

Editorial/comment

Keep Ali Yahya's dream alive

What does Ali Yahya think of the "low-intensity warfare" that erupted between Israel and the Palestinian Authority late last month?

Yahya served as Israel's first Arab ambassador from 1995 to 1999, when he represented the Jewish state in Finland.

During a visit to Winnipeg last September, he was passionate about the need to continue bringing Jewish and Arab youngsters together, to help build understanding between the two groups.

He also spoke fervently of the need to have younger Israeli Arabs do volunteer community service instead of army service, to help them identify more strongly with the Jewish state.

Only 12 days after his visit here, though, relations between Israeli Arabs and the rest of the Jewish state worsened dramatically.

Younger adult Arabs in the southern Galilee briefly shut down roads, and some threw stones at windows of Jewish businesses in the area. In Tel Aviv and other cities, younger Arabs also stoned windshields of cars passing through their neighborhoods.

Some chanted "Death to the Jews", and in return, some young Israelis chanted "Death to the Arabs", and attacked a mosque in northern Israel, in response

to Palestinian desecration of Joseph's Tomb and an ancient synagogue in Jericho.

Young Israeli Arabs also now often consider themselves Palestinians, rather than Israelis.

What lies ahead that might reassure Yahya, and Jews around the world who support his views?

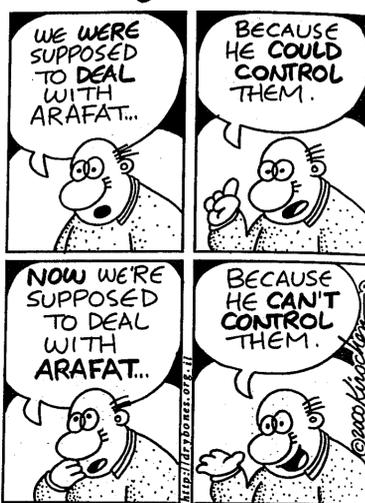
In the near future, until relative calm returns to the region, it will likely be hard to promote Israeli-Arab co-existence. Even models of Israeli-Arab harmony like Neve Shalom, a school for Jewish and Arab children midway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, has reported tension.

The past few weeks have led to a polarization of attitudes between Arabs and Jews - in the Diaspora as well as Israel, as each group competes for the sympathy of the larger world.

The Palestinian Authority, in particular, has preached hatred instead of understanding of Israel in the areas of the West Bank and Gaza Strip it controls.

There are too few Ali Yahya's in the world, and too many extremists on each side, bent on demonizing the enemy. Let's do what we can to keep this courageous Israeli Arab's dream alive - by trying harder to appreciate the other group's grievances, and encouraging mutual understanding, instead of hatred.

Dry Bones



Negev kibbutznik no longer optimistic about peace prospects

'I no longer believe that there will be peace in our time'

For years on end, Rachel, a Negev kibbutznik in her 60s, spent almost every Friday afternoon standing at a regional crossroads and holding a placard that called for an immediate agreement with the Palestinians. She firmly believed that if only Israelis were more flexible, a settlement could be achieved without undue difficulty.

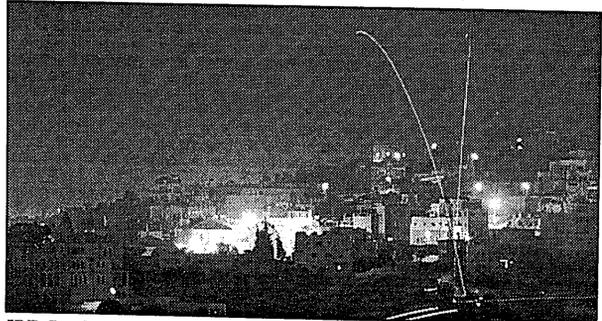
be hoisting such placards.

Commenting on the events of the last five weeks, she says: "The lousy news is almost unbearable for all us former optimists, people who thought that peace was around the corner. I no longer believe that there will be "Peace in our Time!" I can't see anything that will stop the bloodshed and save the peace process."

Another believer who has lost faith is Julio, who came here from Italy several decades ago. Strongly influenced by what has happened of late, he has taken it upon himself to write dozens of Italian friends - Jews and non-Jews - about the situation here.



The explosion as an Israel Defence Force missile hits its target, November 1, firing from the southern Jerusalem suburb of Gilo toward the nearby Arab village of Beit Jalla. Copyright: Isranet.



IDF fire being directed at Beit Jala on the night of November 1 after Palestinian gunmen resumed firing on Gilo. On the left, an IDF missile explodes in a building being used by terrorists. Copyright: Isranet.

young Palestinians with Israeli soldiers who are firing at them? The networks seem to ignore the fact that the Palestinians are also shooting, and that hostilities are always initiated by them."

Particularly galling to Amnon is CNN coverage. "For example," he notes, "it recently screened a discussion on developments in the Middle East where the three participants were: a neutral newscaster, a fiery Palestinian woman who accused the Israelis of every crime under the sun and a former State Department official who limited himself to a few cliches. I can only assume that CNN was not particularly interested in finding someone to present our viewpoint."

Amnon, who earned his doctorate at UCLA, asks rhetorically: "How would people in Los Angeles feel if their neighbors in Pasadena were taking potshots at them, if they had to think twice about going to shop at their local Ralph's because someone might have left a bomb under a pile of oranges, or if they weren't able to attend the birthday party of their niece on the other side of town because rioters had gained control of the freeways?"

The writer lives in Rehovot, Israel.

In his letters, Julio makes a clear distinction between the Palestinians and Arafat. Most of the former, he is sure, want to live in peace with their Israeli neighbors. But Arafat is "an evil, unreformed terrorist, a man who has no real interest in building a modern democratic society that would

exist side by side with Israel." Julio draws a parallel between Nasser and Arafat. "Until Nasser died," he says, "there was no possibility of peace with Egypt. The same is true as regards Arafat, who will eventually be replaced, so I hope, by a Palestinian Sadat."

Meanwhile Arafat is still around and, for the most part, enjoying a good press. This annoys Israelis, and most particularly, disillusioned leftists like Amnon, a Hebrew University professor who has always voted for Meretz. "How is it," he fumes, "that TV newscasts always juxtapose rock-throwing

Comment

Arafat's war boomerangs

Conflict hurting Palestinians economically

Quite aside from the military, political and propaganda aspects of the Palestinian violence during the past month and more, there is an additional element which, though previously unnoticed, is beginning to have an influence on the course of events. That element is the economic, a factor which Arafat had ignored to begin with, but is now affecting him very seriously.



Israeli riot police October 6 at road block outside the Palestinian town of Kalkilya, a few kilometers east of Kfar Saba, Israel. Copyright: Isranet.

INSIDE ISRAEL



CARL ALPERT

Before the stone throwing and then the live fire campaign of the Palestinians, more than 100,000 Arabs from Gaza and the areas found steady, gainful employment daily in Israel. Now security has compelled Israel to close the borders to these workers. Their wages were at once terminated, and more than 100,000 families are said to be on the brink of starvation for lack of income. Continued violence merely means continuance of the suffering of these people.

Grandiose plans which had been prepared for industrial expansion in the projected state of Palestine have now been abandoned as prospective investors from abroad have quickly withdrawn. Tourism to Bethlehem, Gaza and elsewhere has dropped to zero, and the Palestinian economy has felt it accordingly. Hotels, some of them only recently built, have closed down.

Ambitious plans had been drawn up and were in the process of execution for the creation of joint Israel-Palestine industrial parks on the border, in which Israel would share its high tech knowledge with its neighbors. All this has been abruptly dropped because of a hail of rocks, and it may take a long, long time before any degree of confidence is restored.

Unemployment within the Palestine areas has risen to 35 per cent, not only because of the workers unable to get to Israel, but also because many vital industries in the areas have been forced to close down for lack of raw materials, most of which had come in through Israel. In brief, losses to the Palestine economy have been estimated at \$50 to \$60 million U.S. a day.

What Arafat had overlooked, or had willfully ignored, was that economically the Palestinians are completely dependent on Israel. Even more, he had failed to take into consideration that the Palestinian Authority (PA) obtains its electric power supply, its water, its fuel and other basic needs exclusively from Israel. Thus far, Jerusalem has not interfered with the flow of these necessities, but if the violence continues or is increased, there will be powerful demand from within Israel to close these doors, too.

Since the Arab states seem in no hurry to provide financial help, despite

their assurances of support, what does the Palestinian Authority live on? Few realize that the Israel government transfers to the PA between 30 and 60 million shekels a month, constituting levies collected by Israel for goods imported through Israel ports, but destined for the PA. Sales tax revenue collected from the Palestinian workers here has also been systematically refunded to the PA. This, too, is about to dry up.

It seems almost certain that there will be a Palestinian state, but if its relations with Israel remain hostile, or even just cold, it will be completely non-viable. How long will the UN and European powers continue to support the orphan state with their charitable handouts?

As one commentator put it, in authorizing and encouraging the campaign of violence, Arafat has in effect shot himself in the foot.

It is true that there has been an effect on the Israel economy as well, but nowhere nearly as painful as that experienced by the Palestinians. Economists have estimated that the recent events have hurt about one per cent of the Israel economy, but about 25 per cent of the Palestinian economy.

The absence of Arab laborers has been sorely felt by Israel's agriculture and construction industries, but foreign workers and many of Israel's unemployed are gradually taking up the slack. Hotels and restaurants have felt the results of the almost complete absence of tourists here too, but as indicated, all these in sum total, while painful, account for only a tiny percentage of the country's economy.

Israel can withstand these pressures, but it remains to be seen how long the Palestinians can endure the economic blockade which they have imposed on themselves. Arafat has two alternative courses of action: to call off the violence and return to the negotiating table (which would mean a loss of face for him), or in desperation throw the whole Middle East into an all-out war in the hope that world public opinion will come to his aid and impose a solution. Arafat is unpredictable, and it is impossible to say which course of action he will choose.

The writer lives in Haifa, Israel.

An uneven balance sheet

Violence prompts re-thinking of peace process

At no time in the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict has peace seemed so close and yet so far at one and the same time.

COMMENT ON ISRAEL



SHIRA HERZOG

Although the peace process is clearly stalled, and Arafat's fatal weaknesses as a negotiating partner have been exposed, certain achievements of the Oslo process cannot be erased. The reality of the conflict, even between Israelis and Palestinians, has been altered immeasurably. What is the balance sheet to date?

Since the signing of the Wye Agreement by Prime Minister Netanyahu in 1998, a consensus has emerged for most Israelis on the reality of Palestinian nationhood and statehood, as well as an acceptance of the principle of territorial withdrawal from significant parts of the West Bank and Gaza. As recent polls have shown, this is unlikely to change. A majority of Israelis has maintained support for renewed negotiations with the Palestinians, right through the violence of the last several weeks.

On the Arab side, the restrained resolutions at the Arab League Summit last month demonstrated the realism of Arab leaders who know that the risks of war by far outweigh the gains of strident rhetoric. In spite of the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians, Israel does not face the prospect of all-out war. So much for the assets.

The liabilities are all too clear. The outbreak of violence has forced a fundamental rethinking of the assumptions that guided the Israeli peace camp for three decades. Arafat's refusal to accept Barak's offer of 90 per cent of the territories captured in 1967 gives the lie to the belief that withdrawal from those territories, as such, is the key to peace with the Palestinians. The sinking realization for supporters of the process is that the conflict may not have resolution in the foreseeable future. Coupled with the zealous fervour of religious rhetoric that has been woven into recent events, the future seems angry, confrontational and explosive.

Inside Israel - and no less important - recent violence on the part of Israeli Palestinians has reopened the festering sore of relations between the Jewish majority and Arab minority. The dilemma of co-existence is acute. For many Jewish Israelis, it now appears that the "green line" has disappeared. Israeli

Arabs are identified with the Palestinians, and their loyalty is questioned more than ever before.

For Israeli Arabs, the death of 16 fellow Arabs at the hands of Israeli police has been the violent culmination of decades of discrimination and secondary status. From their perspective, Israelis never dealt with their reality as a minority with equal status within a Jewish state. While radical voices within the Arab community are calling openly for a disengagement from the state, others in the Arab and Jewish community feel that this may be a last chance for a renewed dialogue and a new effort at equalizing opportunities and resources. No Israeli prime minister can now afford to ignore this issue, regardless of the outcome with the Palestinians.

A few weeks ago, the excruciating existential dilemmas faced by Israel were expressed eloquently and forcefully in an address to law graduates by Chief Justice Aharon Barak. "Especially when the guns fire, we must strengthen our internal democracy and our respect for the quality of every individual in our society, including 'the stranger in our midst'."

Ultimately, this is what Israelis are fighting for. As the relationship with the Palestinians is radicalized, and an angry generation of Israeli Arabs goes to the streets, the country has to redefining, again, what it means to be a democracy at war.

The writer lives in Toronto.

LETTERS

Get combat training now

The growing violence in Israel and the related anti-Jewish incidents in North American cities should be raising red flags for Jewry across the continent and in Winnipeg: 1) we stand alone and nobody is going to come running to help us and 2) there is a terrible lack of trained Jewish men and women. This lack of trained personnel has to be corrected immediately. It has to be done now. There may not be a second chance.

G-d forbid if there is a calamity in Israel, caused by Palestinians, Israeli Arabs and Israel's neighbours; if there are anti-Semitic events in Winnipeg, there will be an immediate need for combat-trained men and women. This is not a joke, nor is it a fiction. History has proven that. The Jewish community should be well aware of what can happen. And let me be frank and reiterate: Nobody is going to run and help Israel or us.

So I am asking the young to middle aged men and women of this community to put down their basketballs and hockey sticks, turn off the TV and get yourself trained this winter. As I said, if something happens, there will be no time to do anything. The training has to happen now.

There are three part-time/reserve army combat regiments in Winnipeg: Royal Winnipeg Rifles (infantry), Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders (infantry), Fort Garry Horse (armoured reconnaissance). There are also the non-combat army units 17 Service Battalion and 17 medical company.

The navy has the reserve "ship" Chippewa. The air force, 402 squadron and ARAF. There is also the 735 Communications Regiment.

Am I fear mongering? Maybe. But the events that are occurring are very very serious, and G-d forbid if anything should happen, we will need people "on the ground". There will be no time to train.

GERRY FINKLE
Winnipeg

THE JEWISH POST & NEWS
Published Wednesdays, 47 times a year, in the interests of the Jewish community of Winnipeg and Western Canada. Based on The Jewish Post - established in 1925, and The Western Jewish News - established in 1926.
Subscriptions in Canada \$38.76 per year.
Subscriptions outside Canada \$70.00 per year in Cdn. funds or \$60.00 per year in U.S. funds.
Member of Jewish Telegraphic Agency, New York, World Zionist Press Service, Jerusalem.
Awards: Smolar awards for editorial writing: 1976, 1978, 1980; B'nai B'rith Canada League for Human Rights Media Human Rights Award - citation for editorial writing: 1985.
Reproduction or transmission of all or any part of this publication by any means whatsoever is forbidden without prior permission of the publisher.
The Jewish Post & News is not responsible for the kashrut of any products or establishments advertised or publicized in this newspaper, or in inserts included in this newspaper.
Opinions expressed in letters to the editor, or articles by contributing writers are not necessarily endorsed by The Jewish Post & News.
ALL news and advertising copy must be in our office NO LATER THAN NOON THURSDAY for the following week's paper.
Offices and plant at: 113 Hutchings St. Winnipeg, Man. R2X 2V4
Largest Anglo-Jewish Newspaper in Western Canada
Publisher: Matt Bellan
Editor: Bernie Bellan
Business Manager: Bernie Bellan
Advertising Manager: Bernie Bellan
Phone: 694-3332
Fax: 694-3918
Registration No. 08971
Postage paid at Winnipeg
ISSN 0836-6063