



ISRAEL NEWS
A collection of the week's news from Israel
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee
of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation

Events...

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Commentary...

The Convenient War Against the Jews By Caroline Glick

In the end, the global jihad, and the West's fickle response to radical Islam's assault on its civilization, is about hating Jews. This truth, never wholly hidden from view, was exposed in all its ugliness in recent months with startling disclosures by former Italian president and Senator-for-life Francesco Cossiga.

In a letter to Italy's *Corriere della Serra* in August, Cossiga acknowledged that during the early 1970s, then Italian prime minister Aldo Moro signed an agreement with Yassir Arafat's PLO and affiliated organizations that enabled the Palestinians to field terrorists, operate bases and store weapons in Italy in exchange for immunity from attack for Italy and Italian interests worldwide. Cossiga also acknowledged that even when the Palestinians murdered Italians, the government still protected them. Indeed, he admitted for the first time that the largest terror attack ever to take place on Italian soil - the bombing of the Bologna train station in July 1980 which killed 85 people - was the work of PLO-affiliated terrorists from George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

At the time of the bombing, Cossiga was Italy's prime minister. Right after it occurred, he blamed the atrocity on neo-fascists. In his words at the time, "Unlike leftist terrorism, which strikes at the heart of the state through its representatives, black terrorism prefers the massacre because it promotes panic and impulsive reactions."

In August, he claimed that it was the work of the PFLP and asserted that the bomb exploded inadvertently. That is, the Palestinians hadn't meant to kill non-Jews - so Italian authorities protected them.

On Friday, Cossiga expanded on his disclosures to *Corriere della Serra* in an interview with Yediot Aharonot's Rome correspondent Menachem Ganz. Cossiga admitted that it wasn't just Israeli targets that Italy permitted the Palestinians to attack with impunity, but Jewish targets as well. Indeed, in at least one and probably two incidents, the Italians colluded with the Palestinians in their attacks against Jews. On October 9, 1982, six terrorists opened fire on worshippers leaving Rome's Great Synagogue. Dozens of Jews were wounded and two-year-old Stefano Tache was murdered. Hours before the attack the Italian police detail charged with securing the synagogue was withdrawn.

Then too, in December 1985, Palestinian terrorists opened fire on the El Al ticket counter at the Rome airport. Ten people were killed. Another seven people were murdered in a simultaneous attack against the El Al ticket counter

חג שמח

בס"ד
at the Vienna airport. According to Cossiga, Italian intelligence agencies received prior warning of the attack but didn't bother to share the information with Israel.

Cossiga explained to Yediot, "No Italian targets were hit. They attacked the Israeli airline at the airport. The murdered were all Israelis, Jews, and Americans."

Then there was the hijacking of the Italian cruise liner Achille Lauro off the Egyptian coast in October 1985. Palestinian terrorists led by Abu Abbas commandeered the ship. They shot wheelchair-bound American Jewish passenger Leon Klinghoffer and threw him overboard while he was still alive. The Egyptians freed the hijackers and sent them off on a flight to Libya. American jets forced a plane to land at a NATO base in Sicily. The Italians refused to permit the Americans to take the hijackers into custody and freed Abbas. The Italians cast the standoff as a victory against American bullies. But it really amounted to a surrender to Palestinian murderers. As Cossiga explained, "Since the Arabs were capable of harming Italy more than the Americans, Italy surrendered to them."

COSSIGA ALLEGES that his country's agreement with the Palestinians has recently been expanded to include Hizbullah. After the Second Lebanon War, Italy agreed to command the UNIFIL force charged with preventing Hizbullah from reasserting control over southern Lebanon and blocking its re-armament efforts. Yet Cossiga asserts, "I can state with absolute certainty that... Italy has a deal with Hizbullah according to which UNIFIL forces turn a blind eye to Hizbullah's rearmament so long as no attacks are carried out against soldiers in the force."

Ganz notes ruefully that although Cossiga's statements provoked the Italian Jewish community to demand that Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi investigate the government's collusion with Palestinian terrorists, no such investigation is likely to be forthcoming. Ganz explains that Berlusconi himself is not immune to the anti-Semitism that caused his predecessors to abstain from protecting Italy's Jewish citizens. When he addresses Italian Jews, Berlusconi often calls the Israeli government "your government," and so exposes his adherence to the view that Jews are not true citizens of any country other than Israel.

The anti-Semitic belief that all Jews are Zionists and therefore all Jews are fair game in the war against Israel - itself simply another round of the age-old war against the Jews - allows anti-Semites to obfuscate the fact that their anti-Israel rhetoric is simply warmed over Jew-hatred. People like Iranian leaders Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ali Khamenei, and Palestinian terrorists from the PLO and their progeny in Hamas and Hizbullah nearly always limit their threats to "Zionists," and so pretend that they aren't actually anti-Semites.

Their razor-thin deception is eagerly embraced by their fellow travelers in the West - from university professors like Juan Cole, Steven Walt and John Mearshimer, to policymakers like Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, to Western decision-makers and European heads of state, and an alarming number of American politicians.

This deception is par for the course of anti-Semitism. Throughout history anti-Semites have used Jew-hatred as a way to rally their troops. By attacking Jews as the collective enemy, tyrants have given their people a convenient, weak culprit to attack to deflect criticism away from their own failures or to hide real enemies from pacifistic publics uninterested in fighting. Anti-Semitism appeals to people's basest instinct. But people don't like to acknowledge how much they hate Jews, and Jews have always preferred to deny that they are hated.

So anti-Semitic leaders have disguised their appeal to base instinct by pretending that they are actually appealing to sublime aspirations. In the case of the Nazis for instance, Adolf Hitler and Josef Goebbels appealed to

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Germanic pride and love for the Fatherland. Today, the Left appeals to people's aspirations for peace and justice. It is only by permitting and indeed enabling Jews to die and the Jewish state to be destroyed that "peace" can be secured and the Palestinians can receive "justice."

THIS STRATEGY appeals to European - and to greater and lesser degrees American - policymakers for two reasons. First, as French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner made clear in an interview with Ha'aretz on Friday, while the West understands that Islamic jihadists seek the destruction of Europe and the US, they believe - in part because their own anti-Semitism leads them to exaggerate Jewish power - that they will get away with coddling the Arabs and Iran because Israel will protect them.

Referring to Iran's nuclear weapons program, Kouchner said that no one is particularly worried about Iran's nuclear threat because everyone believes that Israel will attack Iran for them. In his words, "I honestly don't believe that [a nuclear arsenal] will give any immunity to Iran. First, you [Israel] will hit them before [they acquire nuclear weapons]... Because Israel has always said that it will not wait for the bomb to be ready. I think that they [the Iranians] know. Everybody knows."

What is ironic about this view is that it exposes the inversion of anti-Semitic rhetoric. Five years ago, former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamed told an approving audience of Islamic heads of state, "The Jews rule the world by proxy. They get others to fight and die for them."

But the West's belief that Israel will protect it from Iran shows that the opposite is true. The West is absolutely certain that Israel is its proxy, and that Jews will fight and die protecting it from the forces of global terror and jihad.

THE SECOND reason the Western champions of "peace" have opted to sell Israel and the Jews out to the jihadists is because as anti-Semites, Western "anti-Zionists" fear Jewish power and therefore want us to be weak. So it is that for the past 40 years, European governments and the US State Department have bankrolled anti-Zionist groups in Israel like Peace Now, B'tselem and Four Mothers. So it is that they have blamed Israel for Palestinian terrorism. And even when Israel succumbs to all their demands for territorial withdrawals, they always manage to demand still more.

In the same interview with Ha'aretz for instance, Kouchner on the one hand praised Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni for their willingness to surrender Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria to the Palestinians, but argued that this is still not enough. Israel must also accept the free immigration of the hostile descendants of the Arabs who left Israel in 1948. That is, Israel must also agree to its own destruction in order to pave the way for "peace." In his words, "The main problem is the refugees and Jerusalem, but more the refugees. Olmert and Livni do not have the perception of this."

Kouchner for one is certain that Livni will come around to recognizing the need to allow hostile foreign-born Arabs to move here. "I think she will change. This is always the case for people that are in charge for politics and for life," he claimed.

Kouchner soothed the reporters' fears of national destruction by claiming that he's probably not talking about more than 100,000 hostile Arabs immigrants. But that's today.

If Livni does form a government and comes around to this view, leave it to the West to explain that placing "arbitrary" limits on Arab immigration is a human rights abuse, and that Israel's Zionist racism is compelling the Arabs and Iran to kill Jews and Westerners around the world.

AND THIS brings us to perhaps the greatest irony of the West's collusion with the Arabs and Iran in their war against the Jews. The logical outcome of the twin delusions of anti-Semitism - that Jews are all powerful and that the Jews must be cut down to size - is the destruction of Israel. And if that happens, the West will find itself in jaws of the Islamic jihadists they have been feeding the Jews to for four decades.

The West's subversion of the Israeli elite has fomented a situation where many Israeli leaders have embraced their anti-Semitic views of Israel. Leaders like Livni and Olmert, and the media and academia in Israel, have largely accepted the notion that Israel is to blame for the global jihad. Today these leaders uphold Jewish weakness as an ideal. The longer these Western-supported elites remain in power, the larger the chance that Israel won't attack Iran and that Israel will allow itself to be destroyed in the interest of pursuing "peace" with Palestinian terrorists.

And if Israel is destroyed, the West won't be able to depend on us Jews to fight and die for them anymore. They will be all alone. (Jerusalem Post Oct 6)

Just Be Our Friend By Barry Rubin

In response to a casual question, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates dropped a historical bombshell, an offhand remark telling more about how the Middle East works than 100 books. And a former US Marine commander added an equally big revelation about long-ago events quite relevant for today.

Almost 30 years ago, president Jimmy Carter tried to show what a nice guy he was by pressing the shah of Iran not to crush the revolutionaries. After the monarch fell, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski met top officials of the new Islamist regime to pledge US friendship to the government controlled by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. At the time, I wrote that by approaching some of the milder radicals, the administration frightened the more militant ones. US-Iran relations must be smashed, they concluded, lest Washington back their rivals. In fact, as we'll see in a moment, the Carter administration offered to back Khomeini himself.

Three days after the Brzezinski meeting, in November 1979, the Islamist regime's cadre seized the US embassy and its staff as hostages, holding them until January 1981. This was our introduction to the new Middle East of radical Islamism. Carter continued his weak stance, persuading the Teheran regime that it could get away with anything.

So we've long known that undermining US allies, passivity toward anti-American radicals and inaction after a massive terrorist act against Americans doesn't work. The hostages were only released because Iran was suffering desperately from an Iraqi invasion and feared Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, as someone likely to be tougher.

THE LESSON of being strong in defending interests and combating enemies has not quite been learned. Today, the mainstream prescription for success is just the opposite, and the US may be about to elect a president whose world view parallels the way Carter worked.

Here's where Gates comes in. On September 29, while giving a lecture at the National Defense University in Washington, someone asked him how the next president might improve relations with Iran. Gates responded: "I have been involved in the search for the elusive Iranian moderate for 30 years." Then Gates revealed what was actually said at Brzezinski's meeting, in which he has been a participant, summarizing Brzezinski's position as follows: "We will accept your revolution... We will recognize your government. We will sell you all the weapons that we had contracted to sell the shah... We can work together in the future."

The Iranians demanded the US turn over to them the fugitive shah, whom they would have executed. Brzezinski refused. Three days later Iran seized the embassy and forever changed the Middle East. The road thus paved led to the Iran-Iraq and Iraq-Kuwait wars, the power of Hamas and Hizbullah, September 11, 2001, and a great deal more. Many thousands would die due to American timidity and Iranian aggressiveness.

Had the US been a mean bully in its treatment of the new Islamist Iran? On the contrary, Washington did everything possible to negotiate, conciliate and build confidence. We'll do almost anything you want, Carter and Brzezinski offered, just be our friend. Far from being appeased Iran demanded total humiliation - turning over the fatally ill, deposed shah for execution - which even the Carter administration couldn't accept.

Far from persuading Khomeini that the US was a real threat, the US government made itself appear a pitiful, helpless giant, convincing Teheran - as Khomeini himself put it - that America couldn't do a damn thing. His revolution and ideology were too strong for it.

SO WHY should we expect such a tactic would work today? How long does it take to get the message: This is an ideological revolution with huge ambitions to which America is inevitably a barrier. Appeasement, talks, apologies, confidence-building measures won't convince Teheran that America is its friend, only that it's an enemy so weak as to make aggression seem inevitably successful.

The only US precondition has been that to get a high-level dialogue, Iran must first stop its drive for nuclear weapons, at least temporarily. Gates understands what happened: "Every administration since then has reached out to the Iranians in one way or another and all have failed... The reality is the Iranian leadership has been consistently unyielding over a very long period of time in response to repeated overtures from the United States about having a different and better kind of relationship."

This situation is quite parallel to efforts to have reasonable preconditions with the Palestinians - stop terrorism, incitement, clearly accept a two-state solution, or with Syria - stop sponsoring terrorism, cease trying to take over Lebanon and accept normal relations with Israel as the outcome of peace.

Similar bargains have been offered Hamas and Hizbullah. Yet even this is too much for the other side and too much for those who continue trying to undermine any Western leverage on radical forces.

If the other side won't give anything, they insist, merely offer more. And if the other side takes those concessions, pockets them, gives nothing in return and continues its behavior, this merely proves you have to give still more.

Here's more evidence why that's wrong. Former US Marine Col. Timothy Geraghty was Marine commander in October 1983 when suicide bombers attacked the barracks of US peacekeeping forces in Beirut, killing 242 Americans. He now reveals that a September 26, 1983 US intelligence intercept showed Iran's government ordering the attack through its embassy in Lebanon. The timid response to that operation set a pattern leading directly to the September 11 attack.

Three decades after the miserable failure of the make-friends-with-Islamist-Iran policy - including offering Khomeini continued US arms' supplies - isn't it time to learn this simple lesson? (Jerusalem Post Oct 5)

The writer is director of Global Research in International Affairs Center and editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs Journal.

Amnesty's Obsession with Israel By Yael Beck and Merav Fima

Amnesty persistently condemns Israel while ignoring suffering elsewhere

Even in a month when war raged in Georgia, Amnesty International continued to focus on the Gaza Strip, persistently blaming Israel for ongoing Palestinian hardship.

Amnesty, in fact, issued harsher condemnations of Israel than of any party to the Georgian conflict. With a ceasefire holding between Israel and Hamas, resulting in a period of calm, Amnesty stubbornly continued to spew hollow publications repeating outdated allegations.

Moreover, Amnesty took pride in its relentless criticism of Israel, while the rest of the world rightly concerned itself with the unfolding crisis in Georgia. In a press release, the organization boasted: "With the ceasefire holding, the suffering in Gaza has fallen off the international news agenda. However, Amnesty International members continue to campaign." This "explanation" merely highlights Amnesty's obsession with Israel, regardless of the reality on the ground.

Regular readers of Amnesty's material are not fooled by their non-stop publications condemning Israel and can easily discern that they seldom reveal anything new. Many of its press releases are identical, except for minor alterations. Amnesty's ulterior motive appears to be to maintain a constant production rate of material denouncing Israel, regardless of actual developments.

For example, Amnesty's distasteful decision to continue issuing condemnations of Israel during a period of intense intra-Palestinian fighting clearly illustrates the point. Unsurprisingly, Amnesty failed to mention, let alone praise, Israel's commendable acceptance of Fatah members fleeing from Hamas.

While devoting so many of its resources to Gaza, at a time of acute suffering and human rights abuses in Georgia, Amnesty International failed to provide effective coverage of the Georgian conflict. Although one would reasonably expect Amnesty to immediately respond with urgency to such a crisis, raising awareness for its victims, Amnesty preferred to focus on its usual target: Israel.

For instance, on August 12, 2008, the organization released a statement headlined "Trapped - collective punishment in Gaza." An expanded version was re-issued on August 27, 2008. As NGO Monitor analysis has demonstrated, the report lacks evidence and credibility, largely ignores the context of terrorism, exploits international legal terminology, and presents data in a highly selective and distorted manner.

Concurrently, Amnesty released a series of vague and neutral statements calling on all sides of the conflict in the Caucasus to avoid harming civilians, without assuming a clear stance, nor providing comprehensive reporting on the events.

Lame response to Georgian conflict Amnesty's scarce coverage of the war in Georgia is not the result of inaccessibility. Human Rights Watch managed to provide ongoing and insightful coverage, based on its delegation's observations. Such limp statements on Amnesty's part betray its commitment to the defense of every individual's human rights.

Disappointingly, Amnesty expressed less concern regarding the events in Georgia, despite the fact that a greater number of civilians were killed during that conflict than over the course of the Second Lebanon War in 2006. On that

occasion, Amnesty rushed to condemn Israel in almost-daily publications. It did not hesitate to portray Israel as an aggressor and largely ignored the fact that civilians in northern Israel suffered a constant barrage of rockets launched by the Hizbullah terrorist organization.

Amnesty's lame response to the recent Georgian conflict, overshadowed by its focus on Israel, indicates that the Second Lebanon War simply served as an incentive for Amnesty to pursue its shameless Israel-bashing. Had its aversion to war been genuine, Amnesty would have responded as forcefully or even more vocally to the Georgian conflict.

Were it truly concerned with the universality of human rights, Amnesty would apply the same standards to all countries. Hence, Amnesty's aim appears clear: to persistently condemn Israel, even if it means neglecting those suffering in other, more pressing conflicts across the world.

The authors are researchers at NGO Monitor. (YNET Oct 2)

A Vehicle Promoting Evil By Isi Leibler

Five years ago, I wrote that the civilized world would benefit from the dissolution of the United Nations, already then a dysfunctional assembly of nations dominated by tyrannies and dictatorships.

Since then, despite the welcome replacement of secretary-general Kofi Annan by Ban Ki-Moon and aside from a few symbolic meetings in New York condemning anti-Semitism, the situation has dramatically worsened.

The newly created UN Human Rights Commission, intended to be more balanced than its predecessor, shamelessly promotes medieval anti-Semitic blood libels and demonization of Israel at levels unprecedented even by UN standards. Many of the Israel-speeches dominating the agenda could have been delivered at Hizbullah gatherings. Israel is routinely condemned as the world's worst example of human rights violations by apologists for monstrous regimes like Sudan.

Likewise, representatives from states such as Libya, Iran and Cuba hold key positions controlling the UN Durban II Conference agenda and are unabashedly displaying a determination to produce a replay of their first gathering in 2001 that became the springboard for the new global wave of anti-Semitism cloaked as anti-Zionism. It is no coincidence that the preparatory committee this year scheduled a meeting to review xenophobia on Yom Kippur.

Although occasionally expressing concerns about anti-Semitism, most democratic countries have displayed a penchant to assume positions of neutrality in the face of toxic anti-Israeli hostility. So it is especially regrettable that when Canada courageously called for a boycott of Durban II, Israel hesitated when firm support might have tipped the US and other democracies to follow suit - a move which would have relegated Durban to a coven of discredited dictatorships and extremist NGOs.

BUT IT was at the last General Assembly plenum at the end of last month, when Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad transformed the podium into a launching pad for demonic Jew hatred unprecedented since the Nazi era, that UN hypocrisy and double standards reached their nadir. A similar diatribe from such a platform against any other religion or ethnic group would have been inconceivable. The obscene outburst paraphrased the notorious Protocols of the Elders of Zion, accusing "Zionist murderers" of controlling international finance, the media and furtively manipulating global politics. The Iranian president who had repeatedly been calling for the elimination of the Jewish state reiterated that the world would soon benefit from the collapse of Israel, a member state of the organization he was addressing.

The response from many of the government and UN officials will be recorded as a day of infamy for an organization established after the defeat of Nazism to create a new world order based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the rule of international law.

Not only was Ahmadinejad's tirade greeted by many representatives with enthusiastic applause, but the secretary-general, who only a short time earlier had condemned anti-Semitism, remained silent. The president of the General Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, a former Nicaraguan foreign minister and a Catholic priest, made a point of publicly embracing the Iranian Holocaust denier after his vile address, and then attending the bitterly protested dinner in honor of the Iranian president.

If the Ahmadinejad diatribe fails to trigger a dramatic response, there is little doubt that similar depraved onslaughts by representatives of tyrannies will become the order of the day. Indeed, there is even a serious effort under way to elect Iran to a non-permanent seat on the Security Council.

What does this say about the UN? That an organization dominated by tyrannies and dictatorships, not surprisingly, is being exploited as a platform for promoting evil. Moreover, the situation will continue to deteriorate if the tensions between Western nations and Russia degenerate into a new cold war, and the Russians intensify their existing support for rogue states like Iran and Syria.

This horrific UN General Assembly session extending the welcome mat to Ahmadinejad, coincided with the 70th anniversary of the Munich agreement, when Britain and France betrayed Czechoslovakia in a vain effort to appease Hitler, paving the way for the most terrible war in history. Despite the fact that there is not a single recorded instance in which appeasement of terrorist regimes succeeded in achieving peace, the same blunders are repeated, even though the US-led democratic world is militarily far superior to those Islamic extremist regimes challenging Western civilization. What is lacking is the will, fuelled by a combination of cowardice and economic greed, to confront rogue states like Iran before they are able to evolve into immensely more dangerous nuclear powers.

NEEDLESS TO say, this has special relevance to Israel. Yet in recent weeks, just when some of the more powerful democracies might have been more inclined to back a firm principled stand, our policy toward the UN seems to have taken a step backward.

Our newly appointed UN representative, Gabriela Shalev, while condemning the General Assembly's embrace of Ahmadinejad and capitalizing on the superb address delivered by President Shimon Peres, was reported to have dismissed the shocking behavior and passivity of delegates as traditional diplomatic behavior. She ludicrously added that some of the ambassadors applauding the Iranian president's Jew baiting had privately praised Israel to her.

Even more bizarre were media reports quoting Shalev saying that in addition to defending Israel at the UN, she considers her job to be "correcting the UN's image in the eyes of the people of Israel." If these reports are true, we may have replaced our former outstanding ambassador Dan Gillerman with an unqualified academic.

Our aspiring prime minister, Tzipi Livni, must be made aware that if her appointees to the UN are going to defend or make excuses for that body, even our allies will conclude that we have taken leave of our senses.

We should initiate a global campaign highlighting the extent to which the UN has deviated from the original hopes and aspirations of its founders, transformed into an instrument for subverting democracy and undermining the civilized world.

We should encourage the emerging view that challenges the validity of democratic states bearing the brunt of the cost of financing a global body exploited for the promotion of evil objectives by the numerically dominant tyrannies. Today, the case for the dissolution of the UN political framework while retaining those welfare agencies which make a constructive contribution has never been greater.

What should be mooted as a substitute is a new multilateral association of countries limited to those who are broadly democratic and display respect for human rights. Such a body could serve as a vehicle to promote democracy throughout the world, simultaneously providing an inducement to autocratic regimes to reform to qualify for inclusion. It would also enhance constructive multilateralism; in the absence of destructive extremist blocs, it would also create a more realistic environment for improved superpower consultations and co-operation.

Such an approach would undoubtedly now find increasing support among increasingly progressively more exasperated democracies including the United States. (Jerusalem Post Oct 7)

Atonement for Oslo By Michael Freund

Tonight is the start of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when Jews traditionally seek to make amends for their misdeeds, whether committed against their fellow man or against God. It is a special and decidedly meaningful period on the Jewish calendar, one that resonates deeply across the generations. After all, no human being is free of sin, and no one would dare to lay claim to a flawless record entirely clean of mistakes.

No one, that is, except for Shimon Peres.

In an interview last Friday with Makor Rishon, our president showed little inclination toward introspection when the subject turned to the disastrous 1993 Oslo Accords with the PLO that he helped to fashion.

Asked what he now thought of Oslo in retrospect, the putative peace-maker

had only words of praise for the unmitigated catastrophe that he brought on this country. Disproving the notion that with hindsight necessarily comes knowledge, Peres insisted that "Oslo gave us the basis for peace."

What it also gave us, of course, was murder and mayhem on an unprecedented scale, as a surge in Palestinian terror left hundreds of Israelis dead and thousands of others injured over the course of subsequent years.

Regardless, Peres went on to list what he feels to be the singular achievement of the accord with Yasser Arafat. "As a result of Oslo," he declared, "the Arabs agreed that the basis would be the '67 borders and not according to the 1947 UN plan... In addition, they recognized the State of Israel and declared their opposition to terror."

Undoubtedly, the residents of Sderot and the rest of the Negev will rest easier in their bomb shelters the next time Palestinian rockets are hurtling in their direction, comforted by the knowledge that they have at last been "recognized."

WHILE PERES grudgingly acknowledged that the Palestinians have "split" - a veiled reference to the ascension of Hamas to power - he nonetheless cheerfully maintains that all is well in la-la land.

"Until today, there remains a group headed by Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas] that is conducting negotiations with Israel, and which rejects terrorism and is fighting terror," he said, conveniently overlooking the fact that the Palestinian Authority leader is perhaps Ehud Olmert's only serious rival for the title of "lamest duck in the Middle East."

Rarely has so much breathtakingly simplistic revisionism and audacious historical inaccuracy been condensed into so few words.

In 1993, Peres defied military intelligence, and basic common sense, when he convinced prime minister Yitzhak Rabin to bring Arafat and his band of terrorists to Gaza, give them weapons and hand over territory to their control. The immediate and predictable result was an unprecedented wave of stabbings, shootings and suicide bombings which left Israel reeling from the worst wave of terror in its history.

Oslo was Israel's single greatest strategic disaster since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It marked a moral low point in Israel's conduct of its foreign relations, as Arafat's bloody track record was overlooked and, instead of being arrested, he was embraced as a peacemaker.

The agreement brought about a sharp increase in anti-Israel violence, it divided the land and people of Israel, weakened the country's deterrence posture, and paved the way for the eventual rise of Hamas.

It was considered the bold experiment of the 1990s, but it exploded in the country's face, leaving the laboratory in flames and sparking a wave of extremism and jihadist violence that is still very much with us today.

IT IS regrettable that Peres could not rise to the occasion in his interview and offer some acknowledgement of failure or at least a plea for forgiveness from the victims of Oslo. But not a single, solitary word of contrition, penitence or remorse is to be found on the subject.

Needless to say, it is tempting to chalk this up to Peres' chosen profession - that of politics, where admitting that one is wrong is rarely high on the daily "to-do" list. As Winston Churchill wryly noted, "A politician needs the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, next week, next month and next year. And to have the ability afterwards to explain why it didn't."

But the reality is that Peres' obstinate refusal to come clean is also reflective of a larger problem in Israeli society: a lack of willingness to accept personal responsibility for one's actions. It plagues our lives in so many spheres, from the playground to the boardroom to the Knesset.

The first step to correcting a mistake is to admit that one has occurred. Yet even this basic, fundamental truth seems to have escaped many of our decision makers.

Peres and those who backed the Oslo Accords owe all Israelis a belated apology. On September 13, 1993, when Rabin shook hands with Arafat after signing the accord, I along with many other television viewers felt a sense of gloom. Not because we were we were any smarter or wiser, but simply because we knew, deep down, that you cannot compromise with evil, however easy and tempting it might appear to be.

Now, some 15 years later, that gloom is shared by all, as peace has never seemed farther and less achievable than it does today.

So when Peres goes to synagogue tomorrow to mark Yom Kippur, I hope he'll take to heart the words that we recite in the Musaf prayer: "for repentance, prayer and charity remove the evil of the decree." And then maybe at last he'll realize that while he may not be able to undo the mistakes of the past, the least he can do is apologize for them. (Jerusalem Post Oct 7)