in October 1986 publicly revealed the plutonium capability of the Dimona plant in the Negev desert, is that it didn't result in any nuclear programmes.

They have come only in response to Iran's increasing nuclear ambitions and accompanying belligerence.

Saddam's own nuclear programme, aborted by an Israeli air-strike on his French-built Osirak 70 MW uranium reactor, near Baghdad, in June 1981, occurred during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War.

This proves that the regional problem isn't Israelis defending their tiny, coastal homeland, but the ongoing threat posed to all Arab states as well as the people of Israel, by Iran's revolutionary regime, and their Hizb-Allah, Islamic Jihad, and **Hamas** as well as Syrian proxies.

The sooner the oil gives out, the better.

TOM CAREW, Ranelagh, Dublin.

Family time bomb

THE Family Rights Institute Of Ireland has unearthed another timebomb as a consequence of Government policy to refuse to acknowledge the existence of the married family in violation of its pledge in the Constitution, Article 41.1.2, which says: 'The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Married Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State.' The report, Unequal At Birth - Inequalities In The Occurrence Of Low Birth-Weight Babies In Ireland, prepared by Dr Helen McAvoy, Jennifer Sturley, Sara Burke and Dr Kevin Balanda and published by the Institute Of Public Health in

Iranians raise the spectre of Hitler

Ireland in 2006, clearly reveals the madness - and unlawfulness - of the Government's refusal to acknowledge the existence of the married family with all the attendant benefits that it brings to its members and to society as a whole.

The authors show that risks to a child's life and health are significantly increased if the child is not born within a married family.

'Low birth-weight babies have a less advantageous start to life that may have effects on their development as children and their adult lives.

'Low birth-weight is also strongly associated with death within the first month and within the first year of life.' It found that unmarried women were significantly more likely to have low birthweight babies than married women.

ROGER ELDRIDGE, Family Rights Institute Of Ireland, Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

The guilty silence

IMMEDIATELY after the last election, Brian Cowen, in response to the Greens' pledge to clean up Fianna Fáil, famously declared: 'I don't need anybody to keep me straight or clean me up.' Now, just months later, he too has added his voice to the Fianna Fáil chorus calling for the Mahon Tribunal to be suppressed.

Perhaps Mr Cowen's assertion was ambivalent and was intended to be interpreted as meaning, 'I'm so corrupt that the last thing I need is someone keeping me straight or cleaning me up'.

But I doubt it. I'm sure Mr Cowen was declaring to the world that he was above reproach and incorruptible. If that is the case, then he should be more concerned than anyone to root out the rank corruption that has so besmirched his party's good name.

So what has caused him to change sides so dramatically? Surely his integrity cannot have been bought at so cheap a price as Bertie's blessing in the next leadership contest?

Even if there exist Fianna Fáil politicians who are as pure and clean as the driven snow - and I'm sure they do - if they stay silent, if they turn a blind eye to tainted colleagues such as Ray Burke, Liam Lawlor, Frank Dunlop, Charles Haughey and Pádraig Flynn, then they are every bit as guilty.

DEAN CUMMINS, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.

Blow These new bulbs

IT'S ALL very well for Environment Minister John Gormley to insist on solar power for all new homes. That sounds like a reasonable and worthwhile step to reduce our dependence on imported oil.

As a percentage of the price of an average house, the installation of solar panels will add very little and will save money in the long-term.

However, when it comes to so-called energy- saving light bulbs, as far as I am concerned, the manufacturers of these bulbs have made outrageous claims that have never been substantiated in independent trials.

Lured by these claims of 'lasting up to 15 times longer' and using 'up to 80 per cent less electricity', I replaced every bulb in my house with these hugely expensive CFL bulbs a number of years ago and, despite my misgivings, continue to buy them, at about €13 a pop, whenever one blows.

In my experience, they blow precisely as frequently as the old bulbs did - on average, one of the ten bulbs in the house blows every six weeks, so each bulb is lasting just over a year, rather than the eight years claimed.

As for consumption, my ESB bill has not been reduced by a red cent. The weasel words, of course, are 'up to'. They cover anything from 80 per cent and 15 times, on down to nothing. I'd say the real figures are closer to nothing.

Iranians raise the spectre of Hitler

STEPHEN BYRNE, Finglas, Dublin.

Moribund body politic

I CAN'T see how Fianna Fáil, with its obsolete, sterile, doctrinaire obsession with 1980s neoliberalism and its addiction to corruption and cronyism, could possibly contribute anything to Northern politics.

But if the consequence of the move was to be that Northern parties would start to organise down here, and to seek election to the Dáil, then I would be all for it.

Southern politics could certainly do with a truly radical party such as the DUP to shake up the cosy consensus between the parties here and the lack of original political thinking in the Republic.

Indeed, one of the great failings of the State has been our inability to forge a body politic that was either uniquely Irish, on the one hand, or willing to take on board the best and most innovative international example, on the other.

Irish politics have been insular without being independent, and far too willing to follow British and American examples without looking to the other common-law countries, such as Canada and New Zealand, or the Continent.

In large part, this was due to the unnatural divisions created by Partition - the industrialised northeast sliced off from the agrarian south, west and midlands, the large, vocal minority of Protestants and dissenters cut off from the Roman Catholic majority - that resulted in two fossilised monocultures, to the very great detriment of the entire island.

GRAINNE HAYES, Clonmel, Co Tipperary.

The innocent Keanes

I REFER to the article 'The new Manhattan' which appeared on 27 September, regarding the proposed regeneration of St. Mary's Park, Limerick.

In the article, to which I was the main contributor, there is one issue in an otherwise factual piece, which I take extreme issue with. It was reported that 'Limerick City Council says it will have to negotiate with each individual private householder. However, Councillor Gilligan says he will never compensate the Keanes.' I totally refute this allegation. Yes, it is a matter of public record that two of the Keane brothers were involved in the drugs trade and paid a heavy price for that involvement.

What may not be so well known is that they come from a large and well-respected family in the community. A decent family, some of whom have worked long hours over the years to build a few small businesses for themselves. Most of all they have been good neighbours.

To suggest that I would tar the whole family with the one brush is outrageous and would be unworthy of any local representative.

I recognise the hurt this article caused to this family and regret the offence caused.

COUNCILLOR JOHN GILLIGAN, Limerick City Council.

Are men ballet masters?

POOR A. N. Wilson, he seems to take his own reflection as the yardstick of achievement. As a historian, I'd have thought he could have worked out by himself why there appear to be no women geni (Mail).

As a teacher, I know all students are presented with a model of achievement and are judged by it. History teaches us that by dint of struggle, experience, imagination, necessity, thought and reflection, trial and error, things change. What is considered great genius in one era isn't necessarily so in another.

Iranians raise the spectre of Hitler

Wilson is judging the world by a masculine model, a mechanical and mathematical one. At 5ft and 7 stone, and ballet trained, I was a terrible rugby player. Has Mr Wilson ever been to the ballet or the theatre? All those great **female** dancers and actresses must have been figments of my imagination.

Changes in society's attitudes towards **women** were brought about by earlier generations who were considered a thorough pain. The Suffragettes were one such vociferous group. Early nursing pioneers were considered almost prostitutes.

The best laugh is the notion that only **women** are victims of hormones. Any paper will show you great men destroyed by theirs - or has he never heard of testosterone?

WENDY WRIGHT, address supplied.

Graphic

Keeping an eye on Iran: Demonstrators in New York liken Iran leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Adolf Hitler

Load-Date: October 3, 2007

The winner

The Sunday Times (London)

June 8, 2008

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THE SUNDAY TIMES

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Byline: Andrew Sullivan

Body

Barack Obama will sweep aside John McCain and make history by becoming the first black US president, says Andrew Sullivan

I wonder if Americans have yet fully absorbed what they have just done. This past week - 41 years after the Supreme Court struck down the last bans on interracial marriage and only 40 years after black America exploded in riots after Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated - a black man became the favourite to be the next president of the United States.

His convention acceptance speech, a date scheduled long before Barack Obama became the Democratic nominee, will occur by exquisite timing 45 years to the day after King's "I have a dream" speech. The states that were critical to his nomination were Illinois, Lincoln's home state, and the four southern states most associated with slavery: South Carolina, Georgia, Virginia and North Carolina.

Much has been made, and rightly so, of how Obama's rise changes America's relationship to the rest of the world. What has been less appreciated is how deeply Obama's victory alters America's relationship to itself.

There is no deeper division in America than race. Slavery was America's original sin. Even after its abolition, America was effectively in large swathes an apartheid society until the 1970s. It was race that bloodily tore the country apart a century and a half ago in the civil war, killing nearly 2% of the population (only 0.3% of Americans died in the second world war). It was race that convulsed America in the last deep internal crisis in the 1960s. And last Tuesday night, Obama's first words were a tribute to his grandmother, a white woman who had effectively raised him.

Obama is not just potentially America's first black president. He would be America's first bi-racial president, in many ways a more integrative event. The cynics demand that we cease this kind of historical hyper-ventilation. It is deemed a function of drinking the Obama Kool-Aid, of insufficient scepticism, of Obamania. But you have to have a heart of stone not to see what this has already done to race relations in America.

The winner

A black woman in Illinois sent me this e-mail on the night of Obama's final victory: "Tomorrow I will go to the African-American cemetery outside of Chicago where my great-grandparents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends, neighbours and my mother and father are buried. And I will tell them that they were right - that if we studied hard, worked hard, kept the faith, fought for justice, prayed, that this day would come."

And it has; but it came after a long, tortuous and extremely unlikely struggle and as a confluence of utterly unpredictable factors. It is just a moment in what remains a fluid general election campaign. But Obama is not a fluke and is not doomed to failure. The odds make him the favourite to be the next president of the United States and to revolutionise its politics in ways more drastic than any figure since Ronald Reagan.

OBAMA owes this opportunity first and foremost to George W Bush. Without Bush there would be no Obama. Without the disastrous mismanagement of Iraq abroad and hurricane Katrina at home, the logic for a transformational candidacy such as Obama's would never have added up.

Without the shame of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, of torture and abuse of executive power, of mounting debt and accelerating inequality, the movement for truly radical change would never have taken off the way it has. Without the uniquely divisive politics of Karl Rove, who turned cultural and religious polarisation into an art form and 51% of the vote into a mandate for even more polarisation, there would be no unrequited desire for a new kind of politics.

Obama's next debt of gratitude goes to the Clintons. They should have defeated him easily and yet their complacency and incompetence did them in. People tend to forget just how overwhelming the consensus was last autumn that Hillary Clinton was the inevitable Democratic nominee.

There were many cogent reasons for this consensus. Politics requires state and big city machines and they had almost all of them on their side. Hillary's name recognition was stratospheric, the warm nostalgia in her party for the era of her husband was intense, her fundraising networks unrivalled, her confidence preternatural. She had a national lead over Obama of 20 to 30 points right up until the Iowa caucuses and a solid lead over him among African-American voters all of last year. The front-loaded primary season, with huge states voting early, suggested an even easier ride. Last December she predicted that it would all be over by February 5.

Obama knew this, but as early as spring last year he crafted a strategy to play to his strengths rather than his obvious weaknesses. The primary issue at the time was the Iraq war. He had been against it, Clinton for it: a big opening. The country also clearly wanted real change and Obama bet that the Clintons - generationally, culturally and politically - could not represent it. So he branded himself as the anti-war change candidate and waited for Clinton to do the same. Staggeringly, she didn't.

Guided by the very small mind of Mark Penn, her strategist, she decided to run as the established, experienced Washington insider. In the Bush- Clinton-Bush pendulum, she banked on yet another swing back to her dynasty. She couldn't have been more out of touch.

Obama also knew that he had to find new sources of funding. With the help of some of Silicon Valley's smartest minds, he set up the first Facebook model for web fundraising. It has become the most formidable money machine in American political history, raising well over \$270m from more than 1.7m individual donors. To counter Clinton's name recognition, he then relaunched his first memoir alongside a new book and used the book-selling circuit to raise his profile. Oprah helped. He was No 1 on The New York Times bestseller list for months.

He studied the primary and caucus schedule to figure out how to outmanoeuvre the complacent Clintons. He always knew it would be hard to beat them in the popular vote. Hillary had too much clout, too much fame, too many debts to call in, too many powerful backers in the states to beat in votes. So he focused on delegates.

With some brilliant young strategists, David Plouffe and Steve Hildebrand chief among them, he analysed with uncanny precision how hard work in often forgotten states such as Alaska, Nebraska, Idaho, Colorado and Hawaii could get him an edge. He saw the Democrats' proportional representation system as his greatest ally. He planned for the long haul, guessing that Hillary was too institutionally strong to be knocked out suddenly in Iowa and New

The winner

Hampshire alone - and that she hadn't organised diligently enough in small caucus states. His focus on these tiny details all but mathematically guaranteed victory. Plouffe's primary spreadsheets were eerily prescient. Obama had a plan that he stuck to and succeeded with.

He benefited also from the Clintons' massive errors. They had no real game plan after February, their expected victory moment. Their dependence on the practitioners of old politics - designed to protect them from Republican attack rather than to chart a new direction for America - left them with no real message except their familiarity and experience in Washington. In other years it would have been enough. Obama's core strength was that he saw that this year was different.

MANY Republicans seem to be making exactly the same mistake that the Clintons did - and with less of an excuse. The Republicans have so far emphasised two weaknesses for Obama: his relative inexperience compared with John McCain and his alleged cultural elitism.

In a Gallup poll last week, by far the biggest reason McCain supporters gave for supporting him was experience. Obama's supporters cite change. The age difference cannot help but underscore this contrast. It would be silly for McCain not to use his much longer and more substantive record as a campaign theme. The trouble is, this year the forces behind change are much stronger than usual. If the campaign is framed around these themes, Obama has the advantage just as he did against Clinton.

Cultural elitism and liberalism are the next strong card. The Clintons used it to great effect in the Appalachian states and among the Reagan Democrats who have long been critical swing voters in general elections. Obama's remarks about "bitter" voters in rural America, his association with the Rev Jeremiah Wright, his faint contacts with former members of the Weather Underground: all these will be used mercilessly in the autumn campaign. But these bludgeons will not have the force that they had on immediate impact and they didn't stop Obama's momentum against Clinton.

Race will matter but in different ways than in the past. Clinton was able to leverage mild Latino discomfort with a black man (and her own long ties to Hispanic groups) to beat Obama among this crucial bloc in the primaries. She destroyed him in California and Puerto Rico. McCain, from Arizona, a border state, has long favoured immigration reform. He should theoretically replicate Clinton's success with Latinos in November. Yet the latest Gallup poll finds Hispanics going for Obama over McCain by 62% to 29%.

McCain suffers a great deal from the poisoned Republican brand among Hispanics. Latinos have historically not shown up at the polls in numbers reflective of their share of the population, but they play a role in four of the six states that Bush carried by five points or fewer in 2004: New Mexico (where Hispanics make up 37% of voters); Florida (14%); Nevada (12%) and Colorado (12%). This mattered in the congressional races of 2006 when Democrats led Republicans among Hispanics by 21 points in party identification. Now they favour Democrats by a 36-point margin. The politics of immigration have deeply wounded the Republicans - and McCain cannot be immune to all of it.

Regionally, an Obama-McCain race also looks subtly different from the classic election maps of the past decade and a half. We are used to seeing Ohio and Florida as the critical swing states. They still matter a lot but the new electoral map means Obama can lose these states and still win the presidency. Through a mix of record black turnout and affluent whites leaning increasingly to the Democrats, some southern and western states long since ceded to the Republicans are back in play.

Obama has done extremely well in Virginia, where high black turnout and an increasingly affluent population have made the state much less solidly Republican. In Colorado the same applies. Georgia - a huge and usually heavily Republican state - could even be close. A former Georgian congressman, Bob Barr, is running as the libertarian candidate for president and draining some white support from McCain in that state. Blacks make up a quarter to a third of voters and the state is also younger than most. The same dynamic also puts North Carolina and Mississippi in play.

The winner

Few believe that Obama could win all or most of these states. But he could make them competitive and force McCain to divert resources from other battlegrounds.

Just increasing the black share of the vote from a quarter to a third could tip the balance in some states. A strong showing by Obama in Virginia and Maryland, as well as Minnesota and the Mountain West, could give him an electoral college win. In states that Bush won by five points or less in 2004, Obama now has a narrow 47%-44% lead over McCain.

The vice-presidential choice will probably not make a huge difference; it rarely does. An Obama- Clinton ticket has been undone by her narcissism and gracelessness. The Clintons turn everything into their own psychodrama. The Obama camp gives every indication of picking a running mate who will not take the spotlight off the Obama-McCain contrast. It makes sense, though, to pick a Clintonite vice-presidential candidate, such as Ted Strickland, the governor of Ohio, to help to unite the party.

IS an Obama presidency a done deal? Far from it. McCain is a formidable opponent and has real strength with critical independent voters. If any candidate can buck the national trend against the Republicans, he can.

On national security, his embrace of the surge in Iraq has shown itself to be more tactically prescient than Obama's opposition. And he has done as much as he can to follow the David Cameron model: visiting depressed areas of the country, rebranding himself as green, promising to try to reduce America's troop levels in Iraq by half in his first term. He will benefit from Obama's newness, his liberal associations and the usual conservative fears of big spending liberals.

His trouble is that hefty majorities seem set in their view that the Iraq war was a mistake, however pragmatic Americans now are about withdrawal. The latest poll shows that pragmatism has limits: 63% want all troops out in two years; only one in five takes the McCain position of keeping them there as long as it takes (and retaining the option to have bases there for the next century).

It is also hard for a Republican to campaign against runaway government spending when his own party has increased spending at a faster clip than at any time since the 1930s. And the cultural issues used by Bush and Rove are not natural fits for McCain. He's not at home among the leaders of the religious right and would prefer to hang out, if push comes to shove, in Hollywood. He can promise conservative judicial appointments, and that matters to the base, but he has a hard time finding the oomph from, say, gay marriage that was required to secure a Bush victory in 2004.

The age contrast between Obama and McCain makes it hard to portray McCain as the change agent and Obama as the receptacle of old ideas. Some of Obama's inclinations do seem a throwback; on taxation he favours increases in marginal rates and capital gains taxes. But his marshalling of the next generation and technological innovation swamp such a message.

Obama's astonishing fundraising machine has also rattled the Republicans. He has raised \$272m, primarily in small donations, from more than 1.7m individuals online. Clinton raised \$200m. Combine their databases and the Democratic war chest is larger than any before in American history. McCain, even combined with the Republican party apparatus, cannot compete. He raised a seventh of Obama's numbers in the primaries and his fundraising has not surged since he won the nomination.

To worry Republicans further, Obama has begun work on a voter registration drive across the country, targeting the young, Hispanics and African-Americans in particular. The under-thirties tend not to show up at the polls in numbers large enough to make a real difference, but this year could prove that wrong - as it has in the primaries.

The impact of the first black presidential candidate on African-American turnout is simply impossible to predict. People tend to forget just how many black voters there are in the South, for example. They could surprise us. All they have to do is tip one usually Republican southern state to Obama and McCain's base cracks open.

The winner

There are close to 3m African-Americans in Georgia and Florida, and 1.5m in Virginia. Blacks make up a third of the population in Mississippi. Most of these states have enough white Republicans to keep them in McCain's column, but a surge in black turnout of historic proportions could produce surprise results in Florida or Georgia.

When you look at McCain's campaign and ask yourself where he could bring out new voters in the same way, you come up empty. Bush won in 2004 by marshalling evangelical voters. McCain cannot do the same thing. Without them even John Kerry would have won easily. Security mums? It's possible, but McCain does not have that strong an appeal to women. Veterans? They may well help McCain in a state such as Virginia or Ohio.

Perhaps McCain's most promising advantage will come from independent and moderate voters intent on balancing what looks like a Democratic sweep in the House and Senate. He could appeal to them by portraying himself as a conservative balance to a liberal Congress. The trouble is that tactical voting has limited traction in a year where change and a desire to throw the bums out dominate the atmosphere.

Then there is the unknowable factor of Obama's star power. No presidential candidate in modern times has drawn 75,000 people out for a primary election rally, as he did in Portland last month. No one has inspired the dozens of songs, anthems, YouTube videos and poster art that this figure has.

Obama has something that Reagan and John F Kennedy had: a charisma that seems to fit the presidency. And he is obviously more Kennedy than Reagan, with youth on his side. Give the American presidency the allure of youth and testosterone and it is an intoxicating mass media phenomenon. His personality could do for it what Kennedy did, what John Paul II did for the institution of the papacy in his first years and what Diana did for the institution of the monarchy: it's a fusion of pop-cultural mass appeal with highly authoritative institutions.

The theatre of this is unmissable. What was previously a theory - a fantasy of a redeemed, rebranded America - gains real traction now that Obama is the actual nominee. As the moment approaches when he could be president, that power will only intensify.

It will require careful management if it is not to degenerate into cultism and messianism. But what Obama has is what Kennedy had and Diana famously didn't: a cool and measured interior. What makes the phenomenon sustainable is this odd mix of hot and cool, of intense emotional energy around this man, centred on a very calm and collected, even aloof, individual.

THIS has been an emotionally cathartic and draining primary season and yet through much of it, as Clinton went up and down on an emotional rollercoaster, as the media swooned and gasped and groaned, as pundits offered every conceivable gambit and interpretation, Obama's team kept steady, made few errors, took few massive risks and never succumbed to the kind of slash-and burn politics they were running against.

Obama has the ability to rouse enormous emotion while seeming almost casual and meditative at its centre. The diplomatic skill with which he has been handling the delicate matter of the Clinton ego is a wonder to behold.

Now imagine his first trip to Kenya. Or his first visit with his wife, Michelle, to Paris. (The French will swoon.) Or - for domestic audiences - his first trip to Iraq as the likely next president.

These moments will all become iconic and these images matter in shaping world opinion and world imagination. Abroad, his race is a massive advantage. That he is the most accomplished orator since Reagan makes it exponentially more powerful.

This is no panacea, of course. The tensions inherent in a hegemonic world power dealing with its allies and the developing world will not evaporate. Last week, as Obama gave a strong speech to the Israel lobby in Washington, Hamas declared him no better than Bush.

But he is not interested in talking to Hamas, primarily because he wants to negotiate the unnegotiable. The point of being open to direct negotiations is part of an attempt to show the world that America is no longer in a defensive crouch and prepared to cede the global public relations war to buffoons such as Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran.

The winner

Obama's openness to the world is an attempt to reboot American soft power, to appeal beyond the leaders of rogue states to the young and restive populations in Iran and Pakistan, to increase leverage if and when negotiating a responsible withdrawal from Iraq demands it.

This bottom-up approach to politics - rallying the forces below in order to help to shift the balance of power at the surface - is central to Obama's community organising approach to politics. It is how he will ameliorate, but not transform, the still difficult tasks of security and diplomacy in a world still at risk from Islamist terror.

The world will also inevitably note in the person of a President Obama a moment in America's own history. It will doubtless be surprised to see America confront its racial past so publicly. To watch a country you respect regain its bearings, to address one of its own deepest wounds in full view of the world, to do so after such a tumultuous, open and deeply American democratic process: this has already reminded many people around the world of what they love about America and what they have missed these past few years.

An American in London e-mailed me last week to report what one Brit had told her: "America didn't become the nation it did with guns and tanks; it became the nation it did with ideas. An Obama presidency represents everything that America has told the world about itself in the past century - and what the rest of the world wanted to expect out of America. The idea that you talk before acting, the idea that you make friends, not enemies, and the idea that anything is possible."

This last thought is the core meaning of Obama's candidacy. That this meaning cannot be fleshed out in full policy detail without losing something is revealing. It's an inherently ineffable and unreasonable notion that America does represent something new and hopeful for every generation, that it somehow encapsulates an idealism ill at ease in a more chastened old world.

This elusive quality made us remember Kennedy, even though he served (rashly) for only three years. It made us remember Reagan, another aloof figure like Obama liable to arouse mass enthusiasm. It has already given the Obama campaign an aura unlike any since 1980. It can be marshalled responsibly and irresponsibly; the trouble is that it is impossible to know for sure in advance whether it will end in disappointment or renewal.

But if I were forced to give a gut check on whether the initial promise can reach the White House in the next five months, I would be obliged to paraphrase the slogan that drove the past six months of campaigning. There are legitimate fears, serious anxieties, important doubts. But after watching him closely for the past year, one cannot but be drawn to an obvious conclusion:

Yes he can.

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World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

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Body

MIDEAST

RICE ENDS LATEST PEACE BID AMID NEW VIOLENCE

JERUSALEM - U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is to wrap up her latest Middle East peace bid today only hours after Israeli troops briefly rolled into the Gaza Strip in another deadly incursion.

Rice had been meeting Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in Jerusalem on Tuesday night when Israeli forces backed by helicopters clashed with Hamas gunmen after several tanks entered Gaza, witnesses said.

A 20-day-old girl became the latest of at least 23 Palestinian children killed since last week, raising new worries about peace prospects after Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas broke off all contacts with Israel on Sunday over killing that had left more than 120 Palestinians dead.

A senior Islamic Jihad militant was killed and 10 Palestinians, including at least three gunmen, were wounded in the Tuesday night fighting, after two had been killed earlier in the day.

Rice had earlier called for Israel to be "very cognizant of the effects of its operations on innocent people."

ISRAELITES HIGH DURING MOUNT SINAI REVELATIONS?

JERUSALEM - The biblical Israelites may have been high on a hallucinogenic plant when Moses brought the Ten Commandments down from Mount Sinai, according to a new study by an Israeli psychology professor.

Writing in the British journal Time and Mind, Benny Shanon of Jerusalem's Hebrew University said two plants in the Sinai desert contain the same psychoactive molecules as those found in plants from which the powerful Amazonian hallucinogenic brew ayahuasca is prepared.

The thunder, lightning and blaring of a trumpet which the Book of Exodus says emanated from Mount Sinai could just have been the imaginings of a people in an "altered state of awareness," Shanon hypothesized.

"In advanced forms of ayahuasca inebriation, the seeing of light is accompanied by profound religious and spiritual feelings," Shanon wrote.

World Report

Shanon wrote that he was very familiar with the affects of the ayahuasca plant, having "partaken of the ... brew about 160 times in various locales and contexts."

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NORTH AMERICA

RARE IDENTICAL TRIPLETS GREET THE PUBLIC

MANHASSET, N.Y. - Tom and Allison Penn wanted a baby more than anything. Now they have three, all alike.

The well-behaved triplets, Logan, Eli and Collin Penn, born last Wednesday in North Shore University Hospital, faced a battery of TV cameras without a whimper Tuesday at a news conference at the hospital.

They are identical triplets, the first known to be born on Long Island in almost 15 years. Estimates on the odds of identical triplets being born range from one in every 60,000 births to one in 200 million births, said Dr. Victor Klein, who delivered the three boys.

The babies, developed from a single egg and placenta, were given only a 30 per cent chance of all three surviving by the first obstetrician consulted by the Patchogue couple, said Tom Penn, who called them his "miracle babies."

NEW SUSPICIOUS SUBSTANCE IN VEGAS FOUND HARMLESS

LOS ANGELES - A suspicious substance reported at a Las Vegas hotel and casino on Tuesday was found to be harmless, authorities said, just days after a man was hospitalized in the resort city for suspected ricin poisoning.

Hazardous materials teams responded to the Excalibur Hotel and Casino after a guest reported the unknown substance in his room, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police spokesman Bill Cassell said.

The room was quarantined while crews tested the matter and ultimately confirmed that it was not dangerous, Cassell said.

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS CREATOR DIES AT 69

WASHINGTON - Gary Gygax, who co-created the fantasy game Dungeons & Dragons and inspired the US\$1.5 billion fantasy game industry, died of an abdominal aneurysm Tuesday at his home in Lake Geneva, Wis. He was 69.

Gygax, a high school dropout who was fascinated by the Dark Ages, and Dave Aronson created the heroic quest game with \$1,000 in capital in 1974. Their game invited players to invent imaginary characters, such as dwarfs, elves, knights and wizards, and set off on adventures with a roll of the polyhedral dice. The game's multiple rule books and character studies gave its obsessed fans thousands of pages of instructions to consider.

"I don't think I've really grokked it yet," Mike Mearls, the lead developer of the upcoming fourth edition of Dungeons & Dragons, told Wired blogger Lore Sjoberg, referring to Gygax's death. "He was like the cool uncle that every gamer had. He shaped an entire generation of gamers."

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AFRICA

LEAVE OUR MINISKIRTS ALONE, SAY WOMEN

JOHANNESBURG - Hundreds of South Africans marched on central Johannesburg on Tuesday defending the right of women to wear miniskirts without harassment.

World Report

The picket was staged near the Noord Street taxi rank where a young woman had her clothes torn off by taxi drivers and hawkers last month, allegedly for showing too much skin.

Her assailants allegedly touched the woman's private parts while pouring alcohol over her head and calling her names.

The protesters, mostly women and many wearing miniskirts themselves, carried placards reading: "We love our miniskirts," and "We aren't road signs, you need to respect us."

Mpumi Ngidi, 26, said she was frequently harassed.

"If you are caught between the pavement and a (vendor's) stall and you cross a group of men, at least one in three will try to touch your boobs, your ass ..." she told AFP.

10 EGYPTIANS SHOT DEAD IN GUNBATTLE OVER LAND

CAIRO - At least 10 Egyptians were shot dead on Tuesday and up to 27 others wounded in a gunbattle following a dispute over ownership of a plot of agricultural land in rural Egypt, security sources said.

They said that the gunfight broke out between two groups of armed private security men -- employed by two rival associations that both claim ownership of the plot -- when one side tried to take the land by force from the other.

One security source said at least 10 private security men had been killed in the fight in the Beheira province in northern Egypt over a 200 hectares plot. Another security source put the number of dead at 14.

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EUROPE

PLANS TO DIG UP GALILEO CENSURED AS 'MORBID'

ROME - A proposal to dig up the body of Galileo Galilei has provoked protests in Italy.

Paolo Galluzzi, the director of the Institute of the History of Science, wants to conduct tests on the corpse, which lies in the Basilica of Santa Croce, in Florence, including finding out if it was true he died blind.

Members of the city council described the request as "morbid." Next year marks the 400th anniversary of Galileo's invention of the telescope.

The astrologer died in 1642, after spending his final years in seclusion. The Vatican refused to allow his burial among the "great figures" in Santa Croce, which include Nicolo Machiavelli and Michelangelo, and he was placed underneath the church's bell tower. However, his body was moved in 1736 and a monument was built to him.

The request came after the recent exhumation of the Renaissance philosopher, Pico della Mirandola, revealed that he had been poisoned.

Rev. Antonio Di Marcantonio, the rector of the church, said: "This is a carnival. Leave us in peace. Nothing should be touched in this church."

ITALIAN JAILED FOR EMAILING NUDE PHOTOS OF EX-LOVER

ROME - An Italian man was jailed for more than two years for putting pornographic pictures of his ex-girlfriend on the Internet and sending them out in more than 15,000 emails.

The 32-year-old man had created a website that appeared to show his ex-girlfriend offering sexual favours and erotic games, with her phone number also on display. The man, who also sent threatening text messages to the woman and her parents, was accused of aggravated defamation, threatening and violence.

TEENAGERS KILLED MAN OVER CHOCOLATE BAR

LONDON - Two teenage boys face jail sentences after admitting that they killed a man in a row over a discarded chocolate bar.

Evren Anil, 23, died from serious head injuries after being punched to the ground after confronting the pair, who had thrown a half-eaten Lion Bar through the window of his sister Elif's car in Crystal Palace, south London, last year. The computer science graduate hit his head on the curb and died in hospital eight days later after falling into a coma.

One of the boys, aged 17 from Tottenham in north London, pleaded guilty to manslaughter and knife possession at the Old Bailey on Tuesday. The other, aged 16 and from Thornton Heath in south London, admitted the same charges on Monday. The two youths will be sentenced on April 4.

'EVIL' BRITISH NURSE GETS LIFE FOR KILLING PATIENTS

LONDON - A British hospital nurse was jailed for life Tuesday, with a recommendation he is not released for at least 30 years, for murdering four frail and elderly patients and trying to kill a fifth.

Colin Norris, branded "evil" by the judge, gave all five women overdoses of diabetes drug insulin as they recovered from surgery on hip fractures at two hospitals in Leeds, northern England, in 2002.

A jury on Monday found him guilty of all charges, which he denied, after a lengthy trial at Newcastle Crown Court, in northeast England.

Sentencing him at the same court Tuesday, judge John Norris said: "You are, I have absolutely no doubt, a thoroughly evil and dangerous man."

He added: "You are an arrogant and manipulative man with a real dislike of elderly patients." His dislike stemmed from the fact that he was "essentially lazy," seeing elderly patients as needing too much care, the judge said.

CHRISTIAN GROUP ANGERED BY BLASPHEMY RULING

LONDON - A hardline Christian lobby group voiced anger Tuesday after Britain's top judges rejected their blasphemy case against a screen version of Jerry Springer the Opera, based on the TV show. The House of Lords Appeal Committee rejected a petition from Stephen Green, head of Christian Voice, after a lower court refused to allow a private prosecution against the head of the BBC and the show's producer.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Lee Sang-hak, Reuters; CRAZY ABOUT CROAKERS: A child looks at frogs moving on a glass at an aquarium in Seoul Tuesday. ;

Colour Photo: Condoleezza Rice ;

Colour Photo: Colin Norris ;

Load-Date: March 5, 2008

World Report

Windsor Star (Ontario)

January 18, 2008 Friday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. C2; World Report

Length: 1576 words

Byline: Compiled from Star News Services

Body

MIDEAST

ISRAEL LOCKS DOWN GAZA IN RESPONSE TO ROCKET FIRE

GAZA CITY - The Gaza Strip was sealed off today on the orders of Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak, after Israeli air strikes killed seven Palestinians there in a bid to halt near daily rocket fire.

The move came as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert vowed to keep up raids on gunmen in the impoverished Hamas-run territory.

In announcing the closure of all border crossings between Israel and Gaza, a defence ministry official said it would remain in effect for several days and would affect both commercial traffic and individual travellers.

He added that, in the meanwhile, crossings would be authorized to respond to "exceptional humanitarian needs."

IRAN'S AHMADINEJAD DEFIANT AFTER ISRAEL TESTS MISSILE

JERUSALEM - Israel tested a missile on Thursday, prompting Iran to vow retaliation if the Jewish state carried out recent veiled threats to launch strikes, possibly atomic, against Tehran's nuclear facilities.

Israel is widely assumed to have nuclear warheads and missiles able to hit Iran. It gave no details of the trial. A defence official said it was "not just flexing its muscles," three days after Prime Minister Ehud Olmert pledged to consider "all options" to prevent Iran building nuclear weapons.

As oil prices rose almost one per cent on the new Middle East tension, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who says his country wants only atomic energy, said Israel would hold off: "The Zionist regime ... would not dare attack Iran," he said.

- - -

AFRICA

5 DEAD AS KENYAN POLICE CLASH WITH DEMONSTRATORS

World Report

NAIROBI - Kenyan police fired live rounds and tear gas in a second straight day of deadly clashes with demonstrators opposed to the re-election of President Mwai Kibaki, killing at least five people.

Police said five people were killed across the country but opposition leader Raila Odinga said seven people had been killed in Nairobi alone, mainly in or around the Mathare slum district.

More than 700 people have been killed across the East African nation since the Dec. 27 election which Odinga says was rigged by the president to secure his reelection.

Washington blamed both Kibaki and Odinga for the deadly deadlock that threatens to destabilize the east African nation, home to 37 million people.

"Both sides bear equal responsibility for the fact that there is not a political settlement," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack.

The Commonwealth on Thursday stepped up international pressure on Kibaki, with the group's chief Don McKinnon saying that procedures after the vote "did not meet international standards."

16 KILLED WHEN NEW BUILDING COLLAPSES

RABAT - Sixteen people were killed and 30 injured when an apartment block being built in Morocco collapsed, Communications Minister Khalid Naciri said Thursday, raising the casualty toll.

"The government presents its condolences to the families of the 16 victims of the collapse of a building in Kenitra," Naciri told journalists following a cabinet meeting the day after the accident.

The MAP news agency had initially reported that 14 people died and 26 were injured, giving a provisional toll from Wednesday morning's tragedy on the site of the two-storey housing and shopping centre.

Rescue workers were still digging through the rubble Thursday in the Hay Oulad Waj district of Kenitra, 30 kilometres north of the capital, and Naciri said the government was "committed to shedding light on all the circumstances."

- - -

EUROPE

SUSPECTED BOMB TURNED OUT TO BE SEX TOY: POLICE

STOCKHOLM - Police said Thursday they had blocked off a Swedish parking garage after a suspicious package was found there, but upon closer inspection they discovered the bundle held a sex toy, not a bomb.

"A man found a package yesterday (Wednesday) in a parking garage (in the southwestern city of Gothenburg). It was taped up and it was very suspicious. It was vibrating," local police spokesman Frans Dahlen told Agence France-Presse.

Police had sent at least four patrol cars to the spot and had blocked off the area before technical personnel cautiously opened the package.

"There were no explosives. Just a sex toy ... A dildo," Dahlen said.

NUDE MODELS DRESS TO PROTEST IN ITALY

ROME - Nude models at Italian art schools and colleges are protesting the best way they know how: by putting their clothes back on.

World Report

The models, who complain that posing naked offers skimpy salaries and scant job security, went on strike on Thursday across the country by covering up for 24-hours.

"Our work is not recognized," life model Antonella Migliorini told La Stampa newspaper. "We pose for eight hours a day and still the colleges treat us like teaching tools.

"We do a difficult job, with a great tradition resting on our shoulders which requires both imagination and great physical concentration."

They complain of having a bum deal that includes a monthly pay of less than C\$1,355 per month, with no fixed contract. They also suffer health risks, Migliorini says, because they work in close contact with paints.

Their demands include annual contracts and more money per month to help them better make ends meet, La Stampa reported.

GERMANY MULLS EXTENDING CHILD CARE LEAVE

BERLIN - The German government is considering extending child care leave to grandparents who are raising their teenage children's offspring, a family ministry spokesman said on Thursday.

"This will allow grandparents to interrupt their professional activities to enable them to take care of their grandchildren if the parents are minors themselves," Hanno Schaefer told Agence France-Presse.

Family Minister Ursula von der Leyen, a member of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats and a mother of seven, has proposed that the grandparents be allowed to take unpaid leave for up to three years.

Schaefer said the Social Democrats, partners in Merkel's ruling coalition, have indicated that they will support such a move.

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NORTH AMERICA

JENNA BUSH TO MARRY AT HER FAMILY'S RANCH MAY 10

WASHINGTON - U.S. President George W. Bush's daughter Jenna plans to tie the knot with fiance Henry Hager at the family's ranch in Crawford, Texas on May 10, People magazine reported Thursday.

First Lady Laura Bush had announced her daughter's engagement in August, but plans for the wedding -- including whether it would take place at the White House -- have been kept strictly under wraps.

"It's going to be a small wedding," an unidentified source told People, according to the magazine's website.

Hager, 29, hails from Richmond, Va., and is in his final year at the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business.

Jenna Bush, 26, has worked as a teacher and with the UN children's agency in Panama, and is the author of a book, Ana's Story: A Journey of Hope, based on her experiences working for UNICEF in Latin America.

Bush's other twin daughter, Barbara, is not married.

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ASIA

SUICIDE BOMBER TARGETS PRAYER HALL, 9 KILLED

World Report

PESHAWAR, Pakistan - Nine people were killed and at least 25 wounded when a teenage suicide bomber blew himself up Thursday night in a crowded Shiite Muslim prayer hall in this border region.

The attack marked the onset of sectarian violence that often flares during Ashoura, the annual religious holiday when Shiites mourn the death in the seventh century of Imam Hussein, a grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. Shiites are a minority in Pakistan.

Elsewhere in the troubled mountain region near the Afghan border, dozens of Pakistani paramilitary troops abandoned an outpost following threats by Islamic militants.

A day earlier, rebel fighters overran a nearby fort and military officials were still searching Thursday for 15 missing soldiers.

Within an hour of Thursday's suicide bombing, Peshawar Mayor Haji Ghulam Ali confirmed that nine people were confirmed dead, including one policeman.

DROUGHT LEAVES BOATS HIGH AND DRY ON YANGTZE

BEIJING - In a fresh sign of China's water and environmental crisis, cargo vessels on the Yangtze have been stranded on river banks as its levels have fallen to a 140-year low.

Forty boats have run aground since October on the lower stretches of China's longest river, which is both a water supply and industrial thoroughfare for a region of 400 million people.

Government scientists blamed an extended drought in southern and southwestern China, which caused widespread water shortages last autumn.

But they also admitted that too much water had been held up by the giant Three Gorges Dam, which was built not only to generate electricity but also to control the Yangtze's devastating summer floods.

The river authorities said the dam was responsible for a drop of 50 per cent in the river's flow downstream.

LEARN MARTIAL ARTS, FEMALE PRESIDENT TELLS WOMEN

NEW DELHI - India's first female president on Thursday urged women to learn martial arts such as karate for self-defence, a week after new figures showed a sharp jump in the number of rapes.

Pratibha Patil told a women's conference that laws must be stricter on punishing sex offenders, but that women should also fight back.

"Self-defence is the best defence," said Patil, 72.

"And one important step in this direction is imparting physical education -- like judo and karate -- for self-defence to girls from a very early age so as to make them physically strong and to build up self-confidence to face the challenges of life," she added.

Patil's comments followed a spate of complaints by female tourists, and attacks on Indian women by a drunken mob during New Year's celebrations.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Gill Allen, Bloomberg News; ROUGH HEATHROW LANDING INJURES 18: Emergency services members inspect the wreckage Thursday of a British Airways Boeing 777, at London's Heathrow airport following

World Report

an emergency landing in London. A British Airways flight from Beijing crash-landed at Heathrow, injuring 18 people. Aviation commentators said the fact the plane only just cleared a perimeter fence, hit the ground well short of the runway and then slid to a halt, pointed to a massive loss of power in the final stages of landing. One witness said the wheels were not down on landing, and he heard a grating noise. "It turned about 90 degrees on landing," Steve Bell said. "Its wheels were not down. Within minutes fire crews arrived and evacuated all the passengers," he told the BBC. ;

Colour Photo: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad ;

Colour Photo: Jenna Bush ;

Colour Photo: Pratibha Patil ;

Load-Date: January 18, 2008

End of Document

The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCCARTHY reports

Canberra Times (Australia)

December 29, 2007 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. B06

Length: 1534 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

On the outskirts of Tel Aviv sits a sprawling mini-city, home to the largest medical centre in the Middle East. It has its own shopping mall, hotel and expansive fields. There are beds for 1700 patients in dozens of buildings across the 60-hectare site. Here, in a private room at the Sheba Medical Centre, lies Ariel Sharon, that maverick of Israel's generals and politicians, a man who did so much to shape his country's past and future and who today remains in a coma after a massive stroke two years ago.

His room is guarded by two plain-clothes agents from Shin Bet, Israel's internal security agency. He remains unconscious and is being fed artificially but although attached to a respirator, his friends say he is breathing on his own.

Two years ago this month, at the age of 77, Sharon suffered a minor stroke. He was treated in hospital and then went home. He seemed to recover and remained in office, but three weeks later, the night before he was to go in for a heart procedure, he collapsed after a much larger stroke.

"It was a total shock. He was nearly 78 but we never considered him an old man," said Dov Weissglas, a Tel Aviv lawyer who has been a close friend for many years.

Sharon had had a cerebral haemorrhage and never regained consciousness. He had several operations at a Jerusalem hospital before he was transferred in May 2006 to the Sheba Medical Centre. In the months that followed he was twice rushed to the intensive care unit, once with pneumonia, then with an infection affecting his heart. But each time he recovered and was allowed back to his room, where special nurses are on duty day and night. The bill, at 1600 shekels (\$A471) a day, is reportedly met by the state.

His doctors will not talk about his case but in a brief statement the hospital appeared to suggest there were signs of hope. It said that Sharon's medical condition had not changed dramatically since he was admitted but added: "He was not in a deep coma on his admission and throughout this period there have been some signs of response to several kinds of stimuli."

There is only a very small group who visit Sharon, partly to avoid the risk of infection. But nearly every day someone attends: his sons Omri and Gilad, Gilad's wife Inbal, or a select few. Sometimes they play music or read

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to him. Among them is Reuven Adler, an advertising executive who has known Sharon for more than 30 years and who was instrumental in remoulding his public image before his 2001 election victory.

"His children and the doctors who are treating him see different signs that he knows what is going on," said Adler. "It's difficult to tell if he listens, if he sees. They tell me 'We saw an improvement today' or 'He reacted fantastically today'. Now, the two sons are very serious guys. They are not imagining these things."

Although connected to the machines around him, Sharon is not relying on them to stay alive and so, his friends say, there is no question of taking a decision to end his life. "He is breathing spontaneously, not on a respirator," said Weissglas. "If you disconnect him from the feeding machine it means he would die slowly of hunger and thirst no one on earth will do it. He is very much alive in terms of somebody who is in a coma."

Weissglas meets regularly with Sharon's sons. He too is struck by their conviction that Sharon might recover. "His family are so healthy in their attitudes. They deeply believe that a day will come and one of the zillion miracles that do happen in this region will happen with him."

However tough and controversial Sharon appeared in public, in private he commanded fierce loyalty, even from those who disagreed with him.

Marit Danon had been personal secretary to Israeli prime ministers going back more than a decade.

"When he was elected I was terrified because my political views are on the other side," Danon said. "He seemed a very tough person."

Yet Ehud Barak, Sharon's predecessor, convinced her to stay and she became one of Sharon's most loyal assistants, working long hours, talking to him as a friend but always referring to him as "Prime Minister".

For three months after Sharon's collapse, Danon and another colleague went to his ranch in the Negev and spent nine hours a day cataloguing his notes, letters and papers from the army stretching back more than 60 years.

Danon, who now heads the Authority for the Advancement of the Status of Women, last saw Sharon when he left his office mid-afternoon on January 4, a few hours before his second stroke. "I don't want to see him in hospital because I don't want my last memory of him to be of a person on a bed," she said. "I want to remember him as strong, very confident and very funny he had a great sense of humour."

"The fact that he is in a long-term coma is for us and for me personally much more difficult," she said. "On one level he is absent and we miss him. He is not here with us. And on the other side he is still alive."

Little has been said or heard of the former prime minister for months and yet, because he clings to life, there have been no formal ceremonies to mark his passing. None except an unusual commemoration granted at a modest opening ceremony two months ago when a vast former landfill site on the edge of Tel Aviv was renamed Ariel Sharon Park.

Here, sandwiched between the commuter traffic on two of Israel's busiest highways, is a low, flat-topped hill of decaying garbage covered in soil and the occasional tree. An ambitious regeneration project, championed by Sharon, will one day reclaim the site into a natural wilderness and ecological study centre, a patch of green three times the size of Regent's Park in London.

It is a most unexpected memorial for the iconoclastic hardliner and comes at a time when his legacy is still fiercely debated by Israelis. The public knew Sharon as the self-styled "warrior" general, a hard man who had fought in all of Israel's wars: he was injured in 1948, fought again in 1967, emerged a hero from the near-disastrous 1973 Yom Kippur war and was then forced to resign as defence minister in 1982, after being found indirectly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camp in Beirut.

The long wait for Ariel Two years ago Israeli leader Ariel Sharon fell into a coma. Family and supporters still cling to the hope that he will recover, RORY MCC....

But in the summer of 2005, Sharon surprised Left and Right when as prime minister he withdrew Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip. His collapse a few months later brought to an end what was a dramatic but only half-completed strategy for resolving this most intractable conflict.

"It's like a movie, and at the most dramatic moment suddenly you get a sign saying 'The End' and the music starts," said Adler. According to Sharon's vision, Israel would unilaterally impose its own borders with the Palestinians, giving up the settlements in Gaza to avoid compromising on the most sensitive issues for Israel: the desire to retain the whole of Jerusalem, to prevent Palestinian refugees ever returning to Israel and to hold on to the largest settlements in the occupied West Bank.

Yet much has changed while Sharon has been in hospital. First Israel launched another war in Lebanon, attacking Hezbollah after two Israeli soldiers were captured in a cross-border ambush. The war was widely regarded as a failure in Israel because Hezbollah seemed to have survived largely intact. At the same time there were continued rocket attacks from Palestinian militants in Gaza, which Israel tried to suppress with a series of military incursions that left hundreds of Palestinians dead but failed to stop the rockets. Not long after, Hamas, the Islamist group that had won Palestinian elections, seized full control of Gaza. The lesson appeared to discredit the idea of unilateral withdrawals and for months the Israeli Government, led by his former deputy, Ehud Olmert, seemed directionless. In the past few weeks, Israel and the Palestinians have returned to negotiations for the first time in seven years.

But few expect this rush of diplomacy will lead anywhere. Weissglas, who was involved in working out Sharon's strategy, argues the "disengagement" from Gaza was pragmatic.

The warrior general had realised the only way to hold on to most of the prized Jewish settlements in the West Bank was to give up the dream of settling all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the river Jordan.

"He used to say to us sometimes that he believed he was the last Israeli politician who could turn back to his public and say 'Listen, we had a dream. What we managed to accomplish we did. What we did not, apparently we will not and that's it,'" said Weissglas.

What may be recognised as Sharon's most important achievement is a letter sent to him by President George Bush in April 2004, which in effect said Washington would let Israel keep its major West Bank settlements, home to more than 100,000, in any final agreement with the Palestinians.

"At the end the overriding consideration would be safeguarding the future of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel for generations to come," said Eyal Arad, another friend who worked with Sharon when he was prime minister.

"There was a realisation that the dream that we can hold on to the entire Land of Israel is an objective that cannot be realised in this generation."

Guardian

Load-Date: December 28, 2007

Saturday: 22.12.07: 'He is very much alive': He was the warrior who discovered pragmatism, but two years ago he fell into a coma, leaving his people without a leader. Is Israel still waiting for Ariel Sharon to wake up?: 'He is very much alive'

The Guardian - Final Edition

December 22, 2007 Saturday

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Section: GUARDIAN SATURDAY COMMENT PAGES; Pg. 25

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Byline: Rory McCarthy, Tel Aviv

Body

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Letters to the Editor

The Capital (Annapolis, MD)

June 29, 2008 Sunday

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Section: RECORD; Pg. A8

Length: 1735 words

Body

Raps Republicans

It saddens me to read letters like the one from Victor Henderson, the recording secretary for the county Republican Central Committee (The Capital, June 20). He complained about criticism of his party, the GOP. That stands for Grand Oil Party, doesn't it?

Yes, his party is obsessed with incarceration and taxation. And his party is also obsessed with running huge deficits and with a needless, endless war that benefits key party members.

Republican Vice President Richard Cheney gets a bigger check each month from Halliburton Energy Services than he does from the taxpayers, his other employer. But Halliburton stockholders need not worry. Mr. Cheney brings in a lot more than he costs the company.

Mission accomplished, indeed.

JONATHAN INSKEEP

Crofton

Judge's remarks

District Court Judge Robert Wilcox's comment on people being abused staying in the relationship (The Sunday Capital, June 15) is a matter of him stating his opinion. Even a judge has the right to state his opinion. Freedom of speech includes everyone.

There are many different theories on the behavior of abused people, but they are theories, and it doesn't mean everyone must agree on a theory, or even understand why it is so.

The offense of the abuser should be put on the abuser, not on the judge's opinion about the actions of the victim. I have known Judge Wilcox for many years, and he is a kind, honest and admirable man.

WANDA HOWE

Crofton

Sidewalk tax

Letters to the Editor

I was surprised to get a bill from the city for a \$25 sidewalk fee. This is ridiculous.

City residents are dealing with massive increases in taxes on the state and local level. We are in the middle of a recession that is raising prices on everything from food to clothes.

Our gas prices are through the roof, our utility costs are increasing at an astronomical level, and now our City Council is levying new fees on simple homeowners who are just scraping by?

At what point do we say that there will be no more taxes or fees? At what point will the City Council stop enacting ridiculous and costly legislation that hurts overtaxed Annapolitans who are forced to fund the city's already excessive \$85 million budget?

What are we paying taxes for if we also have to pay fees for services that should clearly fall under the purview of the city budget? What's next, a fee to pay for flowers and pots?

Will we start paying fees for firefighting, policing and paramedics? How about a fee for roadway improvements? Or even a fee for the mayor's desk-cleaning service?

If our taxes aren't going to pay for basic city services, exactly what is the mayor wasting our hard-earned tax money on?

MICHAEL VAN GEERTRUY

Chairman

Annapolis Republican

Central Committee

State's attorney

Regarding the story headlined "Man serves four months for crime he didn't commit" (The Sunday Capital, June 22):

Is this unusual? Maybe its the first time in a while that such a case has involved the police. But such occurrences are a legacy of the state's attorney. The most notorious such case was that of Guy Gordon Marsh, convicted based upon testimony from an eyewitness who was incarcerated at the time of the crime.

The incompetence, negligence and mismanagement of Frank Weathersbee's office is troubling. He's great at blaming judges and the police. Now he claims that he doesn't have time to review the evidence.

Is that the excuse for withholding evidence in the case of Antonio Moore, and for being sanctioned by the courts (The Capital, May 31)?

In the case of 15-year-old Christian Schellenschlager, a grand jury rejected first-degree murder charges for actions he took in defense of his friends (The Capital, June 12).

However, there was a conviction in the case of a woman who let her dogs starve to death (The Capital, May 29). The woman obviously needs psychiatric help, but a sentence of three years will do, even if you have to kick a mentally impaired person while she's down.

How about the case dealt with in the story headlined "Biggest drug bust nets paltry sentences" (The Capital, March 13)? This one involved U.S. Attorney Rod Rosenstein.

The whites involved received sentences that came to 52.5 percent and 42.5 percent of the mandatory sentences, while the black - who wasn't part of the drug ring - got a sentence of 60 percent of the mandatory time.

Letters to the Editor

Maybe Mr. Rosenstein should stop chasing terrorists and investigate civil liberty violations and prosecutorial misconduct.

ARNOLD J. GASPER

Harwood

Congress

It was shocking that the Democratic House leadership pushed for and won passage of a bill containing the immunity for the telecommunications industry that the White House has long been seeking.

The president is a lame duck! Why is a Democratic Congress protecting George W. Bush and upholding his policies for failure? Will we have to replace Congress, too?

ART WAGNER

Pasadena Abortion

As Ellen Goodman suggested (The Capital, June 13), misogyny certainly had a role in the derailment of the quest of Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., for the Democratic presidential nomination. Had Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., lost the nomination, racism would have been at least equally to blame.

But the miscalculations, mismanagement and wasteful spending of Mrs. Clinton's campaign, to say nothing of an unexpectedly strong opponent, had more to do with her defeat than prejudice against women. Mrs. Clinton was head and shoulders above the campaign waged on her behalf.

Now, time is of the essence - most particularly for anyone who cares as much about reproductive rights as Ms. Goodman does.

Before any Clinton supporter even thinks about not voting in November, she or he should keep in mind the solid anti-choice credentials of Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who has repeatedly said that the Supreme Court's Roe V. Wade decision should be overturned.

Mr. McCain has repeatedly cited anti-choice Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito and Chief Justice John Roberts as models for his appointments to fill court vacancies.

With only one more vote, the Supreme Court anti-choice coalition of Justices Roberts and Alito, along with Justices Antonin Scalia and Clarence Thomas, would threaten Roe v. Wade.

To placate his more skeptical conservative supporters, Mr. McCain has flip-flopped on even his highly publicized courageous support of campaign finance reform and immigration reform. A reversal on reproductive rights would be the final straw for his right-wing base.

Within the next four to eight years, we are likely to lose two, perhaps even three of the five justices who now stand firm against a return to the horror of back-alley abortions.

H.N. BURDETT

Annapolis

Peace discussion

Unfortunately, due to the cuts in public library service, I will have to reschedule a public discussion I had planned for Sunday, Aug. 3, at 2 p.m.: "Peace Begins Here."

Letters to the Editor

This public discussion is designed to address the concerns about peace among Jews, Christians and Muslims right here in their own communities.

It is designed to bring us all together so we can offer ideas together on how we can encourage peace among the three religions right in our own communities. After all, peace begins right here in our own communities.

I am deeply discouraged by some of the resistance I ran into while trying to put this event together. And now that I don't have a free place to hold the discussion, I am at a standstill.

The best place to hold such a discussion would be on neutral ground - neither Jewish-run, Christian-run nor Muslim-run - so everyone may feel comfortable and be able to share his ideas during the open discussion period.

This is a matter very close to my heart. It pains me to know that there may not be as many people interested in peace as I had once thought there were.

I am asking anyone who truly desires peace among the three religions in our communities to donate a public meeting place where I can hold this event on neutral ground. Please contact me at thenextliz2005@yahoo.com if you are willing to donate your space for this event.

HEATHER MORELAND

Glen Burnie

Gas prices

Arguments that high gas prices today are due to past unwillingness to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge are wrong.

Such arguments misuse the law of supply and demand. Price affects demand and supply in a cyclical way. If supply goes up, this causes prices to drop, causing demand to rise, causing supply to drop, causing prices to rise, and so on. You cannot sustain low prices with an isolated supply increase.

It is naive to suggest that oil prices are determined by the United States. Though we demand more than our share of the global supply (25 percent), most of the growth in global demand is in China and India.

On the supply side, most of the world's supply is certainly not in the United States. American-based oil companies sell oil at globally determined prices that are little affected by supply increases.

If the United States could affect global pricing, it has a far better opportunity to do so on the demand side, given our huge share of consumption. If we had the resolve to increase automobile fuel efficiency standards, demand for oil in the United States would have dropped far more than the supply increase offered by Arctic drilling.

In the end, the world's supply of oil is fixed. Either our generation will take on this challenge or a future generation or another nation will have to do it for us.

Productivity, efficiency and innovation have historically been the root of our nation's success. Our next administration needs to lead us back to that path and off the path toward insignificance in the world.

RUSTY GOWLAND

Severna Park

Middle East

I am cautiously optimistic about the latest news coming out of Israel: the cease-fire with Hamas, an offer to begin talks with Lebanon, and the ongoing talks with Syria and the Palestinians. It looks like Israel is heading in the right direction in its quest for security and peace.

Letters to the Editor

I have been struck, however, by the absence of public expressions of support for these recent peace efforts, most notably from the pro-Israel community that is normally such a vocal advocate for Israel and its policies.

As an American who believes that the security of Israel, its neighbors and the United States is enhanced by a peaceful Middle East, I strongly support these initiatives and hope that the United States will do more to facilitate their success.

I hope that those who consider themselves to be friends of Israel will join me in this strong expression of support.

ALLEN SAMPSON

Edgewater

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Body

INTERNATIONAL

KIDNAPPED AMBASSADOR

Freed by Captors

Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan, who was kidnapped three months ago by Taliban militants as he traveled in Pakistan's tribal area, was released Friday night, the government said. The envoy, Tariq Azizuddin, arrived in Islamabad Saturday afternoon. The move came as the government was expected to complete a broad peace deal with the Pakistani Taliban in the coming days. PAGE 12

TESTS ON MEDIA CONTROLS

The earthquake in China has tested the country in many ways, including a climbing death toll and the logistical nightmare posed by a mountainous region with narrow, treacherous roads. One of the biggest challenges, though, is to the country's propaganda system, which has been hamstrung when trying to micromanage media coverage of the earthquake, as it does most major news stories in China. PAGE 6

BUSH'S PROGNOSTICATIONS

President Bush's "bold vision" for the Middle East delivered last week to the Israeli Parliament was fine with most members of that body. But listeners in the next country on Mr. Bush's itinerary, Saudi Arabia, were not as enthused. A Reporter's Notebook. PAGE 12

NATIONAL

EXPENSIVE BATTLE SEEN

Over Marriage Initiative

The California Supreme Court's decision affirming the right to same-sex marriage has set in motion a ballot initiative whose supporters hope will have the effect of undoing the ruling. Groups on either side of the issue expect to spend as much as \$20 million trying to convince state voters of the merits of their argument. And interest is not limited to California. PAGE 18

INSIDE THE TIMES: May 18, 2008

THE DIVIDE FOR DEMOCRATS

House Democrats have been winning more elections of late, but at a price. Some of the new members from previously Republican districts are considerably more conservative than other members of the caucus they join. The challenge is how to bridge the widening ideological divide in their own ranks, and the strain has already been visible. PAGE 25

TENTATIVE AUTO PACT

A walkout at a parts supplier that disrupted production at 32 General Motors plants will end within days if the picketing workers ratify a tentative agreement reached late Friday with their employer, American Axle and Manufacturing. PAGE 24

Metro

FASHION SHOW

At a Troubled School

Camden High School in New Jersey had weathered a cafeteria brawl that led to the arrest of 18 teenagers, a 14-year-old boy's smuggling a gun into school in his backpack and the firing of the principal. But it was a hip-hop fashion show, proposed by a clothing maker, that presented some of the most unusual issues. Among them: Were the students just being used? PAGE 27

AN AGENCY IN DISARRAY

The state's main economic development agency, the Empire State Development Corporation, has been in disarray, plagued by turf battles, poor management and the political collapse of Gov. Eliot Spitzer. It was blamed for the collapse of two of the largest projects in New York City. Hard questions about priorities linger. But it remains rudderless. PAGE 27

CHANGING FACE OF AIDS

They call themselves the Divas, a telling name for this group of African-American and Hispanic women over 50 who are H.I.V. positive. And they represent the changing face of H.I.V. and AIDS: Blacks and Hispanics make up 24 percent of the nation's female population, but 82 percent of new AIDS diagnoses among women. PAGE 29

SPORTS

LOOMING OVER BASEBALL,

2003's Failed Drug Tests

Documents linking more than 100 major league baseball players to positive tests for steroids in 2003 could soon be released to government prosecutors pursuing drug dealers. If so, leaks or public testimony would inevitably provide the names, a possibility neither the players nor the sport would relish. PAGE 1

BASKETBALL'S SOCCER LINK

No one is expecting to see N.B.A. players start passing with their feet, or scoring goals off headers. But as rosters increasingly grow international, the influence of soccer is undeniable. Just look at the Lakers and their quick-passing offense, predicated on proper angles, spacing and movement without the ball. That the fulcrum is Pau Gasol, the Spanish center with the vision of a playmaking soccer midfielder, seems more than coincidence. PAGE 5

OBITUARIES

WILL ELDER, 86

A cartoonist, his frantic, overstuffed illustrations helped to define the comic identity of Mad magazine. Mr. Elder took particular joy in drawing grubby-looking crooks with no talent for crime, like Melvin Mole; parody ads; and caricatures of public and show-business figures. He was also a creator of the Playboy cartoon serial "Little Annie Fanny." PAGE 31

MAGAZINE

MAKING MONEY

From Defunct Brands

Manufacturers spend millions of dollars building up a name for their products, and sometimes the products just disappear. But what marketers refer to as brand "equity" -- part familiarity, part positive associations -- doesn't go away so easily, and some people see using that memory as a way to make money. PAGE 48

Questions: Cynthia Nixon 16

Ethicist: Paying Off Refs 19

BOOK REVIEW

THE MAN BEHIND

'Ich Bin Ein Berliner'

The speechwriter Ted Sorensen grew so close to John F. Kennedy that it was sometimes hard to tell whose words were whose. He has now written a book, "A Life at the Edge of History," that may sort some of that out, along with providing some other glimpses behind the scenes of history. PAGE 10

Arts & Leisure

CALL HIM A BAD DIRECTOR,

And Then Duck

There are unloved movie directors, and there is Uwe Boll. Mr. Boll, whose oeuvre has been largely inspired by video games, has engendered a particularly vocal kind of antipathy. He has challenged some of his ardent critics to boxing matches (and beaten them badly). His latest movie, "Postal," is not likely to win over those detractors who call his work tasteless: It portrays President Bush as not only in league with Osama bin Laden, but also in love with him. PAGE 1

Sunday Styles

PARK SLOPE:

Where Is the Love

Why do so many people hate Park Slope? Theories abound. Some Slopers say that the vitriol reserved for their Brooklyn neighborhood is from people who are jealous that they do not live there. "I imagine there's some horror fantasy fusion: the well-off Park Sloper and co-op member who is obsessed with his kids," one neighborhood writer said. "Oh, wait, I just described myself." PAGE 1

WHAT'S UP HIS SLEEVE?

John Gaughan specialized in "big magic." He has designed large-scale illusions for Siegfried & Roy, David Blaine and David Copperfield, as well as illusions used in films like "Forrest Gump" and Broadway shows. Among

INSIDE THE TIMES: May 18, 2008

magicians, he is a legend, but most people outside the field do not know who he is. And he likes it that way. PAGE 1

Travel

IN SEARCH OF

The Real Ireland

In post-millennial Ireland, a visitor may go to a restaurant and be served dinner by a man with an Eastern European accent instead of a brogue. Or maybe she will run into a Brazilian festival being observed by South American transplants. While it is still possible to come across a clot of sheep blocking your rental car's path, Ireland is in the midst of profound cultural change, with curious juxtapositions of the old and new. PAGE 1

A JAUNT TO LUANG PRABANG

Though much of Southeast Asia's cities are well traveled by tourists, Mary Billard says that the ancient Laotian capital of Luang Prabang still feels as if it's waiting to be discovered. Visitors can climb Mount Phousi's steep, snaking stairway, cruise down the Mekong, or give alms to a streaming line of monks. And for the hungry, there is always the roasted fattened pig face. PAGE 12

T Magazine

BEIJING AS BOOMTOWN

Beijing has been attracting plenty of attention and controversy lately. The Chinese capital is the boomtown of our times, as architects, chefs, designers and filmmakers (to say nothing of the Olympics) turn the once-buttoned-down metropolis into a stylish city of the future. PAGE 97

Sunday Business

AN E-COMMERCE GIANT

With Strange Bedfellows

Richard J. Gordon played a big part in the innovation of digital commerce, processing credit card transactions for retail sites. Much of his company's success has been based on the business of X-rated companies, but he has also worked with a Christian charity that distributes Bibles and organizations that aim to prevent animal cruelty. PAGE 1

REALLY SPEEDING TO WORK

Since the Concorde was grounded in 2003, there has not been a non-military jet in the sky that has flown faster than the speed of sound. But globe-trotting business travelers may get a reprieve, as the Aerion Corporation is developing an \$80 million supersonic jet due in 2014 that would fly from New York to Tokyo in 9 1/2 hours. PAGE 2

Microsoft's Internet Gambit 4

Scars of Losing a Home 5

Week in Review

WHEN NATIONAL OPENNESS

Becomes a Slippery Slope

Myanmar opted to restrict access to its delta region after it was devastated by a cyclone. But China took another tack following its recent earthquake, with its government opting to give the world a vivid look at the disaster's aftermath. Phil Taubman points to Mikhail Gorbachev's push toward glasnost and reform in Soviet-era Russia, and

says that once the genie of openness is out of the bottle, it is very hard for authoritarian governments to put it back inside. PAGE 1

FINISHING YOUR FOOD

Americans waste literally tons of food each year. That has not changed even as food prices have jumped and the food crisis began in many countries. So what to do about it? The Department of Agriculture says that recovering 5 percent of the country's wasted food could feed 4 million people a day. PAGE 3

EDITORIAL:

Fixing the Military

The next president's most pressing challenge will be to plot an orderly exit from Iraq. But the challenges will not end there. The United States military is the world's best. It is also in need of substantial repair. PAGE 11

OP-ED:

Frank Rich

Try though they may, John McCain and the Republican Party are finding it difficult to run from the policies of President Bush. PAGE 12

OP-ED:

Thomas L. Friedman

The whispering among Jews about Barack Obama raises a question worth exploring: What really makes a pro-Israel president? PAGE 12

OP-ED:

Nicholas D. Kristof

Impatience with nonviolence seems widespread among young Tibetans, and the rioting and protests across ethnic Tibetan areas of China in the last couple of months may be a turning point. Unless serious diplomatic efforts help resolve the Tibet question, we may see a Tibetan equivalent of the Irish Republican Army or Hamas. PAGE 14

THE PUBLIC EDITOR:

Clark Hoyt

Because much of the world is increasingly dangerous for Western journalists -- and sometimes for the people who help them and the people they quote -- The Times must frequently decide whether to withhold bylines and the identities of sources who could face repercussions for talking to a reporter. PAGE 12

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS

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Rezko judge is a big punch in small package Judicial standout is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court, her colleagues and others speculate.

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Byline: By Cynthia Billhartz Gregorian ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Dateline: CHICAGO

Body

Federal Judge Amy St. Eve is on the bench in her downtown Chicago courtroom. It's 8:30 a.m. and she's eager for lawyers and jurors to arrive so she can get things rolling.

St. Eve is in her chambers, preparing for her day, at 6 a.m.

She's been awake since 4:45.

She calls this "mother's efficiency."

She would know. She has three children under age 10.

St. Eve is 42 and stands about 5 feet tall. She looks a bit out of place, perched in her big black leather chair, the giant seal of the U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois looming above her.

Twenty-five years ago, St. Eve was a pretty pompon girl, and was voted Miss Maroon, the most popular girl among the 600 students in her graduating class at Belleville Township High School West.

Mention this to her now and she laughs.

"I prefer to remember myself as student body president and valedictorian," St. Eve says.

Of course she would.

Six years ago, George W. Bush appointed St. Eve, a Metro East native, to the federal bench. She was 36 at the time, making her one of the youngest **women** to ever preside over a U.S. District Court.

These days, she holds in her hands the fate of powerful men.

In March, she sentenced Conrad Black, a British Lord and former chairman of Hollinger International Inc., to 6½ years for mail fraud and obstructing justice. Hollinger is an international newspaper company now known as The Sun Times Group.

Rezko judge is a big punch in small package Judicial standout is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court , her colleagues and others speculate.

In coming weeks, St. Eve will sentence Antoin "Tony" Rezko, who was convicted in her courtroom in June of using his connections to Illinois state boards so he could bribe contractors.

And there are whispers about her future. Some day, her colleagues and the media speculate, she'll be a candidate for the U.S. Supreme Court.

Four years ago, the website Underneath Their Robes named St. Eve the No. 9 "superhottie" on the U.S. federal bench. Lawyers, the site said, found that her "distractingly attractive" appearance made it "difficult to appear before her."

But in legal circles, St. Eve also has a reputation for being smart, unflappable and no-nonsense.

She graduated No. 1 in her class at Cornell Law School in 1987, where she edited the Law Review and made Order of the Coif, a national society for the top 10 percent of law students.

She's also known for being intensely punctual.

Lawyers bill by the hour, St. Eve says. Jurors must give up their lives for days, even weeks. No one has time to waste.

"So it's out of respect for them and the process," she says.

It is also out of respect for her family values: She wants to be headed home by 5 p.m. each day. She and her husband, a radiologist with Northwestern Medical Faculty Foundation in Chicago, have worked out a schedule. He takes care of the children in the morning after she's left for work at 5:30 and before the sitter arrives about 7 a.m. She gets home in time to make dinner, help with homework and pack three school lunches for the next day.

judicial drama

St. Eve spent one day recently overseeing the trial of an alleged drug dealer - a craggy-faced man in an electric-blue suit. He's been charged with buying chemicals to produce the drug PCP.

But first, St. Eve moves briskly through four civil motions, an arraignment and a sentencing. Her daily schedule usually includes a dozen or more of about 160 cases on her docket. That's nothing compared with the 296 cases she was handed right after being commissioned to the bench.

St. Eve's unassuming demeanor never changes. Not when she's talking to lawyers. Not when sentencing a military veteran to 120 days in a halfway house and substance abuse treatment.

Next up: Attorney Cecilia Scanlou appears before St. Eve in a company lawsuit.

"Did you see how she was typing and asking questions?" Scanlou asks afterward. "She has amazing control over everything that's going on."

The clacking of St. Eve's keyboard echoes through her courtroom nearly all day long. She's typing notes. She's working on opinions. She's instant messaging her law clerks: "Come on out and watch this lawyer who's good at cross-examining."

To her, the courtroom is like a judicial theater where a new drama unfolds each day.

"There's such a human element to it from jury selection on," she says. "It's fun to watch good lawyers. I love the factual parts of cases, watching witnesses testify and seeing how things unfold."

She doesn't advocate for one side or the other while up there on the bench, she says. Instead, she makes sure that everyone is getting his and her fair shake. And she finds answers.

Rezko judge is a big punch in small package Judicial standout is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court , her colleagues and others speculate.

"I'm the objective person inside the courtroom and outside with written submissions," she says. "And it's a nice feeling."

no pushover

Chicago defense lawyer Michael J. Petro is representing the man in the electric-blue suit. Petro is gruff and has the dramatic flair of a TV lawyer.

Midafternoon, while court's in session, he objects twice to the prosecution's line of questioning of a witness. The third time his voice is loud: "Objection, objection, objection."

"OK, Mr. Petro, you've already objected once. You don't need to object again," St. Eve says, her tone unwavering.

During a break, Petro says St. Eve "has every quality you could possibly hope for in a judge. She's very professional, efficient, hardworking."

St. Eve describes her parents, Raymond and the late Dorothy St. Eve, in similar terms.

Dorothy, who died suddenly of a heart attack six years ago, was a kind, dignified homemaker, St. Eve says. "I always tell my kids that my mom was kind, had the patience of a saint and she was everything you would want in a person."

Raymond, a retired dentist known around Belleville for keeping long hours and forgoing Novocain when pulling or drilling teeth, was a strict disciplinarian, she says.

"You didn't break the rules with him," she said. "If you were supposed to be in at 11 for curfew, you better be there at two minutes till."

Reached by e-mail, her dad said two things stood out about his daughter when she was growing up: She asked for and accepted advice, and she reacted to authority and criticism positively. And yes, he says, his daughter might look young and have an unassuming manner. But she's no pushover.

"She inherited two things from her mother. Her petiteness and her sweetness," he says. "Of course, these qualities disarm people into thinking she is frail and timid. This conclusion is far from the truth."

Her strength on the bench became apparent early last year when St. Eve presided over the trial of Muhammad Salah, who was accused of funding Hamas, the Palestinian militant group. Salah's defense attorney complained in the trial that he didn't "see any difference between the government and the court in this case."

"That is so far from the truth," St. Eve snapped back. She then warned that he was "walking a fine line of contempt."

St. Eve attributes this feistiness to growing up with three older brothers, Mark, Matt and Craig. Craig, the youngest of the boys, died in a car accident when she was 14. They recruited her often to play football and reminded her regularly that no sister of theirs was going to be a sissy.

courtroom charisma

After high school, St. Eve left Belleville for Cornell University to get her bachelor's degree in history. One summer, she interned for U.S. Sen. Alan Dixon, D-Ill., where she met a lawyer, who piqued her interest in law.

She liked the flexibility and options it provided. With a law degree, she could teach, write, practice real estate or tax law. She could even work on Capitol Hill. Then, in law school, she narrowed her focus and decided she wanted to be a trial lawyer. Upon graduation she began applying for jobs with U.S. attorney's offices around the country, but there was a hiring freeze. So she accepted a job with Davis Polk & Wardwell, an international law firm, and began picking the brain of partner Bill Hendricks. She wanted to know how to get courtroom experience, preferably in

Rezko judge is a big punch in small package Judicial standout is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court , her colleagues and others speculate.

criminal law. Hendricks was impressed with St. Eve's work ethic, so he started talking her up to other lawyers he knew.

One day in 1994, a lawyer from Little Rock, Ark., named Bill Duffy called St. Eve out of the blue. Duffy was part of the Independent Counsel Team investigating the Whitewater Development Corp. He had heard she was interested in prosecuting.

"Fax me your résumé," he told her.

Two weeks later, St. Eve says, her bags were packed and she was headed to Arkansas. She spent the next two years working on Ken Starr's legal team, prosecuting the high-profile property scandal involving former business partners of Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton. St. Eve was only 30, but already showed promising legal chops.

George Collins, one of the defense lawyers on the case, told the Chicago Sun-Times that St. Eve "was responsible for the counts the government won."

"If it didn't hurt too bad to lose, I'd say it would be a joy to be against her," he said.

Everyone, including Starr himself, agreed that the jury loved her - and her charisma carried over to her next job as assistant U.S. district attorney in Chicago.

'fair as heck'

Edward Genson, a high-paid defense attorney who has represented rapper R. Kelly and Conrad Black, ran up against St. Eve several times when she was a prosecutor. He said he always dreaded it.

It's bad enough that she knew her stuff like nobody's business, he says, but she looked like a high school cheerleader.

"I want grizzled old guys and young, mean-looking men opposing me," he said.

St. Eve left the U.S. district attorney's office in 2001 to become senior counsel for Abbott Laboratories, a pharmaceutical and nutritional products company in Chicago. A year later, she applied for the federal bench.

St. Eve found herself in Washington, before a congressional confirmation panel, with her 5-week-old son in tow. She breezed through the hearings.

According to her colleagues, St. Eve's high-profile past has served her well.

During the Black and Rezko trials, reporters from everywhere buzzed around the courthouse, and lawyers with big personalities were grandstanding in the courtroom.

In Black's trial, the defendant a British Lord and Canadian celebrity, was perceived by many as an intimidating force. New York Magazine once described him as "grand, dismissive, self-important, striving, humorless, full of social and political zeal."

But St. Eve wasn't ruffled by any of this. She ran a tight ship, and she didn't hesitate to call attorneys on their over-the-top dramatics, Genson said.

"She rules fairly, she's prompt in her rulings and she's much more efficient than the lawyers who come before her," he said. "She's fair as heck, even when you're fighting with her."

Notes

Rezko judge is a big punch in small package Judicial standout is headed for the U.S. Supreme Court , her colleagues and others speculate.

A profile in power • U.S. JUDGE AMY ST. EVE

Graphic

PHOTO

PHOTO - Amy St. Eve watches then-Sen. Peter Fitzgerald in 2002 recommend her for U.S. District Court. John Lee | Chicago Tribune

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**And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at
2008's Just for Laughs**

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Body

"Fighting ain't my forte - pressing charges is my forte."

JB Smoove

"Every year my wife makes an announcement that she's leaving me, but when I look up she's still there. You can't tease a man with freedom."

Rodney Perry

"I don't know why people are afraid of a black president. What do they think, that we'll have dog fights on the White House lawn?"

Brandon T. Jackson

"You'll never find four guys sitting around saying, 'You know what would make this more fun? If my girl was here!' "

Patrice O'Neal

"I only watch the Olympics to see who comes in dead last. I mean, anyone in this room can be the worst in the world - but that guy was trying! He came in first somewhere and thought he had it in the bag."

Jay Phillips

"We have two boys. We named them Jackson and Grant. We figured, 'What the heck, they're going to fight anyway.' "

Henry Cho

"We're not really good parents, we're not bad parents, we're just really new parents. People always ask us: 'Are they sleeping through the night?' And we're like: 'As far as we know.' "

And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs

Henry Cho

"Did Ted Nugent and Charles Manson f--k it up for every man with long hair?"

Hal Sparks

"I hate bulls--t. I hate the president (George W. Bush). ... Do you know every 20 years a president is assassinated, or there's an attempted assassination? Where are my bipolar white people? What happened? ... He walks around carrying that briefcase. Ain't nothing in there but a colouring book and a sippy cup."

Thea Vidale

"I could never figure out why my father was always in the garage. Then I got married and it became crystal f---in' clear."

Billy Gardell

"Growing up, you could always tell the Italian kids at school by their projects. Beth came in with a gingerbread house, but Tony turned up with a 3,000-square-foot bungalow with a finished basement."

Frank Spadone

"My mother told me: 'Watch out for women these days. They are like olive oil. They say they are virgin, but you know they've been pressed a couple of times.' "

Frank Spadone

"If women ruled the world, there would be no wars. Just a bunch of jealous countries not talking to each other."

Frank Spadone

"Hillary Clinton really messed up. She went after the female vote. But she should have gone after the guys' vote by reminding them how forgiving a wife she is. 'I let my husband get laid at work. You should, too.' "

Elon Gold

"How could anybody elect an evil terrorist group to office unless they had confused it with a delicious chickpea dish? Hamas, hummus."

Elon Gold

"I did my makeup tonight to make myself tired and older. How did I do?"

Cathy Ladman

"Menopause. It's a lot like adolescence without all that life ahead of you."

Cathy Ladman

"The C-word. You throw that one like a grenade when you know you're never coming back."

Billy Gardell

"I went to the mall with my wife. We went to Pier 1 to find a podium for her to give me lectures from."

John Heffron

"Lying in bed, facing my wife, that's my foreplay."

And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs

John Heffron

"How do we spot tourists in Scotland? They have that thing ... hope."

Craig Hill

"I think it's funny when hypochondriacs get cancer, because it pretty much confirms every fear they've ever had: 'See, I told you so!' "

Mike Birbiglia

"My therapist says I have a preoccupation with vengeance. We'll see about that."

Stewart Francis

"Imagine you're on a sidewalk watching people cross the street and 54 per cent don't make it. How excited would you be?"

David Hemstad

explaining why he doesn't

like the odds on marriage

"Where are the Olympics for people with minor afflictions? Dressage for hemorrhoid sufferers? The 4 x 100 relay for multiple personality disorders?"

Hal Cruttenden

"It's not only breasts that drop. Vaginas do, too. I woke up eight years ago and asked myself why I was wearing a bunny slipper. And why it was grey."

Joan Rivers

"Remember the good old days, when all women had to do was fake orgasm? As long as you could see the TV, you were home free."

Joan Rivers

lying on her back, onstage

"Can you imagine that my wife thinks an illegal immigrant wants to break into our house and have sex with her? Of course, illegal immigrants will do a lot of work Americans won't."

Nick DiPaolo

"The closest I get to a facial is draining macaroni."

Cathy Ladman

on being the 52-year-old

mother of a 4-year-old

"Eva Braun and Hitler had a good relationship. My husband and I are in couples therapy. Of course, he's no Hitler."

Cathy Ladman

"Have a sandwich! You're supposed to wiggle when you walk. I'm not supposed to be able to see your heart beat!"

And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs

Billy Gardell

on skinny L.A. women

"My husband said, 'If I'm ever in a coma, I want you to pull the plug.' I said, 'Then you're going to have to start talking more, because I can't tell the difference now.' "

Cathy Ladman

"I leave the summer for thin girls, strutting around in tube tops. October, though, October is my time. That's when they have to put their clothes back on. What're they gonna do, talk?"

Deb DeGiovanni

"So, I just got back from my first trip to Halifax, and WOW there are good-looking girls ... in Montreal."

Perry Perlmutar

"I'm not only a comedian; I'm also a stay-at-home son."

Phil Hanley

"People ask me when I'm gonna get my own place, but I don't think I will for a while - my parents are still very healthy."

Phil Hanley

"People assume I'm a vegetarian, which is a compliment: All guys want to look pale and weak."

Phil Hanley

"You know how you meet the right person, you know instantly? Why does it take a year and a half when it's the wrong one?"

Phil Hanley

"I always get freaked out doing shows in the States. Believe it or not, they hate married gay pot-smokers."

Darcy Michael

"Now that I'm married, I know what questions I would have asked if I was single and trying to meet someone online. Not questions like 'What's your favourite colour, or favourite movie?' But questions like 'What temperature do you like the thermostat at?' or 'Do you sleep on your side of the bed, or do you sleep diagonal?' "

Frank Spadone

"Indians like to bargain. My dad will go up to the American Airlines counter and ask for a downgrade. Give him a discount and he'll stand for the whole flight."

Paul Varghese

"I'm half Caucasian and half Asian. I guess that makes me ... Caucasian."

Steve Byrne

"I'm the fluffy one. That's the politically correct term for fat. There are five stages: big, healthy, husky, fluffy and damn! I'm tired of hearing about women getting rejected by handsome, good-looking, slim guys. Give a fluffy guy a chance. The worst we're gonna do is have dinner without you."

And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs

Gabriel Iglesias

"I believe in honesty with my kids. When they say, 'Daddy, what will I be when I grow up?' I tell them, 'Disappointed.' "

Hal Cruttenden

"In the royal family, the boys are only good looking between the ages of 17 and 21. Look at Prince Andrew, William and - well, not Harry, he has a different dad."

Craig Hill

"This is my leather kilt. Or as they say in French, kilt du cuir (queer). How patronizing."

Craig Hill

"With a voice that high, how did he survive the army?"

Hal Cruttenden

on singer James Blunt

"I've always looked young for my age, which was a bit creepy at birth."

Matt Kirshen

"My parents went on vacation last week. I mean, I assume they made it. You'd think I'd at least get a text: 'Plane went down :(' "

Matt Kirshen

"This is my first time in Montreal, and thank you very much for marking the hot water with the first letter of 'cold.' "

Matt Kirshen

"Look at your reaction ... a boo, a laugh and a little clap ... like my sex life."

Matt Kirshen

"I'm from Canada, I live in Los Angeles and I look Mexican. I am the Free Trade Agreement."

Shaun Majumder

"On the \$5, how about a Canada goose pile-driving an American eagle?"

Shaun Majumder

on how we could juice up our currency to reflect the strong Canadian dollar

"I have an 8-year-old child, and he's a bit deranged because he's been living with me for eight years."

Jason Byrne

"Have you ever been to Fort McMurray? Imagine a sea of kitty litter with pools of molasses, one tree with an asthmatic bison rubbing up against it and crying, 'Help me, David Suzuki!' "

Shaun Majumder

"I dedicate this show to my dad, who was a roofer. So Dad, if you're up there ..."

And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs

Stewart Francis

"I quit my job at the helium gas factory. I didn't like being spoken to in that voice."

Stewart Francis

"I wrote a book about a transsexual with a speech impediment. It's called Man or Myth."

Stewart Francis

"There are two types of people I hate: racists and Norwegians."

Stewart Francis

"Receiving oral sex from an ugly person is like rock climbing: You should never look down."

Stewart Francis

"America. The smaller the town, the bigger the people."

Tom Papa

on fat Americans

"How can you boo Canada? We gave you Alan Thicke! I expected more like, 'Awwwww, a Canadian.' "

Shaun Majumder

on being booed at a recent gig in the U.S.

"I'm 34 and still single. I guess I'm sitting out the first marriage. Lately I feel like an airline: Half the time, I'm screening for baggage."

Dave Hemstad

"They say all the oil is in Alberta. What a shame all the dipsticks are in Ottawa."

Bowser and Blue

"The order of Canada is 'two cold ones, please.' "

Bowser and Blue

"God must be in prison, 'cause that's where everyone finds him."

Robert Hawkins

"My girlfriend got me this book on feng shui , but I didn't know where in my home to put it."

Irwin Barker

"People ask him, 'How do you keep your employees from eating your profits?' 'I only hire diabetics.' "

Neil Delamere

on a man who makes fountains out of chocolate for a living

" 'Do you know why I pulled you over?' 'Cause Gandalf told ya to?' "

And the hits keep coming ...; Here are the gags that cracked up our writers at 2008's Just for Laughs

Neil Delamere

on his conversation with

a midget police officer

"I recently finished the Internet. A picture of Bill Gates showed up."

David O'Doherty

Graphic

Photo: JOHN KENNEY, THE GAZETTE; Joan Rivers reminisces about "the good old days" at her Just for Laughs gala on Wednesday night. ;

Photo: ALLEN MCINNIS, THE GAZETTE; Mike Birbiglia: When hypochondriacs get what they deserve.

Photo: JOHN KENNEY, THE GAZETTE; Hal Cruttenden: Honesty is the best policy with kids.

Photo: VINCENZO D'ALTO, THE GAZETTE; Cathy Ladman: Adolescence isn't as much fun the second time. ;

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End of Document

All hail the mystic President

The Times (London)

November 15, 2007, Thursday

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Section: FEATURES; Times2; Pg. 10

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Byline: Martin Fletcher

Body

Slovenia's President is a recluse. Told he had cancer, Janez Drnovsek moved alone to the woods and embraced his inner spirituality. His Government despises him but he is a hero to his people. MARTIN FLETCHER meets him

It is not often that you ask a European head of state whether he has gone loopy, but in the case of Janez Drnovsek, Slovenia's reclusive President, the question seems almost unavoidable.

Bald, monkish and skeletally thin, Drnovsek has abandoned his capital for a mountain retreat. He no longer speaks to his Government. He boycotts state occasions, and disappears for weeks at a time. He has turned vegan, talks like a New Age mystic of his quest for "higher consciousness" and "inner balance", and communicates with the Slovenian people through books on spirituality. He set out to tackle the problems of the world from a country smaller than Wales, and has become a champion of progressive causes.

It is an astonishing transformation for a man who, as Slovenia's Prime Minister from 1992 until he was elected President in 2002, was regarded as a dull, grey technocrat. It was triggered by the prospect of imminent death. In 1999 he found that he had kidney cancer and, in 2001, that the cancer had spread to his liver and lungs. His doctors said his condition was incurable.

Any serious illness comes as a shock, but "the shock can be beneficial because one is caught in patterns of behaviour and somehow you do them mechanically and without really thinking about them. You do like others do," Drnovsek explained in the course of a two-hour interview with The Times -the first he has given in months. "When you are confronted with the perception of the end of your life, it's an opportunity to look at things from a different point of view, to change priorities and establish a distance to this daily existence and all these material developments that you are taught are so important," he said as he sipped black tea in his office.

He accepted that some people thought that he had gone crazy, but was not perturbed. They do not understand, he said in soft, heavily accented English. "Why should I worry what people of this level of consciousness should say or think about me? This is so irrelevant." He used a Chinese philosopher's tale to illustrate his point: "The frog in its well was convinced that this well was the whole world. And then came a turtle from the sea. The turtle told this frog that there was a big ocean and the well was nothing. The frog said: 'OK. This turtle is crazy'."

In fact, most Slovenians have grown very fond of their singular President. Despite -or perhaps because of -his eccentricities he will complete his term of office next month as one of the most popular figures in his country.

All hail the mystic President

Drnovsek is an erstwhile banker who won his nation's respect -if not its affection -by helping to negotiate its peaceful secession from the former Yugoslavia in 1991, and then steering it from communism to democracy and membership of the European Union and Nato. As late as 2000 -one year after he had a cancerous kidney removed -The Economist described him as a "singularly uncharismatic...poker-faced trimmer" whose preoccupations were growth and stability. It quoted him saying, glumly: "People demanded vision. I hate vision."

The cemetery of history is full of visionaries."

Drnovsek says that his conversion from conventional politician into "Slovenia's Gandhi" -as one commentator has dubbed him -was gradual, and he adopted a low profile as he fought his illness. He abandoned conventional medicine because his doctors told him that they could not cure him. He dabbled with Indian and Chinese healers. He gave up meat, dairy products and alcohol in favour of organic vegetables and home-baked bread. He fasted for days at a time. He also sought to nourish his soul, leaving Ljubljana for a remote home set in beautiful beech forests south of the Slovenian capital. He lives there alone, reading and writing, without so much as a television for company since his dog died. He says modern man has lost contact with nature, but it is "very beneficial for health, for body but also for soul...Somehow we can purify ourselves of all negativities that are concentrated in towns and urban centres where there is all this activity and stress."

The new Drnovsek began to reappear on the public stage in late 2005, but more in the guise of national guru than president. He cut his staff. He quit his centre-left political party and launched the Movement for Justice and Development that was open to "all people who wish to change the world for the better". He became a champion of the environment, animal rights and the oppressed, and a fierce critic of a political class that is, he says, concerned only about power and image. "If only we had a candidate like Drnovsek, or even a shadow of him, the world would quickly become less intolerable," gushed Brigitte Bardot in the midst of the French presidential election.

Drnovsek travelled around the country. He was photographed wearing a crown of leaves. He published books entitled Thoughts on Life and Awareness and The Essence of the World that are found in the spirituality -not politics -sections of Slovenia's bookshops. He wrote a monthly advice column in a popular women's magazine, and a blog in the name of "Janez D", whose subjects ranged from diatribes against pesticides to apocalyptic warnings about climate change -he says that humanity has perhaps 20 years left to save itself.

Drnovsek also began to intervene in international affairs in a way that infuriated Slovenia's new conservative Government. He upset nearby Serbia by supporting independence for Kosovo. He visited Jerusalem, where he urged the Israelis to talk to the newly elected militants of Hamas, and Sri Lanka, where he tried to meet Tamil Tiger leaders. In China he defied the authorities by visiting Tibet. He went to India for a conference on spirituality, and to Bolivia for Evo Morales's inauguration as that country's first indigenous president "after 500 years of colonialism and neo-colonialism".

His most ambitious undertaking, however, was a one-man drive to resolve the Darfur conflict that ended with the detention of his envoy and the non-appearance of Sudanese and rebel leaders at a Ljubljana peace conference. It was an embarrassing episode, and he admits that he was probably naive, but says that he felt morally obliged to try to stop the suffering. While international diplomats were living in luxury hotels, earning fat salaries and indulging in endless talks, people were dying, he says. "I thought somebody had to do something to wake up everybody."

By the summer of 2006 Drnovsek had exhausted his official budget, and the Government seized the chance to ground him by refusing further funds for his "exotic activities". He was forced to cancel a state visit to Spain and an appearance at the UN in New York, and grew ever more scathing in his denunciations of the Government.

Drnovsek has described Janez Jansa, the Prime Minister, as the "Prince of Darkness". He disagrees with nearly all of what the Government does, and accuses it of moving towards a "kind of totalitarian system" by curbing the independence of the media. He stops only marginally short of saying that it was unfit to assume the EU's rotating six-month presidency on January 1. "I will say nothing. I'm still President of this country," he replied when pressed.

Drnovsek has now abandoned his conflict-resolution efforts. He tried his best, but was dismissed as "this crazy Slovenian President", he says. "I came to the conclusion that the only way to change the world is to change the

All hail the mystic President

consciousness of as many individual people as possible, and then the pressure on politicians will increase to act differently."

He has once again become an absentee President. He spurns official receptions. He boycotted Slovenia's National Day celebrations in June. "At a certain level of spirituality...it becomes more difficult to do these things of this material life," he says. "You feel the ephemerality of everything, and if you know your activity will have no real effect, you become more selective about what you do and what not. I still have activities, but practically I stopped all unnecessary political activities -those involved with other politicians."

He vanished entirely from June until mid-September, and failed to greet Romano Prodi, the Prime Minister of Italy, when he visited Slovenia in August. Drnovsek said that he spent some of that time visiting monasteries in France, tapping into the "positive energy" that monks had built up through centuries of prayer.

Drnovsek has infuriated the Government, but his people have warmed to his evident humanity. His books are bestsellers, and while a few of the Slovenes I approached in Ljubljana's central market said that they found his conduct embarrassing, many more expressed support and affection for their unusual President.

"He's a good and wise man," said Katja Berlinc, a 21-year-old theology student.

"He's great. He's not afraid to speak his mind. He's not afraid of anything," said Asim Begtasevic, who runs a flower stall. "He stands for basic moral values," said Sasho Adamich, a young TV assistant. When a former lover revealed that Drnovsek had a 19-year-old daughter, it only boosted his popularity.

All this infuriates his critics inside and outside the Government. "Nobody dares to question Drnov-sek's conduct or his travels because of his illness, and because he was some sort of hero of the transition to democracy," says Janez Markes, the editor of the newspaper Delo.

Drnovsek's colourful and controversial presidency is drawing to an end. He is not seeking re-election, and the charming old streets beneath Ljubljana's castle are awash with posters of the more conventional politicians fighting to replace him.

He is not planning any great farewell when he steps down. He is not concerned about his legacy or image. He accepts that a certain amount of ridicule is the price to be paid for stepping outside the political system, and he certainly will not mind the anonymity. "I don't have worries. I don't have fears. I don't have wishes. I'm very calm."

Drnovsek also has one incontrovertible riposte to those who say he went loopy.

Against all odds, and in defiance of every medical prediction, he has not died in office. Indeed, he now claims to be cancer-free: "I am completely healed. I am cured of everything. I can't prove it beyond being alive. I don't need confirmation from a doctor. I just know."

Load-Date: November 15, 2007

Embracing Islam gives Ken new election hope; Claiming to be able to deliver up to 200,000 votes to re-elect the Mayor, the radicals behind Muslims 4 Ken have launched a war of words smearing his rival Boris Johnson as a Muslim hater

The Evening Standard (London)

April 16, 2008 Wednesday

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London Evening Standard

Section: A; Pg. 18

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Byline: KEITH DOVKANTS

Body

NEARLY half a million Muslim voters are being urged to support Ken Livingstone against Boris Johnson in the closing stages of the mayoral election. A year-long strategy to mobilise the Muslim vote for Ken moves into overdrive this week, accompanied by a campaign of vilification aimed at Boris.

It has been orchestrated by Islamic leaders who have been assiduously courted by Ken, an Evening Standard investigation reveals, and signals a new departure in tactics to harness an ethnic minority vote in a bid for power.

Behind the operation are supporters of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Sunni scholar welcomed to City Hall by Ken. Al-Qaradawi has dismayed Muslim moderates with his defence of suicide bombers, **female** circumcision and the persecution of homosexuals, although he has denounced terrorism for political goals..

The Islamic alliance for Ken was set up early last summer and is based in east London. It grew from Ken's links with community leaders and activists and his generous sponsorship of Muslim causes.

The London Development Agency, often referred to as "Ken's piggy bank", gave £700,000 to help set up the London Muslim Centre in Whitechapel. The centre and the adjoining East London Mosque are the geographical heartland of the Muslim campaign to re-elect Ken. So far, it has involved one of the biggest mobilisations of an ethnic vote ever seen in London. It is bigger than the Muslim effort behind George Galloway when he captured Bethnal Green and Bow for his Respect party in 2005. Galloway has a role in the re-elect Ken operation as does an Islamic organisation that helped him back into the Commons, the Islamic Forum of Europe.

Embracing Islam gives Ken new election hope Claiming to be able to deliver up to 200,000 votes to re-elect the Mayor, the radicals behind Muslims 4 Ken have lau....

Muslims 4 Ken, as the group calls itself, is targeting a vote it believes could be as large as 450,000. One part of the operation was to ensure this potentially decisive voice was heard by persuading every eligible voter to register. The other phase, convincing them to vote for Ken, moves up a gear today, the last deadline for registration.

The last two weeks of the election campaign will see a sustained attack on Boris based on claims that he is anti-Islam.

Ken's Muslim supporters have made much of the fact the British National Party urged its members to make him their second preference vote. Boris has rejected BNP support but Muslims 4 Ken argues that it proves he is the enemy. .

THE key figure in Muslims 4 Ken is Anas Altikriti, a 39- year-old lecturer who was brought to Britain from Iraq aged two when his father, a leading Islamist, was forced to flee after opposing Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime. Altikriti has been an active member of the anti-war movement and went to Iraq in 2006 to help secure the release of British Christian hostages including Norman Kember. He was the prime mover behind a letter to The Guardian in January in which 63 individuals and Muslim organisations asked London Muslims to vote for Ken.

Critics of Altikriti claim that while he espouses dialogue and non-violence, he may have wide contacts within extreme Islamic groups. One of the people who has worked closest with him on Muslims 4 Ken, Azzam Tamimi, is an enthusiastic supporter of **Hamas**.

Dr Tamimi heads the Institute of Islamic Political Thought in London. His family comes from Hebron and he has campaigned his entire adult life against Israeli occupation in Palestine. In 2004 he was questioned by Tim Sebastian on the BBC Hardtalk programme about a post he made on an internet forum, saying: "For us Muslims martyrdom is not the end of things, but the beginning of the most wonderful of things." Sebastian asked if he would be a suicide bomber. Tamimi replied: "I would do it.

When? If I can go to Palestine and sacrifice myself I would do it. Why not?" Dr Tamimi has been involved in trying to galvanise what the Muslims 4 Ken group sees as the youth vote, especially among teenagers voting for the first time.

The network of Islamic groups and personalities linked to Muslims 4 Ken is not confined to London. One is Salma Yaqoob, a close associate of George Galloway and a Birmingham city councillor for his Respect party. Ms Yaqoob, a tireless campaigner for the hijab, is on record describing the 7 July bombings in London as "reprisal events".

Muslims 4 Ken believes that out of a possible vote of close to half a million, up to 200,000 can be secured for Ken. For months its campaigners have canvassed door-to-door and targeted 60 key mosques among the 200 or so in London. Altikriti was at Redbridge mosque on Saturday where, as is his practice, he asked the imam if he could include an appeal to vote for Ken in his address. Permission was politely declined but at other mosques he has been able to make his pitch.

A sinister element of the campaign is the effort to portray Boris as a Muslim hater. Websites have been bombarded with selected quotes from his journalism.

One, Islamophobia Watch, carries a long list of excerpts from his articles under the heading Back Boris Urges BNP.

Informed observers see Islamophobia Watch as a tool of Ken's political machine.

It often carries articles lauding his efforts for minorities, especially Muslims. Headlines such as "Livingstone attacks French headscarf ban" and "Livingstone decries vilification of Islam" abound.

Documents obtained by the Evening Standard reveal the exceptional access given to Muslim leaders to the Mayor's office. Altikriti has held extensive talks with Ken and his aides, apparently in the interests of improving race relations and fostering multiculturalism. Insiders believe Ken has also been highly conscious of the electoral potential among London's Muslims.

Embracing Islam gives Ken new election hope Claiming to be able to deliver up to 200,000 votes to re-elect the Mayor, the radicals behind Muslims 4 Ken have lau....

One source said a two-pronged strategy was developed in 2003: one, to take a tough stance with the Board of Deputies of British Jews and challenge the Zionist lobby. The second was to work with and court hardline Islamic groups and individuals.

The source said: "Ken did not have a relationship with them directly but through Anas Altikriti." Altikriti is closely involved with the Muslim Association of Britain, widely described as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, an international Islamist network in which Yusuf al-Qaradawi is viewed as a leading figure. It has provided a spiritual home for a number of extremists, including Ayman Al Zawahiri, the al Qaeda leader often described as Osama bin Laden's deputy.

Altikriti said his father had led the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq for 10 years but he denied he was involved with it.

However, he was instrumental in organising al-Qaradawi's visit to London to attend a meeting of the European Council of Fatwa and Research at City Hall. .

AL-QARADAWI is a highlyesteemed Islamic scholar, but his support for suicide bombers and his homophobia have offended many. He is held to be the unofficial leader of the Muslim Brotherhood by a number of informed authorities.

When Ken made a very public display of embracing him at City Hall the images were widely distributed to Muslim websites and newspapers there was disquiet, especially among Jews and gays.

Al-Qaradawi is now banned from entering Britain after being refused a visa earlier this year. The decision was based on Article 41 of the UN charter which deals with threats to peace and security.

George Galloway, who is standing for the Greater London Assembly, supports Ken.

He demonstrated the power of the Muslim vote in London when he captured the formerly safe Labour seat in Bethnal Green and Bow in 2006. Muslim community leaders campaigned vigorously on his behalf. One, Shiraj Haque, a wealthy restaurateur known as the Brick Lane Curry King, told me: "I got 7,000 votes for

Galloway. I shall deliver more for Ken." Galloway has acknowledged his debt to Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), which has a powerful presence at the East London Mosque. Ed Husein, who wrote revealingly about extremists at the East London Mosque, disclosed that after Galloway's election, he said at a celebration dinner: "I am indebted, more than I can say more than it would be wise for me to say to the IFE ... I believe they played the decisive role in this historic victory." The IFE is believed to have close links with Jamaat-e-Islami, a hardline Islamic group based in Bangladesh. Jamaat has been accused of providing recruits to groups that espouse violence but it has always advocated the advance of Islam by peaceful means.

Ken appears to want the Muslims to help him with a historic victory of his own. The question many will ask is: what is he giving in return? Apart from highlevel access to Muslim organisations, Ken's office has also been a generous donor to Muslim causes, including the Islamexpo in 2005 and the annual Bangladeshi Mela festival. Ken also commissioned a report on anti-Islamic bias in the media and a long dossier defending al-Qaradawi, a document some observers say was seriously flawed.

A spokesman for Ken said: "The policy of the Greater London Authority is that all London's communities should be represented and supported by London government.

Nearly 10 per cent of London's population are Muslim. Accordingly the Greater London Authority and the London Development Agency have supported a number of events and activities in relation to the Muslim community."

Altikriti was based in northern England but moved to London three years ago while keeping his family home in Leeds.

Embracing Islam gives Ken new election hope Claiming to be able to deliver up to 200,000 votes to re-elect the Mayor, the radicals behind Muslims 4 Ken have lau....

He agreed to talk to me about the Muslims 4 Ken campaign, stressing that he wished to clarify two points: it was "absurd", he said, to suggest that he or organisations in which he was involved wanted to establish sharia law in Britain. And he said the campaign for Ken contained "absolutely no hidden agenda".

"We are fighting extremism in the Muslim community," he said. "Boris Johnson would be extremely bad news for Muslims in London. When the 7/7 bombings happened, Ken condemned them as criminal acts. Boris condemned Islam.

"What is at stake is extremely serious. There are fractures between East and West and despite his faults Ken has always been able to bridge the gap. People have come to feel they have a friend in Ken. They would be lost with Boris. The fact the far-Right is calling for its supporters to give him their second vote says it all." As election day nears, he said, efforts are intensifying. "We are going door-to-door, talking to everyone we can. One of the most effective ways is to get mothers to badger husbands and their families to vote for Ken. It's a full-time job and people are very dedicated. We get help from the business community printing for our leaflets is subsidised by print shops." Altikriti said the polls have not yet taken into account the massive Muslim vote he hopes will turn out for Ken. It will, he said, be at least 180,000 and could well reach 200,000." Can Muslims swing it for Ken? "Yes," he replied, "we definitely can."

'The campaign for Ken contains absolutely no hidden agenda. We are fighting extremism in the Muslim community'For us Muslims martyrdom is not the end. Would I be a suicide bomber? If I can go to Palestine and sacrifice myself, I would do it. Why not?'

Graphic

(1)Support for Ken : Anas Altikriti (2)Warm welcome: Ken Livingstone greets Yusuf al-Qaradawi at City Hall. Above, the East London Mosque, epicentre of the Muslim campaign to re-elect Ken as Mayor (3)Backing Bombers: Dr Azzani Tamini

Load-Date: April 16, 2008

Inside The Times

The New York Times

August 5, 2008 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 2089 words

Body

International

FULBRIGHT GRANT RECIPIENTS

Turned Away From U.S., Again

For the second time in two months, the road has been blocked for three Palestinian recipients of a Fulbright grant to study in the United States. The three were part of a group whose grants were originally withdrawn because the State Department feared it would be unable to get them out of Gaza after Israel closed off the coastal strip to contain Hamas. Page A10

TOLL FOR K2 CLIMBERS REACHES 11

The death toll for the climbers on K2, the mountain on the border of China and Pakistan, rose to 11 on Monday. Two were rescued and a third survived despite punishing cold near the top of K2, the second highest mountain in the world and regarded by many as harder to climb than Everest. Three are in stable condition and four are still coming down, Pakistani officials said. On Friday, a serac of ice broke away and fell, stranding as many as a dozen climbers and taking with it ropes left behind for their descent. Page A7

THREATS FROM IRAN AFTER DEADLINE

Iran said it could close a Persian Gulf waterway with ease, thereby halting oil shipments, and claimed possession of a new naval weapon that could sink ships 200 miles away. The reason for the threat was unclear, but it came after the expiration of the deadline for Iran to respond to incentives to cease nuclear enrichment. The United States has warships in the region, and has said more sanctions are likely unless Iran responds. Page A10

SMOOTHING ROUGH EDGES IN ASIA

This summer, for the first time since World War II, Japan's navy made a call at a Chinese port, this time to deliver tourists, not troops. Japan, as well as Taiwan, are viewed as most likely to face a threat from neighboring China, but have recently been drawn closer into its orbit. The newfound closeness comes after two years of often covert diplomacy on the part of President Hu Jintao of China to defuse any tensions leading up to his country's playing host to the Olympic Games. Page A6

SARKOZY LEANS ON PRESS IN SCANDAL

Inside The Times

There's nothing better to ease the tensions of the dog days of summer than a nice little scandal. It seems the latest diversion involves the son of President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, the son's fiancée, a well-loved and nasty satirical magazine, and a dash of anti-Semitism thrown in as seasoning. In the fallout, a famous left-wing cartoonist has been fired for making anti-Semitic comments in connection with Mr. Sarkozy's son and a nerve has been touched: Mr. Sarkozy's efforts to intimidate the French press. Page A11

National

LOOKING INTO EYE OF THE STORM,

And Not Blinking

Coastal cities in Texas are preparing themselves for a tropical storm that gained strength as it churned through the Gulf of Mexico toward Galveston. But Texans are no strangers to extreme weather, and so there was little panic. "It don't faze me, man," said one accountant, lounging outside his home. "I've been through it. Some people leave, some don't. I ain't leaving. If it ain't a Category Four or Five, I'm staying here." PAGE a16

LAWYER SAYS DETAINEE AIDED U.S.

At the war crimes trial of Salim Hamdan, Osama bin Laden's driver, Mr. Hamdan's military lawyer said in his closing arguments that secret evidence showed that Mr. Hamdan offered "critical details" to American forces "when it mattered most" in the early days of the war in Afghanistan. In testimony during public sessions of the two-week-old trial, it was clear that Mr. Hamdan had provided details about Mr. bin Laden's possible whereabouts, even taking interrogators to some of Mr. bin Laden's Afghan homes and training camps. PAGE A1

A KILLING BARES A TOWN'S TENSIONS

Four teenagers in Shenandoah, Pa., have been charged in the killing of Luis Ramirez, though exactly what happened during the attack that led to his death is still hotly debated in the town. Some say it was just a street fight that went too far, and others claim the teenagers singled out a Mexican immigrant for a beating and made anti-Mexican remarks. PAGE A12

OBAMA ALTERS ENERGY STANCE

In a speech in Lansing, Mich., Senator Barack Obama altered his position to call for tapping the nation's Strategic Petroleum Reserve to lower gasoline prices. He also sought to portray his Republican rival, Senator John McCain, as "in the pocket" of oil giants that are profiting from gasoline priced at more than \$4 a gallon. And in his speech, Mr. Obama called for a windfall profits tax on oil companies to finance rebates for Americans. PAGE A14

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Inside The Times

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New York Report

CLERGY MEMBER REMOVED AFTER COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Msgr. Wallace A. Harris, the leader of the congregation at St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem, was removed Monsignor Harris from his parish and priestly duties while it looked into complaints by two people that he had sexually abused them about 20 years ago. People familiar with the district attorney's investigation said the complaints involved two boys at a school where Harris previously taught. PAGE B1

LAWSUIT SEEKS POLICE RACE DATA

When the New York Police Department recently released 11 years of statistics on every bullet fired by its officers, it included the reason for each shooting, how many shots were fired and how many bullets hit their targets -- but it did not include the races of the people shot. The New York Civil Liberties Union is suing to gain access to the racial statistics. PAGE B1

Business

CHINA'S SAGGING ECONOMY

Could Hurt Growth Elsewhere

The economic in slowdown in China was supposed to begin after the Olympics, but it has already started. The downturn doesn't have much to do with the Olympics, but its effects are being felt worldwide. China's woes may reduce inflationary pressures around the world, but they threaten to slow further the already tenuous global economic growth. PAGE C1

STUMPING FOR NATURAL GAS

Gas prices keep climbing, and so consumers are looking to vehicles that run on other fuels, like natural gas. One of natural gas's biggest proponents is Boone Pickens, the billionaire Texas oilman and onetime corporate raider, who has argued that natural gas is a "patriotic" fossil fuel. And maybe not coincidentally, his push aligns with his own business interests. PAGE C1

A HAVEN FOR WOMEN

The women's-only floor in hotels went out of favor about 25 years ago, thought to be sexist. Hotel chains are revisiting the practice, and have tweaked the idea by not excluding men from certain floors and trying to make the hotels more hospitable to women. PAGE C6

CHRONIC DISEASE, LITTLE TREATMENT

A new study by the medical journal *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that millions of Americans with chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure are not getting adequate treatment because they are among the nation's growing ranks of uninsured. The report estimated that about 11 million of the 36 million people without insurance in 2004 had received a chronic-condition diagnosis. PAGE C4

ARTS

A TIE-DYED TIME WARP

To the Age of Aquarius

Perhaps more than any musical, "Hair," the score of which became the soundtrack of a generation 41 years ago, is embedded in time. So the question surrounding the Public Theater's revival of the rock musical is whether it will be able to capture the immediacy of the original. "It seems shockingly relevant," said Felice Friedman, who saw the original production when she was 19. "It was fresh and thrilling and young and energetic." PAGE E1

THE COMFORTS OF HIP-HOP PAST

Rock the Bells managed at the Nikon at Jones Beach Theater to offer an exclusionary vision of the hip-hop genre. Old comforts -- A Tribe Called Quest, Method Man and Redman, above; the Pharcyde, Afrika Bambaataa, Nas -- and their fans celebrated by ignoring much of what constitutes hip-hop today. A review by Jon Caramanica. PAGE E5

LESSING LOOKS BACK

Doris Lessing once declared that "fiction makes a better job of the truth" than reminiscence. And while that might well be true of her celebrated and semi-autobiographical Martha Quest novels, Michiko Kakutani writes, it's an observation that doesn't apply at all to her latest book, "Alfred & Emily," an intriguing work that is half-fiction, half-memoir. PAGE E1

WHERE CHAMBER MEETS MARIACHI

A chamber music festival can be only as good as its performance space. The Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival is fortunate to have the St. Francis Auditorium, which proved an acoustically vibrant hall during an appealing Schumann program and a fascinating contemporary program featuring Anssi Karttunen, Anthony Tommasini writes. Leaving the auditorium, the audience came upon a mariachi band in the plaza. From chamber to mariachi: a typical day in Santa Fe. PAGE E1

Obituaries

SKIP CARAY, 68

He was the middleman in a three-generation line of baseball broadcasters, and his nasal tone and sometimes playful, sometimes sardonic commentary on radio and television made him familiar to fans as the voice of the Atlanta Braves. "He said what he thought," an Atlanta journalist said. "And if he happened to ruffle the tender sensibilities of listeners or management, well tough." PAGE B8

PETER W. RODMAN, 64

He began his career as an aide to Henry Kissinger, and went on to be an important foreign policy adviser for every Republican president from Richard M. Nixon to George W. Bush -- including as an assistant secretary of defense for nearly six years in the current administration. PAGE B8

Op-Ed

DAVID BROOKS

There is a sense that because of his background and temperament, Barack Obama lives apart. He puts one foot in the institutions he rises through on his journey, but he is never fully engaged. As a result, voters have trouble placing him in his context, understanding the roots and values in which he is ineluctably embedded. Page A19

BOB HERBERT

We're not paying nearly enough attention to the fastest, easiest and cleanest step toward a sane energy environment. Page A19

NOT QUITE READY TO GO

In an Op-Ed article, three foreign-policy experts who have just returned from a fact-finding trip to Iraq -- Stephen Biddle, Michael E. O'Hanlon and Kenneth M. Pollack -- argue that while we may be able to bring most American troops home within two or three years, we should not set a hard-and-fast timetable. Page A19

Editorial

GUNS AND POPPIES

In the morass that is Afghanistan, not just the Taliban is flourishing. So too is opium production. The United States and the rest of the international community must work harder and more cooperatively to rescue this narco-state. Page A18

THE PRESIDENT AND PRODUCT SAFETY

American consumers, who have suffered years of neglect from government agencies created for their protection, could soon be in for some genuine help. Page A18

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Mano a Mano in Pakistan: Pakistani wrestlers train in Kushti, a traditional form of Indo-Pakistani wrestling, at the Champion Khali Behalwan wrestling club in the Old City of Lahore, Pakistan. Kushti is several thousand years old and a national sport in Pakistan. (PHOTOGRAPH BY EMILIO MORENATTI/ASSOCIATED PRESS) (A3)

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The INDEPENDENT

Section: COMMENT

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Body

I am disturbed by the eagerness of some of your correspondents (15 July) to label Lillian Ladele as homophobic. Repellent and perhaps illogical as they may find her religious beliefs, they are no doubt sincerely held.

As a Christian, I have no difficulty at all in believing that God rejoices in the loving union of a same-sex couple, but that does not stop me from respecting those who see it differently.

Do your correspondents not understand what it means to have a conscientious objection to something? Do they have no sympathy, for example, for those who refuse military service, and accuse them of gross cowardice? We should be ashamed of our country if we cannot excuse Ms Ladele from a duty which she could not have foreseen when she took her job and which, for religious reasons, she finds repugnant.

Freedom of conscience is indivisible, and we seek to restrict it at our peril.

Adrian West

London N21

In an attempt to get publicity for their cases, both Christian fundamentalists and gay-rights campaigners have missed the actual issue in the case of Lillian Ladele. This was a workers' rights issue. As an existing employee, when new civil partnerships came in, there was a change to Ms Ladele's working conditions, which she didn't have to accept. Had she been a new employee, she would have had to accept the new duties or refuse employment.

As I understand it, it is on the terms of "changes to working conditions", not Christian fundamentalist views on gay partnerships, that this case was won. It says nothing about the legitimacy of civil partnerships, and recognition of gay or lesbian lifestyles has therefore not been downgraded.

Gavin Lewis

Manchester

The bird-flu threat is real and growing

Your report on the concerns of the House of Lords Committee over influenza pandemic planning (21 July) is timely.

The H5N1 bird-flu virus threat to humans grows. A key component of normal seasonal influenza infection roughly shares the N1 part of the virus with bird flu and is rapidly proving resistant to the anti-flu drug, Tamiflu. The same mutation to the virus that causes that resistance is found in the H5N1 bird-flu virus.

The H5N1 virus continues to mutate in other ways, so that even if the capacity to produce vaccines was adequate, they potentially would be poorly effective. In fact, production could probably cover only 10 per cent of the global population and, because of the rate of current manufacture, will be too late anyway.

The maximum human deaths from H5N1 are occurring at present in Indonesia. There, the sizable number of limited human-to-human infections, which promote progression to a pandemic, is hidden in figures which prevent embarrassment to them and the World Health Organisation. The WHO, and governments, have in general proved "dysfunctional" on the issue as the Lords conclude.

However, in addition to better screening, which they recommend, we need to organise existing production capacity to produce already clinically trialed new vaccines, with their greater capacity for speed. Otherwise, we will just monitor the catastrophe better.

Peter Dunnill DSc FREng OBE

the Advanced Centre for Biochemical Engineering, University College, London WC1

Government blind to nuclear dangers

Another U-turn for New Labour, and one for grave concern (report, 14 July). It seems that no lessons have been learnt from the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl.

Most disturbing is the manner in which new nuclear plants will be fast-tracked by the introduction of the Government's new Planning Bill, which will remove the rights of citizens to protest. Instead, an unelected Government quango will be able to force through large infrastructure projects, with little debate or resistance. This Government seems to have lost all accountability to the people it should be serving.

Sue Landon

BRAUGHING, Hertfordshire

With a working life spent in the design, construction, operation, repair, maintenance and management of public electricity supply, I am delighted that Gordon Brown has set "no limits on the number of reactors".

I wonder which way the Conservatives will jump. They might criticise him for favouring this invention of the devil, or for delaying too long, thus risking the blackouts the South Africans have had, continuing for three years to come. It's not just no telly: industry is impaired, with unemployment, civil disturbances and international capital going elsewhere.

The CEGB planned three sisters of Sizewell, to provide reliable power, to take advantage of the benefits of replication, including the consolidation of UK competence in this field, in view of the export markets that would arise. Unsurprisingly, the private sector wouldn't take the risk of investing billions when the Greens, having no responsibilities for the nation's power, would employ any delaying tactics.

Thus, in the queue at the doors of a few suppliers, including France, we are now behind two dozen-plus nations who are already building or planning nuclear.

I'd criticise Brown for not taking the de Gaulle 1974 approach: five or six new reactors every year. Today we are buying two million KW from France. And a British resident complains his EDF bill has risen by 12 per cent, while his father in France has had his EDF bill increased by 1 per cent

Bill Hyde

Offham, Kent

I see that Gordon Brown is to "fast-track the building of at least eight nuclear power stations to cut Britain's dependence on oil". According to the Government's own energy statistics, more than 70 per cent of our electricity comes from burning coal and gas, but only 1 per cent comes from oil.

New nuclear power stations may help decrease our reliance on imported coal and gas in the future, but they will do nothing about our reliance on oil.

Dr Lawrence Clark

Hitchin, Hertfordshire

Pay rises for teachers are in the offing

"Teachers told: 'No pay rises until more quit' " (16 July) is misleading. The Government has accepted our recommended increase of 2.45 per cent from this September, with further indicative rises of 2.3 per cent in September 2009 and September 2010.

My letter to teachers' representatives was about whether we should reopen the current two-year pay award (from September 2006 to August 2008). Teachers have already received uplifts of 2.5 per cent in each of the two years, and it is STRB's view that there is no compelling labour-market case for revisiting this award.

To report this as saying that teachers should not receive a pay rise is simply not true. It is also wrong to say that the review body "has ruled out any reconsideration of their three-year pay deal". Our pay recommendation for the three years starting in September was conditional on there being a review during the period, and this was accepted by the Government. Indeed, we have now received a formal remit to undertake such a review early next year.

Bill Cockburn CBE TD

School Teachers' Review Body, London SW1

America: land of shameful inequality

"American inequality highlighted by 30-year gap in life expectancy" (17 July) exposes the shame of America, and its failure to deliver on its basic social contract: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all. The nation that is, in many respects, the richest on earth is, in others, one of the poorest.

The widespread prosperity in the US, that stretched from the end of the Second World War to the early days of the first Nixon administration, is a fading memory in the minds of aging baby boomers. Instead of a political consensus and a tax code that reflect the value of having the richest people and businesses help the poorest, we've been given policies that robbed the poor and gave to the rich.

If the Truman-Eisenhower-Kennedy-Johnson years saw the greatest expansion of a middle class - and widespread equity in income - the world has ever seen, then the Nixon-Reagan-Bush-Clinton-Bush years will be remembered as the period when America squandered its inheritance for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

Charley James

Minneapolis, USA

Israel's defences are not apartheid

I was profoundly dismayed to read Donald Macintyre's story ("This is like apartheid", 11 July), regarding the recent visit by a South African delegation to Israel and the West Bank. While the report detailed the impressions of

delegates concerning the conditions of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, it failed to deliver a balanced account of this extremely complex situation, and lacked historical context and background.

The article neglected to explain that the security measures applied by Israel in the West Bank, including the separation barrier, are a necessary response to constant threats posed by terrorist organisations to the lives and safety of Israeli citizens. Between the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000 and the completion of the first part of the barrier in August 2003, Israel was the victim of 73 terrorist attacks which killed 293 Israelis and wounded 1,950.

During 2003, West Bank-based **Hamas** operatives conducted several suicide bombings, killing 79 Israelis. But, since August 2003, when the first part of the barrier was completed, Israel has had a dramatic reduction in attacks. Between August 2003 and the end of 2006, terrorist organisations based in the West Bank committed 12 attacks, killing 64 Israelis and wounding 445.

Your comparison of the situation in the West Bank to apartheid in South Africa demonstrates the lack of historical context in the article. Israel's security measures are a necessary response to the unique terror threats it faces, and do not arise from any theory of racial segregation.

By comparing the establishment of Israel to a colonial enterprise, the historic Jewish connection to the land of Israel is eradicated, and the legitimacy of Israel's existence is negated.

Lior Ben-Dor

Embassy of Israel, London w8

The Union Jack can be flown anywhere

Sir: I'm afraid Mark Hobbs has fallen victim to an urban myth (letters, 21 July); the terms Union Jack and Union Flag are interchangeable.

From the Flag Institute: "It is often stated that the Union Flag should only be described as the Union Jack when flown in the bows of a warship, but this is a relatively recent idea. From early in its life, the Admiralty itself frequently referred to the flag as the Union Jack, whatever its use, and in 1902 an Admiralty circular announced that Their Lordships had decided either name could be used officially. Such use was given Parliamentary approval in 1908 when it was stated that 'the Union Jack should be regarded as the National flag'."

Ben Bawden

Epsom, Surrey

Briefly...

Not bike-friendly

Thomas Sutcliffe's piece (18 July) about architectural failure when it comes to bike-parking spaces missed the worst aspect. Architects may forget this in designing new office space. But it's more unforgivable that secure bike storage is completely overlooked in the design of most new city homes. Where do you keep a bike if you live in any of the new apartment blocks?

Dave Carr

Orpington, Kent

Can't see the wood ...

letters@independent.co.uk

Re "The Tree of Life" (17 July); although *Adansonia digitata* is the botanical name of the baobab in mainland Africa, as well as Madagascar, the uniformly smooth and straight trunks illustrated can only be *Adansonia grandini*, one of five species found only in Madagascar. *A. digitata* has a far more uneven trunk.

Richard Clatworthy

Beverley, East Yorkshire

It's only 2p

I am perplexed why it appears to be so important that Mr Darling delays the imposition of an extra 2p per litre of petrol. In most cities, the variation in pump prices between the highest and lowest is around 4p or 5p, but drivers still fill their tanks at the highest prices. If a 2p difference really mattered to people, the highest-priced forecourts would all be deserted.

Tim Brook

Bristol

The **female** brain

The authority of a piece by Michael McCarthy ("**Women's** brains are different from men's - and here's scientific proof", 18 July) is not enhanced by your choice of "experts" for comment.

In what scientific sense are Rosie Boycott, the founder of Spare Rib magazine, Judi James, a body language analyst, and Natasha Walter, a feminist author, experts? Surely the expertise demonstrated in the article by abstracts from learned journals is sufficient.

Ray Farnham

Chislehurst, Kent

It's wrong. Period

Your correspondent's example of the absent colon is very amusing (letters, 19 July). What I do not find so amusing is the way some of your columnists are very sparing of punctuation, so much so that I have to read certain pieces two or three times in order to make out what is meant - I am dyslexic and punctuation helps in my reading.

Martin Mottram

Salisbury

Unkind cut

When I was a young boy of about 10, growing up in Leigh in Lancashire in the Fifties, I won the junior 60-yard sprint at our church summer fete. My prize was a gleaming penknife, a treasured possession (letters, 16 July). How times have changed.

Graham Crooks

Guisborough, North Yorkshire

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Body

international

STICKING UP FOR CHAVEZ,

A New Church Fuels Debate

The defection of a handful of priests in Venezuela and their formation of the Reformed Catholic Church, a breakaway church openly sympathetic to President Hugo Chavez's government yet oddly allied with conservative Anglicans from Texas, has raised the ire of Roman Catholic leaders in Venezuela. Since its founding in June, the church has fueled a new debate over the interplay of religion and politics in one of Latin America's most secular nations. PAGE A9

EX-LEADER'S WIFE IS CONVICTED

In the first verdict in a series of corruption cases aimed at the former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, his wife was convicted of tax evasion and sentenced to three years in prison. More than 1,000 supporters, some carrying red roses, crowded around the family as they left the courthouse. Four corruption cases have been filed against Mr. Thaksin himself, two against his wife and three against two of his children. PAGE A7

I.O.C. DENIES DEAL WITH CHINA

In a reversal of previous statements, the International Olympic Committee said it had never agreed to an arrangement that allows the Chinese authorities to limit Internet access to foreign journalists during the Games. PAGE A7

MEDVEDEV TO TACKLE CORRUPTION

Russia's new president, Dmitri A. Medvedev, who has staked his tenure on curbing what he acknowledges is the country's rampant corruption, announced that he was pressing ahead with a national plan to combat corruption that would include increased enforcement and more disclosure of officials' personal finances. In recent days, Mr. Medvedev and his advisers have tried to give assurances that the economy has a vibrant future, and the stock market has stabilized. PAGE A6

RESIGNATION DIMS HOPES FOR DEAL

Inside The Times

The official line in Washington, Jerusalem and Ramallah is that the decision by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel to resign will not affect American efforts to negotiate a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians before the end of the year. But foreign policy experts say the Bush administration's efforts are unlikely to bear fruit. "It's over," said one analyst with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. PAGE A11

ABBAS SAID TO RELEASE ACTIVISTS

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, ordered his security services to release all pro-Hamas activists arrested in the occupied West Bank this week, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported. PAGE A11

NATIONAL

MILITARY JUDGE IN DETAINEE CASE

Closes Courtroom for First Time

As military prosecutors rested their case against Osama bin Laden's former driver, Salim Hamdan, the military judge for the first time closed the courtroom to reporters and other observers so the tribunal could hear testimony in secret. The secret session was one signal of a new stage for the trial, which has moved from being a largely open proceeding to one studded with references to classified information that was not mentioned in public. PAGE A13

BIG LOSSES FOR BIG SUR

Visitors are finally returning to Big Sur, Calif., the rugged coastal area of vintage motels, upscale resorts and deep-rooted counterculture where fires have caused evacuations and road closures for almost a month. Firefighters have declared the blazes under control, but the local economy is another story. The Big Sur Chamber of Commerce estimates the fires' toll at \$10 million to \$15 million. As campgrounds reopen, and hotel workers clean the soot from linens, the goal most everywhere is salvaging what is left of the summer season. PAGE A12

AT LEAST 8 DIE IN MINNESOTA CRASH

A plane that was navigating through harsh thunderstorms crashed as it was trying to land at an airport in southern Minnesota, killing at least eight people, the Federal Aviation Administration and local authorities said. Most of the people onboard were customers of Viracon, a glass manufacturer that supplied the exterior glass for a number of noted buildings and is based in Owatonna, Minn. PAGE A13

REVISION OF SPY ORDER IS APPROVED

President Bush has approved a long-awaited revision of the executive order that governs the nation's 16 spy agencies, the latest effort to wrestle the bureaucracies into a single effort under the director of national intelligence. The revised version ratifies the major reshuffling of intelligence carried out by Congress in 2004, when a law created the new post of director of national intelligence atop all the agencies. PAGE A15

JUDGE QUESTIONS CONVENTION SUIT

A federal trial in a lawsuit seeking to ease strict security provisions at the Democratic National Convention ended in Denver with repeated questions from the judge about how the rules impinge on free speech, as the groups behind the lawsuit have charged. The groups say the security concerns are exaggerated. PAGE A15

SAN DIEGO CROSS TO STAY PUT

A cross that looms over San Diego from a hilltop can stay put, a federal judge ruled, turning aside complaints that its presence violates the United States Constitution. The fight is among the longest-running involving a monument and questions of the separation of church and state. PAGE A16

NEW YORK REPORT

GREAT BRAZILIAN LOTTERY RUMOR

Echoes Around World

Though likely untrue, the tale of a Brazilian winner of New Jersey's Mega Millions lottery drawing of July 22 (jackpot: \$126 million) reveals a world made small by modern telecommunications, media and travel, where rumors in one immigrant corner of one American city can quickly reverberate back home, even if home is thousands of miles and a hemisphere away. PAGE A20

NO CHARGES IN FATAL SHOOTING

A grand jury has decided not to indict Winston Alladin, a Queens man who fatally stabbed a 15-year-old girl who he said was part of a mob of teenagers attacking him after an argument on a bus. Mr. Alladin is expected to be turned over to federal custody at the request of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. The agency did not say why. PAGE A20

Behind the MetroCard Malfunctions A20

BUSINESS

FEDERAL OFFICIALS PREDICT WORKERS

Will Press for Wage Increases

The movement of jobs offshore, or the threat of it, has conditioned workers to not even ask for a raise, fearing they will join the millions already laid off. But the Federal Reserve's policy makers are convinced that wage pressures could soon emerge. The concern showed up in interviews with policy makers over the last week. PAGE C1

NEW JERSEY PAPER WANTS BUYOUTS

The Star-Ledger of Newark and a smaller sister paper in Trenton need to eliminate at least 20 percent of their staffs and win concessions from trade unions to stay afloat, their management said, or their owner will sell the papers. The Star-Ledger's publisher says the paper must have 200 nonunion workers take buyouts. PAGE C2

DELAYS IN AIRPLANE ORDERS

Despite a backlog of airplane orders stretching for years at both Airbus and Boeing, aircraft manufacturers are seeing troubling signs. High fuel prices helped cause major airlines in the United States to lose more than \$6 billion in the second quarter. Companies are grounding older planes, eliminating flights and routes and putting off plans to update their fleets. PAGE C4

CIGARETTE SMUGGLING CASE SETTLED

Two Canadian tobacco companies agreed to pay criminal fines and civil penalties of about 1.15 billion Canadian dollars after admitting to aiding cigarette smugglers. Had Canadian taxes been paid on the cigarettes, shipped tax-free to the United States, the government would have received \$3 billion to \$10 billion Canadian dollars. PAGE C4

Growth in Outdoor Advertising C3

Weekend

TEXTURES INSIDE THE BLACK,

Technology Amid the Art

Out of envy of his mortality, the pantheon of Greek gods tormented man. Does impermanence make a thing sweeter? Maybe. Ad Reinhardt's "Black Paintings" are fragile and prone to smudges, marks and scuffs. When the

Inside The Times

Guggenheim received one scarred painting, the museum used it to test new techniques of restoration, and documented the process in "Imageless: The Scientific Study and Experimental Treatment of an Ad Reinhardt Black Painting." PAGE E25

ON A CONCRETE WALKABOUT FOR LOVE

Ah, Craigslist -- where one can find anything. In "In Search of a Midnight Kiss," two people looking for love in all the electronic places walk the streets of Los Angeles and the somewhat barren, pothole-ridden world of dating. Owing a debt to Richard Linklater's "Before Sunrise" and "Before Sunset," the stop-and-go banter and flirtation make the film manage to create a plausible, inviting world, writes Manohla Dargis. PAGE E6

FINAL SUMMER AT THE POOL

A pool filled not with water but with music, memories and dodge ball, McCarren Park Pool in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, has been host to concerts by M.I.A., Blonde Redhead, TV on the Radio and others. This summer, you'd better get the memories while they're hot for the taking. According to a city plan, McCarren will be emptied of music lovers, tattooed flesh, Hula-Hoops and Slip 'n Slides and filled in with water, to become a public swimming pool. PAGE E1

A STORY STRAIGHT UP, NO CHASER

"Frozen River" covers a lot of ground: illegal immigration, high gas prices, ethnic tension and poverty. On a landscape of mud and slush, punctuated by trailers and discount stores, two women smuggle illegal immigrants over the Canadian border. Grit, realism and the bond between two desperate people make the movie, which offers no sentimentality to get in the way of the story, Stephen Holden writes. PAGE E8 OBITUARIES

EILEEN G. SLOCUM, 92

A doyenne of Newport, R.I., society, she was a stalwart of the Republican Party both in Rhode Island and nationally whose family history is dotted with connections to the most moneyed and powerful of the American aristocracy. PAGE B6

J. MURDOCH RITCHIE, 83

A biophysicist at Yale, he used a potent neurotoxin derived from shellfish to help trace the way nerve cells conduct electrical impulses and famously asked the Central Intelligence Agency to share its supply of the poison with scientists. PAGE B6

ESCAPES

ISLAND HOPPING BY KAYAK AT AMERICA'S CEILING

Despite their name, the Apostle Islands, in northern Wisconsin, number 22, not 12. Which is partly why the best way to view them is by kayak. Paddling from island to island, you can behold their six outstanding lighthouses, now on the National Register of Historic Places. PAGE F8

BUT IS THE WATER ACTUALLY FINE?

There is evidence that beachgoers are facing an invisible threat: contamination from storm water, which washes, among other things, pet waste, bird droppings, motor oil and cigarette butts into sewers, and then into rivers, lakes and the sea. "You don't necessarily see it," said the director of the Natural Resources Defense Council's clean water project. PAGE F1

A WORKING GETAWAY FOR ACTORS

Inside The Times

Sande Shurin, an acting coach and director, has a second home in Woodstock, N.Y., a barn-like contemporary with two wings: one for her and her husband, the other for visiting actors. The six-bedroom, two-bathroom guesthouse holds up to 12 people for the various acting seminars Ms. Shurin holds there every year. PAGE F1

Cooking Without Walls F2

Really Bad Golf Courses F6

Where Lakes Loom Large F3

SPORTS

RUSSIAN OLYMPIANS SUSPENDED

For Doping Violations

A sting operation conducted over the past 16 months resulted in the doping suspension of seven **female** Russian track and field athletes, five of them Olympians, bringing international embarrassment and dealing a potentially severe blow to the country's medal chances in middle-distance running and field events at the coming Beijing Games. PAGE D1

THE SECRET CURSE OF EXPERT ARCHERS

There is an affliction so feared by elite archers that many in the sport refuse to even speak its name. Archery coaches are sworn not to reveal the identities of archers in its grip. Target panic, as it is known, causes crack shots to suddenly lose control of their bows, and their composure. PAGE D1

LOST IN THE MOVE: DIEHARD FANS

A 75-year-old former union lithographer named Lou Palma is furious at the fan-gouging sports world in general and the Giants in particular. He is one of the diehard fans who in two years will watch his team move into a \$1.6 billion luxury palace -- without him. Harvey Araton, Sports of the Times. PAGE D3

Editorial

'THE JUNGLE,' AGAIN

By treating illegal, low-wage workers as a de facto criminal class, the government is trying to inflate the menace they pose to a level that justifies its extreme efforts to capture and punish them. That is a fraudulent exercise and a national disgrace. PAGE A18

AFTER THE GLITTERING AIDS BILL

President Bush has signed into law an important bill that authorizes greatly increased American spending to fight AIDS. The only hitch is whether the money will actually materialize. PAGE A18

THE COST OF OIL SUBSIDIES

Across the developing world, governments are subsidizing energy, blunting the incentive to conserve by keeping prices low. They are absorbing the savings made by industrial countries and pushing up oil prices by stoking demand. PAGE A18

op-ed

PAUL KRUGMAN

I'm very glad to know that Nancy Pelosi is trying to save the planet. I just wish I had more confidence that she's going to succeed. PAGE A19

DAVID BROOKS

Multipolarity means that more groups have effective veto power over collective action. In practice, this new pluralistic world has given rise to globosclerosis, an inability to solve problem after problem. PAGE A19

HARVESTING MONEY

In an Op-Ed article, Victor Davis Hanson, a farmer and Hoover Institution scholar, argues that Western powers aren't as upset as they claim to be over the failure of the latest round of World Trade Organization talks. PAGE A19

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTOS

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His final salute

The Jerusalem Post

July 25, 2008 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 15

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Byline: YAAKOV KATZ

Highlight: In an exclusive interview on the eve of his retirement from the IDF, Maj.-Gen. Elazar Stern tells the 'Post' why he has worked so hard to incorporate Judaism in the Israeli military, and to integrate religious soldiers with secular ones. SECURITY AND DEFENSE

Body

After a two-and-a-half hour drive to Tel Aviv from the North - where he gave his 80th and final lecture to a group of IDF officers ahead of a heritage trip to Poland - Maj.- Gen. Elazar Stern has one more place to stop before heading back to his office in the Kirya Military Headquarters.

Stern orders his driver to exit the highway and head into nearby Ramat Hasharon. He is paying a condolence call to an officer whose mother just died. The officer served under Stern a decade ago as a company commander at the IDF Officer Training School.

This is quintessential Stern - one of the most charismatic, vocal and controversial generals to have emerged since the founding of the state - a man who, in between making provocative statements about the need to draft haredim and the problems surrounding the release of hundreds of terrorists for a kidnapped soldier, doesn't forget to pay his respects to a former subordinate.

It is during this drive that Stern gives The Jerusalem Post an exclusive interview, just days before stepping down as head of the IDF's Human Resources Department, and ending an illustrious, 34-year military career.

Stern, 52, and the father of five, was drafted into the IDF in 1974, together with several of his classmates from Netiv Meir, the national-religious flagship high school at the time. Three of these - Yair Naveh, Yishai Be'er and Gershon Hachohen - would also become generals.

The young Stern volunteered for the Paratroopers and quickly rose through the ranks, proving to be an agile, confident and determined commander. But after serving as a battalion commander in the Paratrooper Brigade, Stern became disenchanted with the military. It was the period after the first war in Lebanon, and many young officers were jumping ship.

He spent the next two years as a high school teacher, until he was called back to service by chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Shomron.

Since then, he has had a meteoric rise in the military on an unconventional path. While most generals climb onto their seats around the General Staff table by serving in combat and field positions, Stern always opted for roles in

His final salute

which he could also serve as an educator. When he was invited to become a brigade commander, he asked to first serve as commander of the Paratroopers Training School.

After serving as commander of a reserve brigade in the Northern Command, he was appointed commander of the IDF Officer Training School, a role in which he began to receive national attention. After that, he was appointed chief education officer, and in 2005 became head of the Human Resources Department.

Our interview took place shortly before the bodies of reservists Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser were returned by Hizbullah in exchange for terrorist Samir Kuntar, four Hizbullah fighters caught during the Second Lebanon War and approximately 200 bodies of Lebanese and Palestinian combatants.

As head of the Human Resources Department, it was Stern's job to maintain contact with the bereaved families, as well as with the Goldwassers, Regevs and the parents of Gilad Schalit. At a farewell party thrown for him last week, the mother of a fallen soldier told the crowd of 1,000 packed into the Holon Arts Center that the phone call she received from Stern every Friday before Shabbat "made my week."

"I TOLD the families that while I am their sons' commander, I am also the commander of those who will be wounded or killed if we release too many," Stern says. "I think that we, as a society, have become confused with the idea that we will release 'at any price.'"

He says that the "confusion" and hysteria over kidnapped soldiers have "harmed us as a nation" and as a result we have "betrayed our soldiers."

He continues, "We are one of the countries that most surrenders to terrorism," and adds that he is envious of the US, which has set as its policy not to negotiate with terrorists.

Stressing that his opinion is one of principle, and not in reference to either the swap with Hizbullah or the ongoing negotiations with Hamas over Schalit's release, Stern's response to being asked about the possibility that hundreds of prisoners will be released is to answer plainly, "I would not recommend that type of price."

TALKING TO Stern is like being shown a mosaic of the Jewish world, with which, through his military career, he has grown very familiar. One of his close friends was the late Wall Street mogul Zalman Bernstein, who founded the Jerusalem-based Avi Chai Foundation and Shalem Center. Another is Nobel Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel.

It is also like being given a taste of a kind of heimish yiddishkeit. When addressing the IDF delegation to Poland, for example, Stern sounds more like a stand-up comedian than a senior IDF officer. He tells stories about the hang-ups of his Holocaust-survivor parents, and how his mother still calls him in the middle of the night to make sure he is ok. And he recalls how the Saudi and Kuwaiti military officers with whom he studied at the National Defense University in Washington DC couldn't understand why he wasn't shaving during the nine days before Tisha Be'av.

He then moves on to recount a meeting he had recently with the CEO of a large clothing company that decided to use a supermodel who had dodged the draft in its latest ad campaign. Stern told him not to be surprised if the IDF announces that only draft-dodgers buy clothes at his stores.

Indeed, Stern is known for being one of the most opinionated officers in the IDF. At his farewell party, Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi said he would miss him at the weekly meetings, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak quipped that while Stern may have made some controversial remarks throughout his career, "they always stimulated thinking processes and action."

STERN SAYS the Holocaust played a pivotal role in shaping his Jewish and Israeli identity. It was following a private family visit to Poland with his parents in 1992 that he began pushing the top IDF brass to create a program to bring hundreds of soldiers to Auschwitz every year. Since then, 80 delegations have made the trip.

"Nothing should be taken for granted in life, and that is why Poland is important," he says, adding that if he were a young soldier and were asked if he wanted to visit the Western Wall, he would respond: "First take me to Yad Vashem."

His final salute

Indeed, a theme that has run throughout Stern's career is the enhancement of soldiers' Jewish identity. One example: Seven years ago, when he was chief education officer, Stern was informed that the IDF was distributing 600 New Testaments annually to non-Jewish soldiers. And though he could not prevent the distribution, Stern said, "Let's try to reach the point at which soldiers do not ask for it."

Part of Stern's efforts on this score included offering conversion classes to the thousands of new- immigrant soldiers, mainly from the former Soviet Union. Since then, close to 2,900 soldiers have converted, 77 percent of them women. "This creates a feeling of partnership for the soldiers, and enhances their connection to the state and the IDF," he explains. "This is also significant, since now there will be 2,000 more Jewish mothers in Israel."

This theme was also brought to light in Stern's public argument with Israel Prize Laureate Asa Kasher, author of the IDF code of ethics. Stern demanded that the phrase "love for the homeland" be inserted into the code. Kasher opposed, asserting that it was foolish to insert emotions into a code of ethics. Ultimately, it was Stern who prevailed.

"My goal has always been to try to get soldiers to want to say that they are proud to be Jews," Stern declares.

NEVERTHELESS, in recent years, Stern has become ostracized by many in the national-religious and settler camp. The anger toward him is mainly due to the fact that he was a religious officer who participated in the disengagement from the Gaza Strip.

The attacks against Stern from these quarters were not only verbal. On one visit to the Gush Katif settlement bloc before the evacuation, right-wing activists slashed Stern's tires and then proceeded to hurl epithets at him in view and earshot of the media.

Several months later, Stern was physically attacked at the Western Wall, where he had gone to pray with his children. Activists hurled plastic bottles, rocks and chairs at him, while calling him a traitor.

Stern does not believe he made a mistake in obeying his orders to evacuate settlements, but does stand by his longtime opinion that it should have been the police and not the IDF carrying out the withdrawal.

His opposition to IDF participation in future evacuations also stems from a self-professed fear that there will be larger numbers of soldiers refusing to obey orders the next time around. "Today, there is a very ideological youth, and this is potentially risky," he says.

Another, possibly more important reason for Stern's being condemned by religious Zionists is his intention to revamp hesder yeshivot - a five-year program that incorporates Torah learning and a shortened military service. Stern says he is in favor of the hesder yeshivot, but that the number of students has grown too high over the years, and needs to be curbed. He has also taken heat for working to integrate hesder soldiers - who traditionally served in segregated units - with secular ones. He says that integration is important for creating a stronger and more inherent "Jewish dialogue" in the IDF, and that in the end, both the secular and the religious soldiers will benefit.

Despite the almost daily attacks on him in the religious media, Stern has stuck to his principles where moving his initiatives forward is concerned. He even admits that there was "a fraction of a second" when he considered taking off his kippa and throwing it away for good. "Not because I didn't feel religious, which I am. But because of the contempt I feel toward those who have done these things to me. If I ever had the thought, it was because I did not want to be associated with those bearded men who lie and incite and turn Judaism into a hate-filled and evil religion. I know that I am more religious than they are."

AS PART of his work to enhance the IDF's Jewish identity, Stern has worked tirelessly to upgrade the military's ties with the Diaspora. In the past year alone, he has revamped the Mahal and Shlav Bet volunteer programs for overseas youth, in an effort to attract more new immigrants.

Last year, he started the Gvanim program, which sent some 30 high-ranking officers to dozens of cities around the United States to lecture and interact with Jews.

His final salute

One of his greatest accomplishments in this area was getting the approval for soldiers to participate in birthright. So far, 30,000 soldiers have attended the 10- day tour program.

"The military needs to be an attractive place, not a discouraging one," he says, expressing the hope that more Jews from abroad will come to Israel to serve in the IDF.

DURING HIS last year in service, Stern faced possibly his greatest challenge - dwindling draft numbers. Ahead of last summer's draft, the IDF presented statistics showing a sharp rise in the number of teenagers dodging military service, with the total reaching 25% of youth born in 1990. Of that 25%, 11% received exemptions this year on religious grounds, an increase of 1% over last year; 7% were exempted for medical reasons, including physical and emotional; 4% had criminal records; and 3% live abroad.

Stern does not hide his concern. "This is a real threat to the state of Israel, since we are not yet at the stage where we do not need a strong military. We have become confused. We thought that we didn't need a military in the beginning of the decade, and we were proven wrong."

He says that in recent months he has noticed that the public campaign against draft-dodgers is having the desired effect. The slogan, "A true Israeli does not dodge the draft," which can be found on the bumpers of tens of thousands of cars, was created by a private public relations company, not commissioned by the IDF.

While the IDF is pushing financial incentives for soldiers who serve a full military term, Stern believes that in the end the only way to curb draft-dodging will be through the public's asking: "Who are we as a society?"

He is still waiting for an answer.

Graphic

Photo: ELAZAR STERN. 'My goal has always been to try to get soldiers to want to say that they are proud to be Jews.' (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski)

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Rewind 2007 - February

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Body

AT HOME...

Feb 1

Manual worker Asmadi, from Indonesia, falls to his death from the 23rd floor of Plaza Damas in Sri Hartamas. This is the fourth construction site accident at the building.

Authorities believe there are as many as nine deviant groups operating in Selangor and plan to move in on them. The Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (JAIS) is monitoring eight other groups that have either been banned or are suspected of deviationism.

Tee Joe Jer and Zabrina Fernandez caught the imagination of most Malaysians watching the first-ever The Amazing Race Asia (TARA) over AXN on Astro with their never-say-die personalities. In the final episode which saw both Malaysian teams making it to the final three (the other team represented Hong Kong), they made history by becoming the first winners of TARA.

Feb 2

It's the sack for principals and discipline teachers who fail to tackle indiscipline in schools. Deputy Education Minister Datuk Noh Omar's warning comes in the wake of the death of Form Four student Matheus Mering on Aug 16, last year. He was allegedly assaulted by seniors.

Feb 4

For almost a year, six Thais and a Malaysian have been on a robbing spree in Malaysia, killing seven people and collecting RM3.7 million from four jewellery store heists. After each robbery, the Thais, who include a woman, re-enter Thailand and lie low for some time before striking again. Today, their game was up. Police picked them up in two separate operations just hours after they hit the Poh Kong jewellery store at Subang Parade, taking off with RM890,000 in jewellery.

Feb 5

Sarawak made legal history with the launch of the country's first court video/teleconferencing facility between the Miri and Kuching courts. This means that a lawyer in Miri, for example, need no longer travel to Kuching to present his case. He can appear before a judge in a Kuching case via the video/teleconferencing room in the Miri High Court, saving time and travel for both lawyers and their clients.

Rewind 2007 - February

Lawn bowler Siti Zalina Ahmad is the first ever Asian to capture the women's singles title in the Australian Lawn Bowls Open. The two-time Commonwealth Games champion beat New Zealand's Jowana Edwards 10-3, 5-8, 2-1.

Feb 7

Malaysian experts overseas have the government's guarantee that upon their return to work in the country their non-citizen spouses will be given permanent residence in six months. Their spouses will also be able to work.

Feb 8

A high-powered 23-member task force, handpicked from the public and private sectors, is set up to promote quicker reform of the country's delivery system and enhance economic activity. After months of expressing frustration at the lethargic pace of reforms, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday announced the task force was to report directly to him, to facilitate business and overhaul archaic and unnecessary licensing and bureaucratic procedures. The task force is jointly headed by chief secretary to the government Tan Sri Mohd Sidek Hassan and by Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers president Datuk Yong Poh Kon.

Permodalan Nasional Berhad is given the green light to set up a heritage trust to manage Stadium Merdeka and Stadium Negara in Kuala Lumpur. The Merdeka Heritage Trust will be used to manage, renovate and preserve the stadiums.

Feb 10

The Smart Tunnel in the city centre is expected to open by the end of next month. The world's first two-in-one RM1.93 billion stormwater management and road tunnel was built to channel excess floodwaters away from the city. It also provides a route south for city motorists to escape the infamous Jalan Tun Razak jams and a route for Seremban motorists to get to the city centre.

Feb 12

Former Penang police chief Datuk Albert Mah died at University Malaya Medical Centre this morning of injuries he sustained when fending off robbers who broke into his house last Friday. He was in a coma for four days. Mah, 82, was Penang police chief from 1963 to 1970.

Feb 26

The benchmark Kuala Lumpur Composite Index hit a 13-year high of 1,285.15.

AND ABROAD

Feb 1

Harry Potter author J. K. Rowling announces the release date for her book, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, the final instalment in the Potter series to be on July 21 2007.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change publishes its fourth assessment report, concluding that global climate change is "very likely" to have a predominantly human cause.

Feb 3

An outbreak of the deadly strain of avian flu, H5N1, is confirmed at a Bernard Matthews turkey farm in Holton, Suffolk in the United Kingdom. Authorities incinerate more than 50,000 turkeys as they work to contain the bird flu.

Feb 5

Space Shuttle astronaut Lisa Nowak is arrested in Florida for attempted kidnapping.

Rewind 2007 - February

Boris Berezovsky tells the BBC that Alexander Litvinenko, on his deathbed, said that Andrei Lugovoi was responsible for his poisoning.

Former Malaysian premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad hosts a conference calling for George W. Bush and Tony Blair to be tried by an unofficial tribunal for war crimes in Iraq.

Feb 6

United States President George W. Bush approves a Pentagon plan for establishing a new command centre in Africa.

Feb 7

Indonesia's West Irian Jaya province, on New Guinea, changes its name to West Papua.

Feb 10

Senator Barack Obama officially announces his candidacy for president during a speech at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Illinois.

Feb 11

UK's Vodafone buys 67 per cent stake in India's fourth largest mobile operator, Hutch Essar, for \$11US.1 billion.

The Queen wins the British Academy of Film and Television Arts Award for Best Film of 2006 with Helen Mirren winning the award as Best Actress. Forest Whitaker wins the Best Actor award for his role in the The Last King of Scotland which won the Best British Film Award.

Feb 12

India's Hindalco Industries buys Atlanta-based Novelis for \$6US billion.

Four state-owned enterprises of the Republic of China (Taiwan) - Chunghwa Post, the Chinese Petroleum Corporation, the China Shipbuilding Corporation, and the Central Bank of China - change their names to remove "China" from their titles at the request of President Chen Shui-bian. The decision is condemned by the Pan-Blue Coalition, the United States and People's Republic of China as a move towards Taiwan independence.

Israel carries out a successful test of its Arrow missile.

Feb 13

Former Governor of Massachusetts Mitt Romney formally announces his candidacy for president.

Japan holds an international conference to push for the resumption of commercial whaling. Anti-whaling nations in the International Whaling Commission such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia have boycotted the conference.

Feb 14

A major weather system reaches the Northeastern United States and eastern Canada and hammers the region with snow and ice. The same system is responsible for severe weather in the Midwest and a tornado in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Feb 15

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon claims that the Sudanese government had broken a promise to allow a human rights mission into Darfur.

Rewind 2007 - February

The **Hamas**-led Palestinian government has resigned to make way for a new administration. The Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh remains as caretaker prime minister and will select a new cabinet.

South Korea agrees to resume high level talks with North Korea following the deal over North Korea's nuclear programme.

Feb 16

The G8 countries, plus Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, approve the "Washington Declaration", proposing a global Carbon emissions trading system to replace the Kyoto Protocol by 2009.

Feb 17

Presidential contender Hillary Clinton calls for a 90-day deadline to start withdrawing US troops from Iraq. She states in a video on her website: "If George Bush doesn't end the war before he leaves office, when I'm president, I will."

Former professional wrestler Mike Awesome is found dead in his Tampa, FL residence. He was 42.

Vietnamese New Year

Feb 19

The US moves forward with plans to base a missile shield for National Missile Defence in the Czech Republic and Poland. In response, Russian officials have claimed they may target the two Eastern European countries. The Russians also claimed they could pull out of the 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty.

A truth commission is set up by East Timor and Indonesia to promote reconciliation after the violence surrounding the 1999 independence referendum.

Feb 20

The United Nations Security Council unanimously approves an African Union force to help stabilise Somalia.

Kraft Foods announces plans to close up to 20 production facilities and cut up to 8,000 jobs worldwide.

Cases of avian flu are confirmed at two chicken farms near Moscow, Russia. Villages are quarantined until prescriptions can be filled.

A powerful earthquake in northeastern Indonesia sparks a tsunami warning.

Volvo AB agrees to buy truckmaker Nissan Diesel for \$1US.1 billion.

Feb 21

Romano Prodi tenders his resignation as Prime Minister of Italy, after a defeat by two votes in the Senate.

Iran ignores a United Nations Security Council deadline for it to suspend its nuclear programme.

Leaders of Italy's centre-left coalition have agreed to support Romano Prodi and a 12-point programme meaning that he can resume serving as Prime Minister of Italy.

Feb 23

The United States and South Korea reach an agreement to return control over South Korea's military to South Korea by 2012.

At a summit in Oslo, Norway, forty-six nations agree to work towards a treaty banning the use of cluster bombs.

Rewind 2007 - February

Pakistan successfully tests a new version of its Shaheen II missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads.

Feb 24

The Virginia General Assembly votes unanimously in favour of a motion expressing "profound regret" for Virginia's role in promoting slavery, which is the first apology for slavery passed by a US state legislature.

Vice President of the United States Dick Cheney warns Iran that "all options are on the table" if it continues to defy the international community about its nuclear programme.

Feb 25

79th Academy Awards: The Departed wins four Academy Awards including Best Picture and Best Director for Martin Scorsese. Helen Mirren wins the Academy Award for Best Actress for her role as Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom in The Queen. Forest Whitaker won the Academy Award for Best Actor for playing Idi Amin in The Last King of Scotland. Alan Arkin won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for his role in Little Miss Sunshine with Jennifer Hudson winning the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in Dreamgirls.

Prime Minister of East Timor Jose Ramos Horta announces he is running for president.

Feb 26

The Iraqi Government has come to an agreement to divide oil revenue and encourage foreign investment in the country.

Scientists find over 20 new species of animals as the Larsen Ice Shelf breaks in the Antarctic.

Vice-President of the United States Dick Cheney makes surprise visits to Pakistan and Afghanistan to encourage Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai to increase border security between the two countries and to take further action against the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Feb 27

North Korea and South Korea meet at a ministerial level for the first time since the conclusion of six-party talks about the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

Drought in southwestern China is threatening the drinking water supply of 1.5 million people.

Feb 28

United States Presidential Election, 2008: Senator John McCain announces his candidacy for president on the Late Show with David Letterman.

Airbus announces plans to cut 10,000 jobs across Europe in the next four years.

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Recognition the key to success - and peace; ANNAPOLIS SUMMIT

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

November 28, 2007 Wednesday

First Edition

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Body

ANOTHER attempt at peace in the Middle East is under way. This time the venue is Annapolis, in the US. All people of genuine goodwill hope that these will be the talks that succeed in breaking this tragic stalemate between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

The real question is whether the Arab side will accept and recognise a Jewish state of Israel alongside an Islamic state of Palestine. The issue is not that of theocracies but a recognition of reality, as there are already a couple of score of Islamic states. If mutual recognition is accorded, then the talks will succeed. But if the **Hamas** position of "not one inch" is the Palestinian position, then another generation on both sides will have been sacrificed for nothing.

James Johnson, Benthleigh East

It's not that complicated

YOUR editorial on the Annapolis conference (The Age, 27/11) does little more than state the bleeding obvious. The equation for peace in the Middle East is not that complicated: Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state equals the formula for a two-state solution and peaceful coexistence of Israelis and Arabs.

Unfortunately, the Middle East conflict is less about territorial issues and more about an unending Arab hostility towards a Jewish presence in the region. The Palestinians have had countless opportunities to establish a state of their own but rejected them every time.

Alan Freedman, East St Kilda

Terrorism and myth

YOUR editorial claims that "to do nothing is to ensure continued conflict in a region that has spread the curse of instability and terrorism around the world".

Thus, you perpetuate the myth that Islamist terrorism has its roots in the conflict in Iraq and (of course) between Israel and the Palestinians, as opposed to its actual cause - Islam. If your argument is truly the case, why are Muslims killing non-Muslims in dozens of countries where there is not an Israeli or American in sight? Moreover, why has not one Christian Palestinian ever blown himself up, only the Muslims?

Recognition the key to success - and peace ANNAPOLIS SUMMIT

The argument that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the first step to ending terror is exactly upside down. If Muslims ceased their terrorist activities, from Gaza to Baghdad and beyond, there would be no more conflict. The sooner they realise this, rather than blaming the US and Israel for their own dysfunction, the better.

Daniel Lewis, Rushcutters Bay, NSW

'Controversial' and proud to be so

THE article by Lindsay Murdoch on leadership changes in the Northern Territory Government ("Tearful NT chief, deputy step down", The Age, 27/11) labels new Deputy Chief Minister Marion Scrymgour as "controversial".

If the basis of that "controversy" is the Charles Perkin Oration she recently delivered at Sydney University, she should be proud of the label.

In a wonderful speech, Ms Scrymgour pointed out that "sorry" will never be enough response to the actions of Commonwealth governments over the years towards indigenous people, and that the defects in the current "intervention" are manifold. I hope our Prime Minister-elect and his team, with their promised compassion, read her speech again and don't wait too long before responding to the issues she raised.

Graeme Calder, Rocherlea, Tas

We must not divide

I'M DISAPPOINTED that Prime Minister-elect Kevin Rudd has succumbed to populist calls for an apology to Aborigines.

A government committed to governing for all Australians must not abuse its authority to differentiate on the basis of race, gender, religion or any other distinguishing characteristic.

At the end of the day, we are all human beings living in one nation. Despite the wrongs committed against Aborigines (not the fault of the present generation), by continually treating indigenous people as somehow different to other Australians, we are merely entrenching their marginalised status.

This is not to say that apologies should not be given. But they should be given by the individuals responsible in a private capacity. It's an abuse of government influence to place the blame on all Australians.

Sukrit Sabhlok, Bulleen

Charge your glasses

"I CRACKED a bottle of Grange when I heard the result in Bennelong," was the comment from my bleary-eyed, staunch Labor-voting neighbour the morning after the election. I asked him whether that was because they had run out of Veuve.

On hearing the same news, Gough would have had a small McWilliams sherry, Paul a vial of bat's blood and Bob a wheatgrass and fish-oil smoothie (although wishing it was a yard of Toohey's New).

Ben Calvert, Richmond

Get to know your real Green

IT IS important over the next three years that people, especially in the inner city areas, are educated about the Greens.

Voting for the Greens will not see the grass grow greener or the roses smell sweeter. They are not the environment party, but extreme social engineers.

Recognition the key to success - and peace ANNAPOLIS SUMMIT

A recent article in the English media pointed out that the British had learnt not to support the Greens because of what had happened in Germany, the only country to give Greens any real power. The German economy was brought to its knees by the Greens, with their anti-business policies.

Greens voters also need to talk to the people of the Cunningham electorate (Wollongong), where the only Greens' member was voted into the House of Representatives. He was kicked out and replaced by a Labor member at the following election, after the true Greens agenda was exposed.

Robert Ellis, Travancore

Myth of the children

I TIRE of reading "children overboard" as one of many reasons why some didn't vote for Howard. It's one of many incidents hijacked and twisted by the left to push a political view.

A boat carrying refugees was sabotaged by those on board, repaired by the navy, then sabotaged again, causing it to sink.

Photos gave the first impression that those on board were threatening to throw the children overboard. John Howard did not spin this, rather some elements of the media did.

When it all came unstuck they then did a huge back-pedal, blaming Howard, which of course the left jumped on, taking it into left-wing mythology.

However, no matter how it's twisted, those kids ended up in the water because of the actions of the adults on board. They may not have physically thrown them in, but the results were the same.

Jon Crow, Townsville, Qld

Here we are at the start of the cycle

NOW the cycle starts again. The good ship Kevin 07 sets out with a clean skin and high ideals.

Mandate from the people - promise to govern for all. We hear it every time. About 53% of us try to believe it every time.

As always, this new lot will make mistakes - then they'll try to cover them up. They'll win another term. They'll grow out of touch, become arrogant.

They'll repay favours and electoral support. Because the electorate doesn't have the same level of cynicism that it takes to reach the top in politics, we'll toss them out one or two elections too late - again.

Then the cycle will start all over.

Gary Sayer, Warrnambool

A fine citizen lost

VALE Bernie Banton, a man who represented the qualities of true mateship forged by the trade union movement over a century ago and subsequently appropriated as part of our national ideal.

His courage in the face of imminent death, his forbearance of hideous pain and disability and his unrelenting concern for his fellow Australians, both current and potential victims of asbestos-related disease, stands as a sterling example of good citizenship.

Gerard R. McEwen, Glandore, SA

Schoolies are out

Recognition the key to success - and peace ANNAPOLIS SUMMIT

YOU have to feel sorry for some of the schoolies. Seduced by stories of booze, revelry and women, they are supplied liberally with the first, if they have the money, but the other two are just a disappointment.

What better way to take out their frustrations than a late-night rampage up Geelong Road, Torquay, turning over rubbish bins and spreading the contents.

But your money spent on a year 12 education is not entirely wasted. There is some creativity in the smashed glass patterns on the footpath and certainly some "right brain" in the way pages of the local papers are distributed along the nature strip and footpath.

I know, it's not your son, it's those other people's.

Spencer Leighton, Torquay

GE food in bad taste

MANY citizens of Victoria are concerned about the proposed overturning of the moratorium on genetically engineered organisms. Once GMOs are in the environment there is no way back from the possible consequences, as already in evidence in North America.

Premier John Brumby's refusal to debate the matter with the full caucus and accept the resulting decision smacks of the past dark days of the Kennett regime. He certainly won't be getting my vote next time.

Rod Turner, Doncaster East

Reading, writing and earning more

THE pathetic pay that teachers currently receive was brought home to me at our secondary college yesterday when we received a flyer from our own union, the Australian Education Union, advertising a position of "membership services officer". The job requires no tertiary degree or graduate diploma in education and includes such stressful activities as maintaining files and resources, answering phones, solving pay problems and co-ordinating welfare services. The annual salary? - \$72,822, as well as a generous non-contributory super scheme.

That's \$13,000 more than I get after years of tertiary study, HECS debts and 10 years experience teaching in a public secondary school.

Bernie Brown, Creightons Creek

Future on the agenda

CONTRARY to your report ("Uni backs out of city revamp", The Age, 26/11), the University of Melbourne has not pulled out of the City of Melbourne's Future Melbourne project. It is still very much involved in this important and exciting endeavour.

The university has played an integral role in the successful first stage of the Future Melbourne project, helping to guide public debate and discussion on issues and values for the future of Melbourne. Highlights of phase one include more than 1000 people attending 13 public forums, seminars and events; the development of a Future Melbourne website that has had 14,000 visits from 89 countries and 11,900 visits from within Australia; and an online discussion.

Now the university believes it can contribute most effectively as an independent academic institution making recommendations to three key themes: the living city; the science/medical city; and the cultural city.

Therefore, the university has refocused its contribution to areas that best reflect its expertise and so add the greatest value to Future Melbourne.

Recognition the key to success - and peace ANNAPOLIS SUMMIT

Vijoleta Braach Maksvytis, deputy vice-chancellor (innovation and development), and Christina Buckridge, manager, corporate affairs, University of Melbourne

Hear the whispers

MARK Webber says that the Grand Prix is absolutely brilliant and that we should embrace it ("Love the GP or lose it, Webber warns Melbourne", Sport, 27/11). Then why does it need "a full support program", including V8s and a Kiss concert, and why are the organisers trying to boost attendance by offering free admission to children under 12?

Webber says that if the race wasn't held at Albert Park, it would be lost to Australia. Why is such a brilliant event so dependent on Albert Park as a venue? The answer is obvious: the Grand Prix is basically an empty commercial spectacle and it needs support to keep its sponsors happy.

Top of the list comes the use of an inner-city park with its trees, lake and city views, to suggest public acceptance, and to provide a pleasant location for corporate entertainment.

As indicated by the report from the Victorian Audit Office, the event has not produced an economic benefit that could justify its cost to taxpayers, or the loss of amenity caused by the four to five-month construction period.

Your article referred to a "whispering campaign" about the race's future. Who's whispering? People don't whisper when they realise that they have been conned.

Peter Goad, Save Albert Park, Middle Park

Graphic

CARTOON BY LEUNIG

Load-Date: November 27, 2007

The man below is a religious Israeli who served in the army. Now he runs guided tours highlighting the abuse of Palestinians. It's controversial and dangerous work - so why does he do it? Donald MacIntyre finds out on a unique tragical history tour; HEBRON

Independent Magazine

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Body

Close to the Tomb of the Patriarchs, the site holy to both Muslims and Jews in Hebron's city centre, Yehuda Shaul, a religious Israeli who served in an elite Army combat unit in the city during the worst of the Palestinian uprising, is trying to guide a tour round four Jewish settlements in the heart of an overwhelmingly Arab city.

It starts in Shuhada Street, which runs through what is now the settlers' security zone, the rows of empty Palestinian shops and houses boarded up with steel shutters, many daubed with Stars of David to show who is in charge here. The only permitted vehicles are those of the settlers and the Israeli military.

Shaul is seeking to demonstrate to his visitors that the settlements and the formidable military apparatus which protects them have violated the human rights of the Palestinians who live - or increasingly no longer live - in what was once the teeming Arab city centre.

But his every footstep is dogged by another religious Jew conducting a non-stop monologue designed to drown out Shaul's explanation of what his visitors are seeing. "Yehuda Shaul - he helps the Arabs," Baruch Marzel tells them, before making clear his view of the two-state peace deal with the Palestinians which the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, US President George Bush and a majority of the Israeli public say they want. "Do you think if there is going to be an agreement that you will be allowed to pray at this tomb? Only because there are Jews living here can you visit the tomb. He isn't telling you about the 40 terrorist attacks there have been on Jews here. You can visit our Hebron centre and learn the truth about Hebron, not the lies Yehuda Shaul is filling you with."

American-born Marzel - a man to whom the term "right-wing extremist" hardly does justice - had lain in wait for the tour bus near the grave of his fellow settler Baruch Goldstein, who walked into a mosque at the tomb in 1994 with an automatic assault rifle and shot dead 29 Palestinians as they prayed. Marzel, who has a police record for attacks on Palestinians, was a prominent figure in the far right Kach group which was designated a "terrorist" organisation in both Israel and the US after issuing a

statement praising the Goldstein massacre. Seven years ago, Marzel held a macabre graveside commemoration for Goldstein, who had been lynched by enraged survivors after the attack. It was a "big party", Marzel said, to mark

The man below is a religious Israeli who served in the army. Now he runs guided tours highlighting the abuse of Palestinians. It's controversial and dangerous w....

the anniversary of Goldstein being "murdered by the Arabs" - a somewhat incomplete account of the day in question.

Shaul struggles to conduct his tour against Marzel's noisy filibuster. At one point, Shaul walks across the street to a watching senior police officer and asks him to move Marzel on; the officer replies, "You can carry on. He's not stopping you." When Shaul then turns to Marzel himself and tells him quietly: "You are disturbing us, please can you move?" Marzel replies defiantly: "No. This my house."

This tense little scene underlines - in miniature - one of the looming obstacles facing the current Israeli-Palestinian talks in the wake of this month's visit by President Bush. It is impossible to imagine any final peace deal which does not put Hebron - 12 miles east of the "green line" that marked Israel's eastern border until the Six Day War, and the site of some of the first Jewish settlements on Palestinian land which followed that victory - in the heart of a Palestinian state. When Marzel says "this is my house" it is an understated but forceful reminder that the Hebron settlers may prove the toughest to remove - as they would surely have to be if the occupation is ever to end - of any in the West Bank

Marzel is not alone in stalking Shaul. Enjoying the sport alongside him is Ofer Ohanna, the settlement security officer, who on a previous visit has goaded Shaul about a recent haircut. Noticing that the (heterosexual) Shaul had sheared off the pony tail which, along with his beard, black velvet kippa (or skullcap) and habitual sandals, has - ironically - long served to make him look like the more hippyish kind of settler, Ohanna had told him he had done it because "your boyfriend wouldn't go to bed with you if you didn't cut it off". Today, another prominent settler, Moshe Ben Batat, marches up to Shaul and demands more chillingly the date of his "mother's remembrance day" because "your mother threw you out of the house and committed suicide". (One - and only one - part of this is true. Shaul's mother did commit suicide, but during a post-natal depression - when Shaul was four years old.) Later still, the vociferous group of Shaul-stalkers is joined by David Wilder, the US-born spokesman of the Hebron settlers. Saying that Shaul's tours are "very dangerous", he adds that Shaul "feeds the enemy and plays into their hands" by criticising the settlers. Wilder sums up his view of Shaul: "Hamas with a kippa."

The man who attracts such hatred from the Hebron settlers has, at only 24, already led a remarkable life. He was described by the celebrated Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa, to whom he acted as a guide in the city two years ago, as "one of the righteous this country has". He was a co-founder of Breaking the Silence, the growing group of dissident ex-soldiers - the core of whom served in Hebron at the peak of the intifada like him - who have testified on the persistent abuses they say the military has committed during the years of warfare.

Stationed in Bethlehem in the last few weeks of his military service he had "an enlightened f moment" in which he says he began to understand what one of the group's later publications would call the "terrible moral price" exacted by the occupation from the young soldiers who serve in the West Bank and Gaza. Then and over the time that followed, Shaul began to find himself "in the very terrifying place [where] there is no justification for 90 per cent of the actions you took part in".

Since then he has become a political guide to, and activist in, the part of Hebron which was once its Arab commercial and cultural heart but which is now overwhelmingly dominated by the presence of 800 Jewish settlers. He has conducted or organised more than 200 tours of Israelis - including school and college students in their year before Army service - and foreigners. Last October, he and another ex-combat soldier, Avichai Sharon, briefed the international Middle East envoy Tony Blair on the daunting problems of inner-city Hebron.

To understand what led him to this unusual vocation, you have to climb with Shaul to look over the Palestinian city from a vantage point close to the old Jewish cemetery. As the afternoon muezzins ring out from the mosques, Shaul points out the red-roofed house where his unit's snipers and machine gunners were posted after giving the Palestinian family who lived in it half an hour to leave. At the peak of the intifada in 2002-03, with Palestinian gunmen using mainly assault rifles to shoot towards the settlements to their south at night, the Israeli soldiers were firing back grenades from machine guns.

The man below is a religious Israeli who served in the army. Now he runs guided tours highlighting the abuse of Palestinians. It's controversial and dangerous w....

"A grenade is not a bullet," Shaul explains. "It hits something and explodes, kills everyone in a radius of eight metres and injures everyone in a radius of 16. Secondly a machine gun is not an accurate weapon. You aim it a bit to the left and a bit to the right. If you're a real good operator you'll probably hit your target the fifth time."

Briefed initially by his platoon commander on the task, Shaul says he "freaked out. You still have a sense of a mission, of black and white, and I'm like, 'What's going on here? I'm supposed to shoot grenades into a city where people live?' The first night, you aim in the area of the target and you pull the trigger and you let it go as fast as you could and inside you're praying that the least amount of grenades were fired because if you pull the trigger for a minute around 60 grenades are out."

But as the week wore on, he says, it became "the exciting moment of the day. You're bored. You're stuck in this house. You don't go out. You play it like a video game with your joy-stick on top of the city - boom, boom, boom."

Shaul has no direct evidence of casualties from the salvos he fired - the "worst thing I did" - though he assumes there must have been injuries at the very least. It is something "you would prefer not to think about". And, yes, Palestinian snipers did indeed claim the lives of Jewish victims from the settlements - five since 2000. But Shaul says that the fire to which the military mainly responded in the way he describes habitually fell well short of the settlements.

The Israeli military employed draconian measures in Hebron during the peak of the intifada to protect the settlers - whose right to live in the city is not recognised in international law. These included imposition of curfews in the city centre (377 days in the first three years of the intifada), checkpoints (the UN counted more than 100 in the Israeli controlled sector of the city in 2005), comprehensive house-to-house searches in which Shaul says Palestinian families were sometimes locked into a single room while soldiers grabbed some sleep elsewhere in the house, and a refusal to intervene in many cases when settlers attacked or threw stones at local Palestinians.

According to a report earlier this year from the two most respected Israeli human-rights organisations, B'Tselem and the Association of Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), "violence, arbitrary house searches, seizure of houses, harassment, detaining passers-by, and humiliating treatment have become part of daily reality for Palestinians and have led many of them to move to safer places". And while armed violence has significantly reduced inside the city, most of the restrictions on movement within the area of the settlements have remained. Shaul draws comparisons with other West Bank cities. "Does the IDF [Israeli Defence Force] have posts inside Nablus all the time? No. Inside Jericho? No. Inside Hebron? Yes. Why? Because you have the settlements here. H1 [the outer area of Hebron] is like all the rest of the Palestinian cities and H2 [the centre] is a ghost town; it's missing from the frame."

After a 13-year-old process of closures and segregation which began - ironically - with the Goldstein attack on Palestinians in the mosque, and continued through the intifada, there are now 304 closed shops and warehouses - 218 of them shut down by military order. The whole of the "sterile zone" protecting the settlements is closed to Palestinian vehicles. And the central section of Shuhada Street is closed to Palestinian pedestrians, except for four families who still live on this once densely populated but now desolate artery. The term used by B'Tselem and ACRI for the steady Palestinian depopulation of the area is "enforced eviction". Jan Kristiansen, a former head of the (already decade-old) Temporary International Presence in Hebron, described it as "ethnic cleansing".

An internal 2003 report produced by the Israel Defence Forces's civil administration cited a lengthy series of legal violations - mainly damage, break-ins and seizure of Palestinian property - by Hebron's Jewish settlers as they "consistently and systematically" worked to "establish and expand" their colony. "The leadership selects a target and broadcasts it a number of ways. Youths/teenagers burgle the building and even if they are driven away in the beginning, they eventually succeed. Youths/teenagers empty/burn the contents ... They enter through a common wall/the yard/narrow passageway between the properties without being noticed and begin to settle in." Adding that the activities of Jews in Hebron can be described as "if carried out under the protection of the Israeli regime", the report added: "The State of Israel looks very bad with regard to the rule of law in Hebron."

In December 2006, ACRI challenged the ban on pedestrians using much of Shuhada Street, pointing out that it had not been sanctioned by a written military order. The Army agreed it was indeed a mistake and issued a directive

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cancelling the prohibition. Some prominent local Palestinians were allowed to walk along the street after detention and body searches, and with a substantial military escort. Within a week the Palestinians were again told they were not allowed to use the route.

"We have a few hundred settlers there," says Shaul. "We don't even question it. They are Israeli citizens and they deserve protection, just like people in Tel Aviv. To give them the protection, we take a lot of things into consideration - we have geography, we have a budget, large numbers of soldiers - but there's one thing we won't take into consideration, and that's 166,000 Palestinians around here. This is the problem of Hebron. Only in this way can you close what used to be the main street for 60 years and then say it was a mistake and continue this mistake."

But, for Shaul, Hebron is also a paradigm of the wider West Bank, almost 40 per cent of which is now reserved for the settlers, along with the military apparatus and the roads - in many cases prohibited to Palestinians - that serve them. "If you zoom out of Hebron, if you look at the segregation, the methods, the tactics, Hebron is like the laboratory where things are tested before being used outside."

Another milestone in the long journey that led Shaul towards this point began early in his Army service. Shaul explains that the seminal historic event in every settler child's early education is the 1929 massacre during the riots against Jewish immigration to Palestine, when 67 Jews were slaughtered on a single day - though 435 survived after being sheltered by their Arab neighbours. And then he recalls how he saw an elderly Palestinian woman coming down from the hillside neighbourhood of Abu Snena to be greeted by settler children throwing stones at her. "I said to a child of about 10, 'What do you think you are doing?' He said, 'Do you know what this woman did in 1929?'"

We are now walking - a privilege exclusive to Israelis and foreigners - along Shuhada Street, past the abandoned stalls of the market area, illegally occupied by eight settler families from Avram Avinu after a Palestinian sniper killed a 10-month-old settler baby, Shalhevet Pass, in 2001. The settlers were finally issued with eviction orders in January 2006 - but then agreed to leave voluntarily after a remarkable deal with the Army under which they would be allowed to return after a few months. The deal was later overruled by Israel's Attorney General Menachem Mazuz.

As we pass to the left, leaving a manned Israeli checkpoint to the right, we come to the surreal lane where two Palestinian families still live amid a dozen settler families. We walk past the Abu Ayesha house, protected by wire mesh from the stones and garbage frequently thrown at it by the settlers. It was against this wire mesh that Jewish settler Yifat Alkobi pressed her face while repeatedly hissing "sharmuta" - whore - at her married Palestinian neighbour. The scene was caught in a video recording given to B'Tselem which shocked many Israeli viewers when it was shown on prime-time TV last January - including Tommy Lapid, the former Israeli Justice Minister who lost many of his family in the Holocaust. "In the years that preceded the Holocaust," he wrote, "behind shuttered windows hid terrified Jewish women, exactly like the Arab woman of the Abu-Ayesha family in Hebron." And where, according to testimony given by Taysir Abu Ayesha, Baruch Marzel broke into the house with 10 other settlers in the winter of 2002, beat him and attempted to drag him into the road before he was rescued by his stick-brandishing father. f

And then we arrive at the end of the street and the home of Hani Abu Heikel, whose family was one of those who sheltered more than 400 of the Jews who survived the 1929 massacre. He says that the settlers from the neighbouring Al Bakri house have attacked his house with water pipes in the night, that his car has been attacked and burned four times and that in June most of the trees in the olive grove next to his house were ruined by being set on fire. When his son suggested to soldiers - some of whom, on this occasion, helped put the fire out - that they could identify the culprits by means of the ubiquitous cameras, he was told, says Mr Abu Heikel, that the cameras were for "security" - for the settlers' security, that is. The Abu Heikel family, a fixture of the Yehuda Shaul tours, are as pleased to see him as the settlers are displeased. "Yehuda, Yehuda," two-and-a-half-year-old Yara Abu Heikel shouts excitedly. The fact that Yehuda brings Israelis to the house has been, says Abu Heikel, especially valuable

The man below is a religious Israeli who served in the army. Now he runs guided tours highlighting the abuse of Palestinians. It's controversial and dangerous w....

for his children. "I welcome it," he says. "I want them to know that the Israelis are not just the settlers. I wanted to show them that there are Jews who are not in conflict with us."

A tour round the inner city with a senior Israeli military official gives a very different take on Hebron from Shaul's. The official, who insists on anonymity, argues that while Palestinians are restricted in only three per cent of the city, Israelis are either barred or heavily restricted in the other 97 per cent. While ACRI and B'Tselem pointed out that a resident of the Old City wanting to cross one side of Shuhada Street to the other needs to go round the entire city centre and pass through a number of checkpoints, the Army insists that the restrictions on pedestrian movement in the city are "minimal". As for vehicles, the Army says that those carrying supplies like construction materials are allowed through with prior authorisation and that the required detours add only 10 minutes to the journey for Palestinians. The official stresses that the closures are needed for security reasons and insists, "I am responsible for the lives of Palestinians and Israelis. I am not just in charge of the Israelis."

This, of course, goes to the heart of the question of who bears the real burden of keeping the settlers safe. In the words of the ACRI/B'Tselem report, "Israeli law-enforcement authorities and security forces have made the entire Palestinian population pay the price for protecting Israeli settlement in the city." In doing so, it caused "the economic collapse of the centre of Hebron and drove many Palestinians out of the area." The Army repeatedly - and rightly - points out "that the rights of Israeli citizens to live in the city have been authorised by the decisions of the Israeli government." The military official says, moreover, that since the Goldstein massacre, which he adds was a "horrible thing" which brought "shame to the Jewish people all over the world", the principal "targets" of violence here have been not Palestinians but Israelis. "Since 1994 until today Israelis have been targeted by all the organisations of terror," he concludes.

Certainly, since the beginning of the intifada, Palestinian militants have killed 17 members of the security forces and five civilians - including 10-month-old Shalhevet Pass, shot by a Palestinian sniper in 2001. In Hebron as a whole, according to the ACRI/B'Tselem report, the security forces killed 88 Palestinians in the same period "at least 46 of whom (including nine minors) were not taking part in hostilities at the time they were killed". In addition two Palestinians were killed by settlers, one of them 14-year-old Nasseem Jamjoum, gunned down at her home by settlers in 2003 on the rampage after the shooting of a soldier/settler outside the city. No one was indicted for that shooting.

The official says that because "**Hamas** terror is strong" in the area, the soldiers consist of "the best units in the Israeli Army" - inevitably trained to defeat the militants rather than to keep the peace between civilian populations. But despite the human-rights groups' well-documented charge that soldiers repeatedly fail to intervene when an Israeli attacks a Palestinian or his property, the army insists that soldiers are under orders to do so. In general, the military official says, violent incidents between Palestinians and Israelis have fallen 50 per cent in 2006-07 from the level in 2003-04.

The official insists - rightly - that the decision about whether to allow settlements in Hebron is a matter for the politicians and not the military. But he is also clearly sympathetic to the argument that the Jews had a right after the Six Day War to reclaim property that had been historically Jewish. On the subject of the progressive takeover of Arab property since 1967, he repeatedly draws a distinction - not recognised in international law - between property that was historically Jewish and property that wasn't. He points, for example, to the Beit Hadassah settlement (which was taken over by settlers in 1979 though even Menachem Begin, the right-wing Likud Prime Minister at the time, was strongly opposed to the move). "This was a hospital that served all the neighbourhood, Jews and Muslims, until most of the staff were killed in the 1929 massacre," says the military official. "When Germany gave back property which had been taken from Jews, people in Israel were very proud," he says. "If we hadn't had the war in 1967 the emotion about recovering the property [in Hebron] would be the same."

For Yehuda Shaul, however, that argument - that there were always Jews in Hebron in the past - is no different from that of the "right of return" to Israel claimed by the families of Palestinian refugees who were forced to flee their homes in what is now Israel during the war of 1948, a claim consistently rejected by both Israel and the international community. And the argument that alternative routes, however tiresome, exist for Palestinians to the one through

The man below is a religious Israeli who served in the army. Now he runs guided tours highlighting the abuse of Palestinians. It's controversial and dangerous w....

the old city centre of Hebron is as tenable as if "you said to people in West Jerusalem, you can no longer use Mahane Yehuda [the main Jewish market in the city] and Jaffa Street [the main artery of Jewish West Jerusalem]; you are going to have to go round it."

Nor is he impressed, as a religious Jew, by the argument that the settlers are needed to establish the right of Jews to pray at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. While even some Palestinians have suggested that in the event of a Palestinian State there could be guaranteed "safe passage" for those Jews who would want to pray at the Tomb, Shaul doubts that would be realistic, pointing out that no such permission existed before the occupation. Instead he suggests the price being paid is too high simply to "control the city of the patriarchs" and to allow access to the Tomb for the minority of religious Jews who use it now. "All this was done on the back of thousands of Palestinians who were more or less expelled from their lives," he says. "This is not Jewish. I'm an Israeli, I'm a Jew and I care what my society looks like, about what are the values that are at the heart of my country. And Hebron is a huge problem for my society and my country. There is a clear plan to cause the Arab population to leave the centre of Hebron."

Shaul doesn't for a moment deny the threat to settlers and soldiers. "You don't have to teach me about security problems," he tells today's visitors about his period serving in the city. "Hebron was a very dangerous place. Israelis were killed. But what we are doing on this tour is asking: what are the red lines we cannot cross?" David Wilder retorts: "His red line is that we shouldn't be here."

Many - possibly even a majority - of Israelis would indeed agree that the settlers should not be in Hebron. After the Goldstein massacre, Yitzhak Rabin wanted to expel them but was advised that it was politically impossible. Shaul does not use his tours to urge the withdrawal of the settlements from Hebron. Instead, "We just ask them: 'What do you think? You saw the price in human rights, in morality, in the lack of law, the price that Palestinians pay for 800 settlers in the heart of their city. And you saw the price the Israeli regime pays and Israeli society pays for running this place and you have to decide for yourself.'" E

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Body

INTERNATIONAL

BOMB DESTROYS HEADQUARTERS

Of a Leading Sunni Party in Iraq

A major Sunni political party's headquarters in western Iraq was blown up, and in southern Iraq, where Shiite factions have been fighting each other, a powerful bomb was discovered on the road to an important Shiite shrine. Both episodes pointed to probable tensions in the months before provincial elections, in which factions are fighting hard to ensure that they have a place at the political table. PAGE A16

5 KILLED IN GAZA BLAST

A large explosion destroyed a residential building in the northern Gaza town of Beit Lahiya, killing at least five Palestinians. The Islamist group Hamas initially blamed an Israeli airstrike, and it unleashed a hail of rockets and mortar rounds at Israeli towns and villages. But a spokesman later tacitly acknowledged that the blast could have been caused by explosives being handled by militants inside the home. PAGE A16

VOWS OF AID FOR AFGHANISTAN

More than 60 countries and international institutions offered about \$20 billion in aid for Afghanistan -- more than half from the United States -- as part of a conference in Paris. But officials fretted over whether the Afghan government was doing all that it could to make sure the money would not go into the pockets of the country's warlords and corrupt government officials. PAGE A16

CHINA AND TAIWAN IN TALKS

Representatives of China and Taiwan, on the first day of talks about how to strengthen their economic relationship, agreed to establish permanent offices in each other's capitals to help coordinate discussions. The meetings, taking place between so-called unofficial negotiating bodies, are the highest-level talks between the two since 1999. One issue is how to increase charter flights between China and Taiwan. PAGE A12

QUAKE MEMORIAL CALLED OFF

INSIDE THE TIMES: June 13, 2008

Parents of children who died in a school collapse during the May 12 earthquake in Sichuan Province dropped their plan for a one-month mourning ceremony after local officials warned them not to go through with it, two of the parents said. The group's members were told not to contact one another and not to stay in the town of Juyuan, site of the collapse, they said. PAGE A10

NATIONAL

BAN ON REGISTRATION DRIVES

For Veterans Is Criticized

Voting rights groups are criticizing the Department of Veterans Affairs for its decision to ban registration drives among the veterans living at federally run nursing homes, homeless shelters and rehabilitation centers across the country. Mary G. Wilson, president of the League of Women Voters, said, "They appear to be using technicalities to block many veterans from registering to vote." PAGE A18

RESISTING SAME-SEX UNION RULING

Thousands of gay and lesbian couples across California are expected to tie the knot next week, when a State Supreme Court decision granting that right becomes official. But the ceremonies will not come without strong opposition. Several counties have announced that they will not solemnize any ceremonies, citing administrative and budgetary concerns, which has some gay rights advocates crying foul. PAGE A18

USING THE WEB TO DEBUNK RUMORS

Senator Barack Obama's presidential campaign began to push back against what it said were unfounded and potentially damaging reports by unveiling a new Web site. On it are five sets of rumors about Mr. Obama and his wife, Michelle, along with responses intended to establish once and for all that they are baseless. PAGE A24

VERMONT ASSISTS WITH GAS COSTS

Gov. Jim Douglas of Vermont announced the creation of a task force to help residents combat the high prices of gasoline, home heating oil and food. The state will establish a no- or low-interest program to help residents weatherize their homes. PAGE A23

MORE REPORTS OF TAINTED TOMATOES

The tainted-tomato outbreak has spread to six more states, federal health officials said. Along with New York, the five new states with cases were Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Tennessee and Vermont, and the total number of people sickened by salmonella-tainted tomatoes rose to 228. PAGE A21

METRO

FORMER STATE ASSEMBLYWOMAN

Sentenced for Influence Peddling

A judge sentenced a former state assemblywoman from Brooklyn, Diane M. Gordon, to two to six years in prison for offering to help a developer acquire city land if he built her a house without charge. Prosecutors sought a longer sentence, arguing that Ms. Gordon, a Democrat, had the gall to run for re-election after her indictment. (She won.) Her lawyer argued for a sentence of community service. PAGE B1

HARLEM'S CHANGES NOT FOR EVERYONE

No one in Harlem is wishing for a return of the boarded-up buildings, the lifeless bodies found in vestibules or the bands of drug dealers and crackheads. But gentrification has various consequences, and residents say they do

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miss having a neighborhood with familiar faces to greet, familiar foods to eat and no fear of being priced out of their homes. PAGE B1

EXPIRED DRUGS AT PHARMACIES

A survey of drugstores by the state attorney general's office found expired items, including milk, eggs, infant formula and common medications, at more than 250 stores across the state, 50 of them in New York City. Doctors said that consumers would not be poisoned by taking expired medication like allergy remedies, Tylenol or cough syrup, but that the medicine might have lost its potency. PAGE B3

BUSINESS

RETAIL SALES INCREASE

More Than Expected

The Commerce Department said that retail sales rose more than anticipated in May, news that Wall Street found to its liking. But some economists remained skeptical, and a separate measure of import prices rose sharply in May, driven up by expensive oil and the comparatively weak dollar. That report may play into fears of inflation. PAGE C1

LOOKING AT DEBT RATINGS

Criticized by states and cities for how it rates their bonds, Moody's Investors Service said it was considering rating municipal debt on the same scale it used for corporate debt. The move could help lower borrowing costs for some local governments and lead to less demand for bond insurance at a time when several big guarantors are faltering. PAGE C5

HEDGE FUNDS LENDING

With banks retrenching on credit, hedge funds are increasingly offering business loans, usually at interest rates that are far higher than those that banks charge. And though economists predict that it is only a matter of time before the cutback in bank lending causes a business slowdown, hedge funds may fill a small part of the void. PAGE C4

UNITED SETS BAG FEE

Get ready to slug it out for the overhead bin space: United Airlines became the latest to say it would begin charging many passengers to check their first bag, joining American Airlines in assessing a \$15 luggage fee for passengers flying on the cheapest tickets. PAGE C1

EUROPEAN UTILITIES CHARGED

The European Commission charged the leading suppliers of natural gas in France and Germany with colluding to raise prices. The accusations focus on how the suppliers, Gaz de France and E.on, managed a pipeline, called Megal, which they jointly own, and which links France and Germany and facilitates the flow of Russian natural gas to Western Europe. Both utilities denied the charges. PAGE C2

Invitrogen in Purchase C3

Not Admitting an Error C1

WEEKEND

A LETHAL LURKING

In Yonder Trees

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If you can ignore the harping about the assorted failings of M. Night Shyamalan -- and, unless you are a critic, you probably can -- then you might find his latest movie, "The Happening," enjoyable. Manohla Dargis writes that "it turns out to be a divertingly goofy thriller with an animistic bent, moments of shivery and twitchy suspense and a solid lead performance from Mark Wahlberg." PAGE E1

VAN GOGH AFTER DARK

A curator's brainstorming about small shows that might focus on an item from the permanent collection, and taking "The Starry Night" as a starting point, has led to "Van Gogh and the Colors of the Night," which will open at the Museum of Modern Art in September. It appears that the artist was quite obsessed with the nocturnal world. PAGE E23

FEATURING THE SIMPLE FOLK

"The Hired Man," a chamber musical that's part of the Brits Off Broadway festival, bears little resemblance to the better-known, Broadway-devouring British musicals of that era, writes Charles Isherwood, who finds it respectable, but hardly exciting or innovative. "If it's splashy fun you're looking for, look elsewhere." PAGE E2

BEARING WITNESS

Among the 19 feature-length films at this year's Human Rights Watch International Film Festival is "Traces of the Trade: A Story From the Deep North," a personal documentary examination of the slave trade directed by a woman whose ancestors profited handsomely from that trade. Stephen Holden writes that "the movie suggests that the North's high-toned abolitionist rhetoric was a cover story." PAGE E6 Turns Angry When Shaken B1

Heavy Light E23

A Venerable Festival E1

SPORTS

ATOP THE OPEN LEADER BOARD,

But Who Is That Guy?

If your name is Justin Hicks and you play golf professionally, then you may have shot a 3-under-par 68 on Thursday to take the early, first-round lead of the 108th Open at Torrey Pines Golf Course. Unless you are the other Justin Hicks who plays golf professionally and is also in San Diego. Perhaps not surprisingly, the golf world has a bit of trouble sorting out the two. PAGE D2

PERCEPTION VS. REALITY

Perceptions of preordainment regarding professional basketball existed long before news of the corrupt officiating career of Tim Donaghy, Harvey Araton writes in Sports of The Times. Aggrieved fans, coaches, maybe even players, see controlling forces at work in their disappointments. But separating perception from reality is not always an easy thing to do. PAGE D1

OBITUARIES

HARLAN CLEVELAND, 90

A former president of the University of Hawaii and an American ambassador to NATO, he pressed for nuclear arms control and strengthening of the United Nations. PAGE B7

JOHN RAUCH, 80

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A devotee of the passing game, he coached the Oakland Raiders in the second Super Bowl and was later O. J. Simpson's first coach in professional football, with the Buffalo Bills. PAGE B7

EDWINA FROEHLICH, 93

A pioneer on several fronts, she was inspired to help found La Leche League to support breast-feeding after being told at the age of 35 that she was too old to make breast milk for her baby. PAGE B7

ESCAPES

WHEN THE R.S.V.P.'S

Come Back 'Non, Merci'

So, eager to get away from it all, you've bought a weekend home, and, eager to share your hospitality, you invite friends to visit. But they seem not to share your eagerness. There may be any number of reasons, not all of which are reflections on you as host or on the accommodations. And consider this: They may be doing you a favor. PAGE F1

TREKKING THE MUD AND MUCK

For decades, starting in the late 19th century, county officials spent millions of dollars trying to drain it. In the 1940s, the military bombed it, assessing the fall of munitions. But the ooze and earth of the Big Bog prevailed, and now people pay to tour what was once considered just a wasteland. PAGE F1

INTO THE WOODLANDS

It has gone from being the nation's second-most-popular inland resort to obscurity, threatened by a dam project, only to rebound as one of the most used sites of the National Park Service. But because it is also one of the least heralded, the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, just 72 miles from Lower Manhattan, may be unknown to you. PAGE F8

Havens: Livingston Manor, N.Y. F3

Relocating a House F2

EDITORIAL

JUSTICE 5, BRUTALITY 4

For years, President Bush has denied the protections of justice, democracy and plain human decency to the hundreds of men that he labeled "unlawful enemy combatants" and threw into never-ending detention. On Thursday, the Supreme Court turned back the most recent effort to subvert justice, with a stirring defense of habeas corpus. PAGE A28

A DANGEROUS PLACE

There is enormous confusion about what happened Tuesday night on the Pakistani border, but Pakistan's charges that American strikes killed 11 of its paramilitary troops must be fully investigated. The Bush administration also must do a lot more to salvage this relationship. PAGE A28

ARE INSIDERS NECESSARY?

Both presidential candidates have now been bruised by talking the talk of reform while walking the walk of old Washington habits. PAGE A28

OP-ED

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PAUL KRUGMAN

Lately, there always seems to be at least one food-safety crisis in the headlines -- most recently the attack of the killer tomatoes. The declining credibility of U.S. food regulation has even led to a crisis in relations with South Korea. How did we find ourselves back in the world of Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle"? It began with ideology. It devolved into crony capitalism, with agencies that are supposed to protect the public serving the food industry. The ironic thing is that deference to the food industry isn't just bad for consumers, it's bad for business. PAGE A29

DAVID BROOKS

Barack Obama's education remarks give the impression of a candidate who wants to be for big change without actually incurring the political costs inherent in that enterprise. PAGE A29

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Body

INTERNATIONAL

IMMIGRANTS FLEE SOUTH AFRICA

As Hate Mobs Continue Terrorism

Feneck Mgawa moved to South Africa to seek work and send cash to his family back home in Malawi. But after being beaten with sticks and pelted with rocks by a hateful mob, Mr. Mgawa intends to leave the country. He is part of a stunning reverse migration of foreigners desperate to leave South Africa after more than a week of anti-immigrant violence that has left 42 dead. PAGE A10

DEADLY HELICOPTER STRIKE

An American helicopter strike killed eight civilians, including two children, during an operation against "known terrorists" working with the Sunni insurgent group Al Qaeda near the northern Iraqi town of Baiji, the Iraqi police said. The episode may inflame anti-American feelings already present from the admission that an American sniper had used a Koran for target practice. PAGE A16

CUTBACKS IN MEXICO'S DRUG PLAN

Congress has scaled back on President Bush's anti-drug plans for Mexico and put human rights conditions on some of the aid, drawing fire from some Mexicans who accuse American lawmakers of meddling in their country's internal affairs. At issue is the performance of Mexico's army and the police, which have been accused by human rights organizations of engaging in abuses as they chase down the country's drug cartels. PAGE A6

HOPES FOR TROOP REDUCTION IN IRAQ

President Bush's nominees for commander of forces in the Middle East and senior commander in Baghdad told a Senate hearing that troop reductions might be possible this fall. But they acknowledged that Iraqi security forces would probably be unable to take the leading role in all provinces of the country this year. PAGE A16

ATTACKS CONTINUE NEAR BORDER

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A Palestinian suicide bomber detonated a truck packed with explosives near the Gaza-Israel border, killing himself and causing damage, but no injuries, on the Israeli side. It was the latest in a series of attacks at the border crossings after the Islamic militant group Hamas took control of Gaza. PAGE A14

Ruling Party Cements Power A16

A Premier's Personal Troubles A14

NATIONAL

NEW DRUGS RAISE HOPES

For Brain Cancer Treatment

Cancer drugs have been unable to do much to improve survival rates for brain cancer, including the type recently diagnosed in Senator Edward M. Kennedy. But Avastin, already widely used to treat other types of cancer, is leading a pack of new drugs that some experts hope can improve the outlook. PAGE A20

SENATE PASSES VETERANS' BENEFITS

Twenty-five Republican senators broke with President Bush and voted for a major expansion of veterans benefits as part of a bill to finance another year of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The proposal, adopted by a veto-proof vote of 75 to 22, also provides money for extended unemployment insurance benefits and other domestic programs to which Mr. Bush has objected. The bill now goes back to the House, where its future course is somewhat uncertain. PAGE A20

THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

Congress, efficient? A 34-page section of the 673-page farm bill was missing from the package sent to President Bush (who vetoed it). So the House, which a day earlier had voted to override the veto, voted again on the whole 673 pages and passed it. And it gets even more complicated in the Senate. PAGE A23

PANEL SUBPOENAS ROVE

The House Judiciary Committee issued a subpoena to Karl Rove, the former chief political adviser at the White House, pressing its inquiry into possible political influence in Justice Department prosecutions. Mr. Rove's lawyer said his client would not appear, on instructions from the White House, and accused the committee chairman of "provoking a gratuitous confrontation." PAGE A21

F.D.A. TO EXPAND DRUG SCRUTINY

Federal health officials announced a plan to use information on Medicare claims to assess almost immediately the risks of drugs. Now, months or even years pass before officials learn of unexpected side effects that can be fatal. Researchers praised the government initiative, but many said its fruits would take years to realize. PAGE A17

A Fire's Costs and Benefits A17

Subsidy Proposal for Pipeline A20

metro

THE PUBLIC VICTIMS

Of a Private Turf War

The murders are so routine the mourning has become a familiar ritual at the Redfern Houses in Far Rockaway, Queens. Invariably, those killed are young. Sometimes they are the intended targets, other times they are not. Most

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are victims of a private war over money, turf and drugs. Police Commissioner Raymond W. Kelly visited to announce plans to combat the violence. PAGE B1

BLOOMBERG WON'T TESTIFY

Saying that he did not want "a media show," a federal judge ruled that Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg cannot testify at the pending civil trial of a Georgia gun dealer accused of creating a public nuisance in New York by selling weapons that were later used to commit crimes in the city. "I don't see any reason for the mayor to be here," the judge said. PAGE B3

SPORTS

COMING BACK DOWN TO EARTH

After Success Down Under

Tennis's newest star, Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, beat four top-15 players, including Rafael Nadal, on his way to the Australian Open finals. But he is not expected to have the same kind of run on home soil at the French Open. There is that not-so-little problem of playing on the slow red clay. And, in general, things have changed considerably for him since Australia. PAGE D1

RUNNING INDY ON ALMOST EMPTY

Of the three women driving in Sunday's Indianapolis 500, Sarah Fisher is the only one who is also an owner, and the first woman in 30 years to have filled both roles at the 500. But it hasn't been completely smooth -- like when she lost her primary corporate sponsor. But fans pitched in to help, and things are looking better now, with a new sponsor. PAGE D2

HANDICAPPING BEIJING

The coming Summer Olympic Games in China are a bit hard to handicap. Will sympathy over the recent earthquake trump complaints about the country's complicity in Darfur? And what will be the medal results produced by the resources it has been pouring into the athletic effort? Sports of The Times, Harvey Araton. PAGE D1

SPRINTER ACKNOWLEDGES DRUG USE

The Olympic gold medalist Antonio Pettigrew acknowledged in federal court that he used performance-enhancing drugs from 1997 to 2001, when he was one of the world's top 400-meter runners. The admission took place at the trial here of his former longtime coach, Trevor Graham, who is accused of lying to federal agents in 2004 about whether he set up athletes with banned drugs. PAGE D2

OBITUARIES

J.C. HUREWITZ, 93

A Columbia University professor, his voluminous research, belief in the importance of local histories and evenhanded scholarship contributed depth and complexity to the emerging field of Middle Eastern studies starting in 1950. PAGE B7

JAN HIRD POKORNY, 83

A Czech-born architect, his New York firm became known for restoring and adapting historic buildings for reuse. He spent much of the last decade, from 1997 to 2007, as an often wryly outspoken member of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. PAGE B7

WILFRID MELLERS, 94

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An English musicologist, composer, critic and teacher, he published more than 20 books on subjects ranging from 17th-century English and French composers to the music of the Beatles and Bob Dylan. PAGE B7

BUSINESS

WHAT HAPPENS HERE

Is Inexpensive Here

The approach of the crucial summer travel season has tourism marketers looking for ways to overcome travel inertia caused by rising gasoline prices and airfares. As a result, feel-good slogans like Las Vegas's "What happens here stays here" are giving way to harder-hitting pleas and promises of bargains. PAGE C3

THE USUAL SUMMER SUSPECTS

It must be close to summer if Congress is raking oil company executives over the coals, a show that went into its second day. And there is talk by lawmakers of various ways to provide relief at the pump. But none are likely to reduce prices at the pump, as the players well know, so they just ran through the usual script. PAGE C1

EASING PAIN, OR DUMPING RICE?

The Japanese government says the country plans to send at least 220,000 tons of rice to the Philippines, and possibly Africa, to ease the suffering of poor nations punished by rising rice prices. Critics, including some in Washington, say that could set a bad precedent for dumping. But opposing the plan could put the United States in a delicate diplomatic position. PAGE C3

UBS MOVES TO RAISE CAPITAL

The Swiss banking giant, UBS, said it would raise more than \$15 billion by issuing sharply discounted shares. It is the second time that UBS has had to raise funds since the credit markets tightened last year with the collapse of the American subprime housing market. It is issuing 760 million new shares at 21 francs each, 31 percent below the Wednesday closing price. PAGE C5

Possible Airline Downgrades C4

WEEKEND

SO MANY BOOKS, SURE,

But Are They Worth the Time?

William Grimes felt challenged, and a bit insulted, by the title: "1001 Books You Must Read Before You Die." So of course he had to find out more. And of course he found points of disagreement, like this: "Not only is it not necessary to read 'Interview With the Vampire' by Anne Rice before you die, it is also probably not necessary to read it even if, like Lestat, you are never going to die." PAGE E29

TWO PROVOCATEURS

There is reason to be thankful, at times, that film critics stand between us and the movies. A.O. Scott, for example, has invested more than four hours of his life on "Che," Steven Soderbergh's "digitally shot, Spanish-language epic about a Marxist militant." For various reasons it is altogether unclear whether many of the rest of us will do the same. PAGE E1

THE SOUNDS OF SUMMER

Summer has various associations with music, not the least being the open-air amphitheater show. But while it's a crucial time for singles, it hasn't been for albums. Until now. New albums by Coldplay, Usher, Lil Wayne, Nas, T.I.,

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Slipknot, the Game, Solange Knowles and the Jonas Brothers are among the what Billboard magazine counts as 180 significant records coming out in warm weather. PAGE E1

REVISITING THAT FUN 2000 VOTE

In case you've forgotten, what with the various intervening events, the Florida vote count in the 2000 presidential election was a big deal. So big that HBO is about to offer "Recount," which Alessandra Stanley calls "an astute and deliciously engrossing film." And, she reminds, presidential voting is again on people's minds. And Florida again has a big role. PAGE E1

Woman Troubles E3

Giants Amid the Blooms E23

Afghanistan's Hidden Treasures E28

ESCAPES

LIVING AN ARTISAN'S LIFE,

At Least for a Weekend

The Roycroft Campus in East Aurora, N.Y., a nonprofit corporation, offers classes and tours to visitors interested in print- and jewelry-making, painting and metalwork. It is where would-be craftsmen can learn to suffer quite literally for their art, and can hear "Don't worry. We can fix that." many times over the course of a weekend. PAGE F1

PUTTING OUT THE 'WILLKOMMEN' MAT

It is 650 square feet of white walls, windows, ceiling and rafters three blocks from the beach in Venice, Calif., that had served as a surfer's crash pad and was offered "as is" when the actor Joel Grey came upon it. "O.K., this is it," he said, and took a lease on what he now calls his "ad hoc" house. PAGE F1

A RAMBLIN' KIND OF GUY

Back in 1968, at the age of 14, Jim Dworschack bought his first Nash, a 1948 Model 600. The next year he founded the Nash Car Club of America. Some may find the devotion puzzling, others understandable. "I don't have any rational explanation," Mr. Dworschack said. "A '50 Nash was the family car, my dad liked it a lot, and I guess it rubbed off." PAGE F6

Havens: Logan Martin Lake, Ala. F3

Jazz and the Grateful Dead F7

For Sale: Frank Lloyd Wrights F4

EDITORIAL

TALKING WITH THE ENEMY

President Bush was aiming at Senator Barack Obama last week when the president said those who talk to "terrorists and radicals" were appeasers. Now we know what Mr. Bush knew then -- that Israel is in indirect peace talks with Syria. It seems as though the president was going for a two-for-one. Page A24

TROUBLE IN THE HUDSON

The Hudson River is looking good. You would think it was about as healthy as it has been in a long time. Sadly, it isn't. Page A24

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CHILDREN IN ADULT JAILS

Children who are confined to adult jails are at greater risk of being raped or pushed to suicide, and they are more likely to become violent criminals. This barbaric practice must end. Page A24

OP-ED

DAVID BROOKS

Among adults, the words "geek" and "nerd" exchanged status positions. A nerd was still socially tainted, but geekdom acquired its own cool counterculture. A geek possessed a certain passion for specialized knowledge, but also a high degree of cultural awareness and poise that a nerd lacked. Page A25

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Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq? And, are you dyeing your hair?; You ask the questions ... David Miliband, Foreign Secretary

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Body

As the Brown premiership turns to dust in front of us, how do you expect to turn things around in time for the next general election?

Russell Child

by email

I do not accept the dust point, but the test is to put into practice good ideas that deliver real change before the election, and then go into the campaign with a strong prospectus. The announcements about direct payments of social service budgets to older people, new opportunities for youngsters and the expansion of offshore wind power set a new agenda. In addition, issues like Europe or ID cards, which are seen to be tactical weaknesses, will in fact be shown to be strategic strengths - because they are about a future agenda which no party can duck.

Do you regret not running for the Labour Party leadership?

Omaha Schlumberger

London

No. I think Gordon is the right man for 2007-plus, in the same way that Tony Blair was the right man for 1994 to 2007.

Would you like to be the next Labour Party leader? I think you would find many supporters already.

Francis Lindley

Birmingham

Thanks, but I have spent the last three years saying I would not run for the leadership. I have a great new job that I am wholly committed to so let's not start that again.

Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq ? And, are you dyeing your hair? You ask the questions ... David Miliband, Foreign Secretary

Now that we managed to bring back Gillian Gibbons, can we send politicians to return the British inmates from Guantanamo?

Rahman Chowdhury

London

All the British citizens at Guantanamo are now home, and last Thursday I was able to announce that three (out of five) British residents still there would be released. Their immigration status will be reviewed following their return and the same security considerations will apply to them as would apply to any other foreign national in this country. We will continue to discuss with the US government how best we can work with them to see the closure of Guantanamo.

As a non-white, working class student not studying at Oxbridge, what hope do I have of a career at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office?

Amarit Bains

by email

Good, I hope. An effective Foreign Office projecting British values and interests needs to be representative of Britain in all the senses of that term. Our application process is fully open and transparent. See www.fco.gov.uk.

Is it true that you are slowly dyeing the grey out of your hair?

Matilda Greene

by email

No no no! Who on earth said that? I think the grey is slowly expanding, not shrinking.

Do you regret voting for military action against Iraq in 2003?

Ian Sinclair

London, N19

I don't resile from my vote. I regret some of the things that have happened since 2003 and the violence and bloodshed. Clearly winning the military victory in war is not the same as building the peace, and the last five years have been very tough for Iraqis and for coalition troops. But as you read this, I am in Iraq seeing the last British province (Basra) transfer security responsibility to Iraqi control. Local leaders [have now] committed themselves to peaceful political processes [and that] is my focus now.

Has the term "war on terror" been banned at the Foreign Office now? Was it ever a useful term?

Paul Sullivan

by email

It has not been "banned" but I tend not to use it. That is mainly because it has come to be associated in a narrow way with the use of force against terrorism, which while sometimes necessary is not sufficient. Terrorism inspired by al-Qa'ida needed (and needs) a military response in Afghanistan; it needs tightened security measures at home and abroad (see the recent bombing in Algeria); but we also need to engage the ideology and grievances which can increase radicalisation and lead to violent extremism. That means, at least a debate within the Islamic world that separates devotion and orthodoxy from violence; the growth of democracy and politics in Islamic countries, hence

Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq ? And, are you dyeing your hair? You ask the questions ... David Miliband, Foreign Secretary

the importance of reform and debates in Turkey and Pakistan; and efforts in industrialised countries like ours to ensure that our diversity is combined with integration.

Did you watch the BBC's 'No Plan, No Peace' series on Iraq? If so, were you as shocked as I was?

Catherine Meadows

by email

I am afraid not. But if it makes the argument advanced in books like that by Ali Allawi, *The Occupation of Iraq: Winning the War, Losing the Peace* or George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq* then I understand your concern. There is still an argument about whether security comes before democracy, or vice versa. The lesson of Iraq and Afghanistan, and other efforts at "nation-building", is you need security side by side with political reform and economic reconstruction.

The blockade of Gaza imposed by the US and Israel is causing immense suffering to thousands of people. How can you collude in such cruel, collective punishment?

Annie McStravick

by email

Douglas Alexander, the International Development Secretary, and I set out our concerns about Gaza after its declaration as a "hostile territory" on 30 October. One thousand or so rockets have been sent into Israel since the attempted coup by *Hamas* in June, but immiseration of ordinary Gazans will not stop those rockets. I raised this in all my meetings during my visit to the Middle East.

Is the British Government's definition of what constitutes torture the same as that of the Bush administration?

Peter Steadman

Bucks

We never condone or support torture and the UK and the US are both parties to the UN Convention Against Torture, Article 1, which defines torture.

Why are you and the Prime Minister staying quiet over Europe and sneaking off to sign treaties, rather than proudly making the case for the EU?

Susan Procter

Devon

I think that is a bit unfair. If you look at the Global Europe pamphlet, or my speech to the College of Europe, you will see a strong argument that Britain is better off leading in Europe and Europe is better off with Britain leading in Europe. This is the argument we make all the time in the Commons.

Does "a la carte" membership to the EU diminish the union's standing?

John Romer

Ealing

If "a la carte" means that you don't follow the rules of the club then that is not on. But equally, the EU with 27 members needs to have the flexibility to allow different groups of members to work together on different issues. I think that makes sense.

Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq ? And, are you dyeing your hair? You ask the questions ... David Miliband, Foreign Secretary

As a former Environment minister, will you use your new role to push for an international agreement on stopping climate change?

Pauline Rowe

Stockport

Yes, the whole Government (and the whole country actually) needs to do that. I will ensure that low carbon/high growth strategies remain a key priority for the Foreign Office. Hilary Benn is leading the Government's negotiations in Bali at the UN conference but we all have a role to play, and in my work I always try to make the links to climate change. The UK is the first country in the world to put into legislation commitments to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We are committed to doing our share to respond to the challenge.

Why should the poorer in society have to pay a bigger part of their income on "green" taxation?

Garry Anderson

Haverhill

I do not think they "have to" and it depends what you mean by "green" tax. In the end the tax system has to be fair (i.e. related to ability to pay).

You have said Iran must realise there will be "negative consequences" if it continues uranium enrichment. Does this mean military action is still a live option?

Milan Rai

East Sussex

I have said many times we are 100 per cent committed to diplomatic resolution of the debate between the UN (through unanimous Security Council resolutions) and Iran over its nuclear programme. The UK was instrumental in developing a big economic and scientific offer to Iran (including civilian nuclear power) if it ceased its uranium enrichment programme. We want Iran to be a proud and respected nation, but it cannot defy the international community and set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

What tighter sanctions do you recommend imposing upon Iran, and what benefit will they have?

E O'Connor

Woodford Green, Essex

There are ongoing discussions, but we will certainly be looking to continue targeting those responsible for the nuclear and missile programmes that are causing us serious concern. As for the benefit of further sanctions, they work as part of a comprehensive approach, including the offer of dialogue in order to negotiate a solution.

You have been described as the "thinking-girl's pin-up" and "Commons eye candy". How do you feel about having a large female fan base?

Anna Sampson

Kent

Really? Nice to hear it. Maybe the hair dyeing is working [see earlier question].

If a Tory Prime Minister had refused to meet the President of Zimbabwe after welcoming the King of Saudi Arabia, would you be saying that it is all because of oil and arms?

Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq ? And, are you dyeing your hair? You ask the questions ... David Miliband, Foreign Secretary

David Grinnell

by email

I don't think so. [The Tories] refused to bring in sanctions against apartheid, and we called that immoral.

Can we expect stronger action against Robert Mugabe's government?

David Sylvester

Wapping, London

We have sanctions against regime members that are EU-wide and that focus on President Mugabe and the 130 top people who support the way he runs Zimbabwe. We freeze their assets, impose a visa ban and prevent arms sales to Zimbabwe. But we have stopped short of economic sanctions that would hurt ordinary people. If there are more ways to increase the pressure on those top people or others around them who profit from what Mugabe is doing, we will definitely explore those.

The Bush administration has tried to rubbish the recent CIA report on Iran's nuclear weapons programme. Do you agree with their stance?

Ivor Yeloff

Norwich

I think the administration accepted the findings, which were about "weaponisation", in other words the process of fitting fissile nuclear material for a bomb. If the Iranians have stopped that work, good. But it takes three steps to build a bomb - weaponisation, uranium enrichment and missile testing. The Iranians are boasting about the latter two. So I think we and others are right to be concerned.

New figures show 30 per cent of total foreign investment in Burma came from companies based in UK territories last year. Why haven't you banned such investments?

Jonathan Stevenson

London, E9

I am surprised to hear that. The Office for National Statistics' figures for current active UK investment are very low, indeed they have no returns suggesting any UK direct investment in Burma as of the end of 2005. I have seen reports suggesting investments in Burma are being channelled through companies registered in our overseas territories in breach of EU sanctions. I take these reports very seriously and we investigate each one that comes to our attention.

Have the comments you invite on your ministerial blog ever resulted in you doing anything differently? If so, how?

Jim Roland

London, NW11

Yes. On housing when I was Minister for Communities and Local Government the comments about shared equity helped me shape policy. At the Environment department the debate about carbon credit cards helped me develop policy. It is a bit different in the Foreign Office but it gives me some sense of what strikes a chord. See http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/blogs/david_miliband/

[fco.gov.uk/blogs/david_miliband/](http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/blogs/david_miliband/)

miliband/

Do you regret voting for military action in Iraq ? And, are you dyeing your hair? You ask the questions ... David Miliband, Foreign Secretary

Some commentators have said you seem out of your depth as Foreign Secretary. Do you take any notice of such criticism?

Nicola Attewell

Slough

I think you have to do your best, improve, and trust your instincts. What counts is the reality not the commentary.

Why did you choose to adopt your children from the US, rather than the UK?

Leonard Grahame

Richmond

Several reasons, including the fact that my wife is a dual US-UK citizen.

Do you get bored of people pointing out how different your politics are to that of your father, who was a Marxist academic?

Steve Orton

by email

No. I am very proud of my dad. It is really nice when people say that they read a book of his at university and it made them think.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

September 30, 2008 Tuesday

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Body

Powerful nations must protect Israel from Tehran

MOST TALKED ABOUT

A NUCLEAR-ARMED IRAN

RESPECTED Middle East expert Michael Rubin's assessment of the threat from Iran ("A threat bigger than Wall St", 27-28/9) is pretty depressing but realistic.

After all, Iran is on the way to developing nuclear weapons; its President threatens to eventually use these weapons against Israel and Iran already supports Hezbollah and Hamas who are at war with Israel.

Why shouldn't Israel take all these threats against its existence seriously? President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad does not sound like he is bluffing.

Israel is all alone and must take whatever action is necessary to prevent or delay Iran's future nuclear aggression.

Israel over the years has been involved in numerous wars against overwhelming odds and has never used or even threatened to use its alleged nuclear weapons.

If the international community doesn't take Iran's belligerence seriously and act urgently, it will be its responsibility if Israel is forced to act alone.

Michael Burd

Toorak, Vic

RECENT articles on Iran ("A threat bigger than Wall St", 27-28/9, and "Iran tests candidates", 29/9) try to convince the public that Iran, by developing nuclear technology and consequently nuclear weapons, is a threat to the world.

Such an approach typifies the failed US view of the world particularly of Iran, where until the fall of the Shah, the US was the major supporter and supplier of military weapons.

Even if Iran acquires nuclear weapons, why would it use them? What possible advantage would it obtain by using nuclear weapons?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If it attempted to destroy Israel, the consequence of the first strike would be devastating on Iran. It would suffer an immediate response from the US.

Why would Iranians want to do that?

Just because the Iranian President is full of rhetoric does not mean that the nation would sacrifice itself for it.

Most of the so-called experts on the region and advisers to the US offer no resolution and/or solution to the problem.

They just talk and threaten to go in and take them all out ... show them the beacon of democracy, and they will all fall behind and live happily ever after.

What we need to do is get out of the region, the Middle East, including Afghanistan, and leave these peoples alone.

Let them be what they want to be.

The failure of Western (and Eastern) interference is well documented throughout history.

Emil Sremchevich

Camden, NSW

YOUR support of John McCain's tough approach to Iran regarding its nuclear ambitions (Editorial, 29/9) is irresponsible, as it involves military action instead of direct talks.

Even George W. Bush's refusal to support Israel's recent proposed air strike on Iran's nuclear facilities ('`Bush `no' to strike by Israel on Iran", 27-28/9) is an indication that such actions are unlikely to bring the desired outcome.

An attack on Iran would lead to devastating consequences around the world, including severe damage to Australia's economy from increased oil prices.

Israel already has more than 300 nuclear weapons and delivery rockets. It has continually threatened Iran with bombing raids.

If the West wants the Middle East to be a nuclear-free zone, the disarmament must start with Israel.

Bill Mathew

Parkville, Vic

TO say Iran is a bigger threat to the world than Wall St (read US imperial capitalism) is like saying Fiji is a bigger threat to whales than Japan. Iran is a stable, sovereign state which does not kowtow to the US administration.

It is pursuing a civilian nuclear agenda which may or may not develop into a weapons program.

Pakistan is an unstable state, which covertly supports terrorism in both Afghanistan and India but which does kowtow to the US and has an operational and expanding nuclear weapons program which has been financially and militarily propped up the US.

Meanwhile the US, while demanding other states do not develop nuclear weapons, continues to expand and upgrade its nuclear weapons and missile capabilities as well as (if John McCain wins the presidential elections) expanding its civilian nuclear generation capacity by at least 200 more nuclear power stations.

Greg Sheridan does not mention that Israel has had a secret and significant nuclear weapons program and capability for at least 30 years, clandestinely supported by the US.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The US is by far and away the biggest threat to the world on a number of fronts including environmental (the biggest polluter), economic (the biggest mess) and militarily both in terms of nuclear capability, conventional weapons production and military activity.

Greg Jefferys

Woodbridge, Tas

Heritage worth more than cash on gas pipeline route

NOT all West Australians nor all Kimberley Aborigines are mourning the decision of Inpex to pipe its gas from the Browse Basin to the Northern Territory ("Top End snatches \$24bn gas plant from under the West's nose", 27-28/9).

Many are applauding the decision not to bring the gas ashore at the Maret Islands for processing and exporting from the Kimberley coast.

Piping the gas to the NT will, at least for now, ensure that one of the great wilderness areas of the world will be kept intact.

The Kimberley Land Council has been stating that this decision is a huge loss for Kimberley indigenous people.

This is sad and wrong for a number of reasons.

First, that acceptable education and health services for Aboriginal people should depend on mining company royalties to the KLC; second, that the KLC is prepared to allow destruction of the most culturally significant and ancient rock art galleries in the world which are at the core of indigenous heritage and Australian pre-history; and third, that this beautiful Kimberley environment with its unique biodiversity, pristine rivers and coastline, so few people, no towns, virtually no access, can be bought for the airy promise of jobs and wads of money from multinational mining companies.

All Australians should be pressuring the federal and state governments for the Browse Basin gas to be piped from offshore to a southern industrial hub within Western Australia and with minimal environmental damage, and that governments should meet their responsibility of providing health services and education to some of Australia's most deprived people.

These services, taken for granted by other Australians, should not be reliant on the KLC being promised royalties and other hand-outs for selling off their treasured country.

There are some things in this world that should not be measured in dollars; the far northwest Kimberley is one of them.

Susan Bradley

North Kimberley, WA

On law, Bryce is right

CHRISTOPHER Pearson's attack on Quentin Bryce ("Conservatives under siege", Inquirer, 27-28/9) is mistaken and unwarranted. He describes as a "howler" Bryce's suggestion that the reserve powers entrusted to her to, for example, dismiss the government of the day should be "written down in the Constitution".

Pearson is wrong to say that this would be "virtually impossible as well as pointless".

Constitutional lawyers have for many years argued for exactly this reform on the basis that the vague and uncertain nature of the powers vested in the governor-general is a flaw in our system of government.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

There are also examples already in Australia of aspects of the reserve powers being codified, such as in the NSW Constitution and the ACT Self-Government Act. Rather than having a ``grasp of constitutional law in recent years (that) has left a lot to be desired'', our new Governor-General has in fact expressed views that demonstrate a clear understanding of the subject.

George Williams

The University of NSW, Sydney

Base cuts on population

SCIENTISTS who have called on Kevin Rudd to cut carbon emissions by 25 per cent by 2020 also urge the Government to reject Ross Garnaut's call for a 10 per cent reduction in absolute terms. If this is the case, then these scientists may not have understood Professor Garnaut's Targets And Trajectories report.

Two-thirds of emissions come from the energy sector and energy consumption is related to population. So Garnaut's approach of considering emissions reduction per head of population rather than absolute reduction is the only realistic way of measuring.

On current trends, the Australian Bureau of Statistics projects that Australia's population will grow to around 25 million by 2020 from 21 million today, almost a 20 per cent increase. The climate scientists want a 25 per cent emissions reduction by 2020. Garnaut is offering a 30 per cent reduction, taking this population growth into account.

Considering only absolute cuts in emissions without regard to changes in population seems somewhat unscientific when the population is growing largely from migration.

Martin Nicholson

The Pocket, NSW

AFTER an unprecedented economic boom, with high prosperity and low unemployment, after one of the worst droughts in modern history, and after the best efforts of climate change alarmists Al Gore, Tim Flannery and James Lovelock to steer the debate their way, 21 per cent of respondents to the 2008 Lowy Institute Poll are still not prepared to pay anything to slow down climate change.

It is for the alarmists and for those who condemned the Howard government's stance on climate change, not for the so-called denialists or realists such as me, to demonstrate how climate change via consumer restraint rather than via technical fixes can possibly work in democratic states.

Chris Oliver

Bondi Junction, NSW

Parents made bad choices

WALTER Bass (Letters, 29/09) is adamant that Philip Ruddock and the Howard government were primarily responsible for the long-term detention of children as asylum-seekers.

But the parents and guardians of these children elected to keep their family behind wire indefinitely while they fought deportation orders through appeal after appeal.

Greg Jones

Kogarah, NSW

SOMEHOW, Jane Hansen's article ``Ruddock gave detainees Bucklies'', (27-28/9), doesn't quite tally with Janet Albrechtsen's piece of the previous week, ``True reformer rose above the hysteria'', (17/9).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The only hysteria Ruddock rose above was that of people driven to it by his own actions.

David Blake

Lake Barrine, Qld

Discretion his better part

PAUL Newman's philanthropy will surely leave a greater legacy than his movies.

From the sale of his range of salad dressings and pasta sauces over the past 25 years he kept not one cent of his royalties or profits, donating more than \$12million in more than 800 individual grants to Australian and New Zealand charities. His donations to charity around the world now exceed \$300 million.

Statistics don't tell the real story. Newman championed the little guy and many charities he chose were little known.

He helped fledgling groups become established. His grants often gave credibility to organisations previously ignored by our governments.

He helped thousands of sick kids by putting on camps and outings and providing mobility equipment.

The charity spectrum is wide: rural fire brigades and emergency services, dance and musical performances for isolated kids, drought relief, aged care, medical research.

Before his death he ensured that his foundation would continue in the spirit which he intended. I have worked for Paul Newman for 25 years and admire him as one of the world's truly remarkable human beings.

Sue Home

Red Hill South, Vic

Unisex at the urinal

LORD Curzon's excursions (Letters, 29/9) reminded me of an occasion when I was caught short in the French countryside. Approaching a urinal, I was amused by noises coming from one of the adjacent cubicles. Amused that is until, standing at the urinal, I was frozen with embarrassment when the lady author of such noises came to wash her hands at the bowl right alongside me, without batting an eyelid.

David Evans

Taree, NSW

Stories bring the past to life

PETER Cochrane is on the right track ("Historians neglecting role as story-tellers", 29/9). Story-telling is how many cultures have preserved vital knowledge.

I was impelled to pursue history and become a teacher through at least one good storyteller at school.

There is a history of everything; let's share in the telling and in as interesting a way as is reasonable.

Phil Pryor

Turrumurra, NSW

FIRST BYTE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Anna Bligh wants more money for hospitals ("Bligh to demand federal funding boost for hospitals", 29/9). Perhaps it would help her cause if she abandoned the name of her mission statement -- Q2 -- as we are all aware that Queenslanders have to queue to get a hospital bed and queue to even get into a line to queue to see a specialist. Q2? Come to Queensland and you can Q too.

Judi Cox

Springfield, Qld

The Athenaeum Club should allow women if it is a club for civic and business leaders, because women are civic and business leaders too. But why would any woman actually want to join anyway? It sounds pretty crusty to me.

Shane Beazley

South Yarra, Vic

Now that the US Congress has agreed to a massive welfare handout to Wall Street's truly greedy, when will the conservative commentariat and right wing think tanks re-commence sneering at middle class welfare?

Thos Puckett

Ashgrove, Qld

It's great that the Chinese astronauts have returned safely to Earth. No doubt their mission will have confirmed the accuracy of their costings and they will now be able to build a space station at a tenth of the cost of any international projects. Is it just possible that Chinese ingenuity will see the prefabricated bird's nest dismantled and set aloft to orbit the Earth?

Crispin Walters

Chapel Hill, Qld

If the Government really is concerned about the effect that financing maternity leave will have on the budget, why doesn't it instead stop the baby bonus and spend that money on paid maternity leave?

Ben Williams

Smithfield Plains, SA

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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