

# OPINION/EDITORIAL

## Sharon's Choices/Arafat's Options

by Ken Stein

Has the present dire situation for Israelis and Palestinians become so desperate that only American intervention can shape a cease-fire? Is there a way for Arafat to extricate himself from the physical and political cul-de-sac which has narrowed around him in recent days? Or will Israel continue to surround Palestinian cities, keeping the Palestinians penned in for an indeterminate period of time only allowing food, medical, and other necessary supplies into the Palestinian areas? Will Arafat depart office unceremoniously or be killed, leaving the Palestinian political community in a state of civil turmoil as succession to a new regime emerges? Is Sharon interested in deposing or disposing of Arafat? So far the answer is no. In an interview in February 2001, Sharon said, "It is not up to us who the Palestinians elect to lead them, [Arafat] is the man we must talk to ... gradual solutions should be pursued ... the first phase [with the Palestinians] is a state of non-belligerency to be followed by the gradual development of a relationship." In an interview published at the end of November, Sharon remarked, "I believe I can reach a settlement [with the Palestinians] ... I believe from one of the few who can bring this about. Peace is almost as painful as war because you must make painful concessions. ... [In] the final analysis, when we get through the testing chapter of a calm life without terror and with cooperation, be it in the economic and other spheres, we will reach a solution in which there is a Palestinian state. But it must be a Palestinian state by agreement and must be demilitarized with the things we need to exist."

In the past, when moments of political urgency demanded action, Arafat chose to preserve

himself and the status of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. His strong preference is not to expand definitive cleavages in the Palestinian community, which a sincerely prolonged crack-down would inevitably create. With the Bush Administration confiscating assets of Hamas in the U.S. and unequivocally declaring Hamas a "murderous terrorist" organization, Arafat is left with an ever smaller middle ground on which to maneuver.

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And by stating that as a sovereign nation Israel has the right to defend itself, the Bush Administration estimated that such overt positioning against Arafat will not adversely effect the success of the international coalition established to destroy the terrorist network in Afghanistan. Rightly or wrongly, like it or not, less than three months after the assault on America, Arafat and Hamas are surrounded like Osama bin-Laden, al-Qaeda, and the Taliban. In its own way and for its own purposes, actions of Hamas have allowed Israel to join actively the coalition against terrorism.

American foreign policy favors establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel; President Bush called for one, Secretary of State Powell requested an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and two senior

U.S. envoys were dispatched to the area to try yet again to mediate another cease-fire. Key disagreement exists over the term "ending occupation." The U.S., Europeans, and Israelis define it as all or some of the West Bank, Gaza, and portions of east Jerusalem; many Palestinians, including Hamas and other Arabs, use the term "ending occupation" as a geographic equivalent for the end of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish nation-state. They believe that Israel illegitimately occupies all the land of Palestine. No matter what Arafat has said in the past, he is being forced to choose which definition of "ending occupation" it will be: some or all of Palestine.

The presence of American envoys in Jerusalem gives Arafat an available escape from the closing vise. Arafat does not want to show to his people that after 15 months of uprising against Israel he is capitulating to either American pressure or Israeli threats. While he waits, perhaps to be bailed out one more time by Arab, Islamic and European leaders, Israel may have already made contacts with potential Palestinian successors. Israel, like the United States, realizes that ultimately the Palestinian and Israeli people will have to share the land west of the Jordan River in separate states, regardless of whether Arafat is the first president of that state or not. ☆

*In Atlanta, Georgia, Professor Kenneth W. Stein teaches Middle Eastern history and political science at Emory University. He is the author of Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Begin, Carter and the Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace (Routledge, 1999). For Microsoft's Encarta Encyclopedia, Stein is the author of six entries dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the PLO, and Hamas.*

## The View from Israel

### How Much Democracy Can Israel Afford?

By Carl Alpert

Haifa - Israel is proud of the fact that it is a democracy - the only democracy in the Middle East. Its government is elected by majority vote of its citizens, and from time to time the government is changed by the wishes of the electorate. But the definition of democracy includes far more than merely change of government. It embraces a broad range of personal liberties, protection of privacy, freedom for expression of varying opinions, the right of the public to be kept informed, freedom to come and go, freedom to practice religion and more.

What happens to these freedoms when a country is at war, and national security may dictate certain abridgement or restrictions of these rights? Such questions are being asked in Israel these days. Most immediate case in question is the decision by the Knesset to strip M.K. Azmi Bishara of his parliamentary immunity so that he may face prosecution for making speeches in Syria praising the terrorist Hizbollah. His reaction: He was democratically elected to the Knesset by a large number of voters whose views he represents. He was exercising his right in a democracy.

There are other public actions that have for some time been questioned here. The torture of prisoners to extract information from them has long been regarded as typical of repressive dictatorial regimes. Yet Israeli military authorities justify such action in special circumstances, as when they receive reliable information that a major terrorist attack is about to be carried out, and the prisoner in hand has information which would enable Israel to anticipate, act and prevent the attack. That is known as the ticking bomb. Does a country that is faced with enemies both within and without, and is in effect in a perpetual state of war, have the right to suspend the application of certain democratic axioms?

Should the press/television/

radio, which in the long run determine what the public knows, and therefore to a large extent help formulate public opinion, provide a platform for enemies of Israel to present their views, which may be antagonistic to what most consider the best interests of Israel? But in the name of democracy? It must be added that the media here to an extent follow the democratic line, despite much criticism.

The press here is subject to military censorship, but it is applied only to matters affecting immediate security, and the press is to a large degree responsible and self-censored on such matters.

Emotions play an important and colorful role in our lives. To what extent can the government seek to control emotions when expressed in public rallies and demonstrations at which provocative placards are displayed, and pictured on television screens? The issues may be political, economic, social, but it is not forgotten here that such uncontrolled expressions of emotion led to the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. If incitement is banned, who determines what constitutes incitement, without trespassing on treasured principles of the right of the individual to hold opinions and give expression to them?

Restriction of private rights may take other forms as well. There are many who complain that municipal ordinances that forbid the sale of pork products, or ban public transport on the Sabbath constitute an invasion of the rights of the individual citizen, who should be left free to make his own choice in such matters. This has led to wide ranging discussion as to whether the concept of a Jewish state is in conflict with the definition of a democratic state.

It would not be correct to say that the country is torn by dissension on these issues, but such matters are being given thoughtful consideration in many quarters. ☆

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## WNET

(Continued from page 13)

Carolina Room of the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, in partnership with the Charlotte Jewish Historical Society, a CAJE project.

Why May 2002? May will be the first annual History and Heritage Month Celebration in the Charlotte region, a joint marketing effort coordinated by the Charlotte Regional History Consortium, to raise public awareness about the wonderful history and heritage resources available all across our area. CAJE and its project the Charlotte Jewish Historical Society are longstanding members of the Consortium, which was founded almost a decade ago when the local history museums, heritage sites, archives and historical sources banded together. The month-long celebration will kick-off at Taste of Charlotte on the first weekend in May, and will conclude at a community-wide event on the first weekend in June. There will be a family-friendly "Queen Charlotte's Treasure Hunt" activity to support that kids and parents may complete during the month by visiting participating sites, such as our exhibit here in the Galleries at J.

The national list of WNET/Thirteen Heritage: Civilization and the Jews grant recipients includes:

2. Arkansas Institute of Holy Land Studies, Sherwood, AR.
3. Kehilla Community Synagogue, Berkeley, CA.
4. Agency for Jewish Education, San Diego, CA.
5. Bureau of Jewish Education, San Francisco, CA.
6. Greater Hartford Jewish Community Center, West Hartford, CT.
7. Adolph and Rose Levis Jewish Community Center, Boca Raton, FL.
8. Board of Jewish Education of Metropolitan Chicago, Northbrook, IL.
9. Jewish Foundation of the Quad Cities, Rock Island, IL.
10. Bureau of Jewish Education, Getzville, NY.
11. Conference of Jewish Organizations of Nassau County, Syosset, NY.
12. Jewish Federation of Broome County, Vestal, NY.
13. Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, Michigan District, Oak Park, MI.
14. Temple Israel Libraries and Media Center, West Bloomfield, MI.
15. St. Louis Jewish Community Center, St. Louis, MO.
16. Carolina Agency for Jewish Education, Charlotte, NC.
17. Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey, Cherry Hill, NJ.
18. Jewish Community Center, Albuquerque, NM.
19. WGTE Public Broadcasting, Toledo, OH.
20. UAHC Camp Harlan,

- Leighton, PA.
21. Jewish Community Centers of Greater Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA.
22. Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island, Providence, RI.
23. Barshop Jewish Community Center, San Antonio, TX.
24. KWBU/Baylor University, Waco, TX.

In addition to the lecture by Dr. Goldfield on the evening of May 9, there will be a demonstration of the interactive DVD-ROM and its many features that complement the video series. The nine-hour video series has continued to be a popular item in the CAJE Resource Center over the years, and many families and schools borrow the videos on a regular basis. Heritage: Civilization and the Jews trace the history of the Jewish people from biblical times to the present, telling their story as part of the broader history of Western Civilization. Now enhanced with new content bringing the epic saga up to present day, Heritage is a portrait of the Jewish experience with a scope and depth unlikely to be surpassed.

The grant program is sponsored by WNET/Thirteen, the Educational Broadcasting Corporation and the Charles H. Revson Foundation, all of New York City. Watch future issues of The Charlotte Jewish News for more information about the lecture and demonstration on May 9, about the upcoming photo exhibit, and about History and Heritage month in the Charlotte region. Or contact CAJE at 704-944-6780 or email [lsstein@vnet.net](mailto:lsstein@vnet.net). ☆

**Save the Date!**

# Purim

Games

Sunday,

Food

February 24, 2002

Contests

Noon 'til 3 PM

Activity Booths

at Shalom Park

and much more!

# Purim Carnival