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The Left Is No Longer Right

by Aryeh Rubin

When hostilities broke out after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in late September 2000, much of the Jewish world reassessed its view of Yasir Arafat as a partner for peace. When bloody hands were held up during the Ramallah lynching, and after the suicide bombings in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and the continuous drive-by shootings, much of the Jewish world readjusted its political compasses.

Now, after the carnage of Sept. 11, much of the Jewish world has focused on the public emergence of Muslim anti-Semitism, and seriously pondered its impact on the future of the State of Israel.

Yet the American Jewish organizations of the left, those that invested much energy on the peace process, seem to have been unable to adjust their direction or rhetoric. While they have expressed sympathy for the victims, few have condemned the Palestinian Authority and/or Arafat. The organizations continue to issue statements, conduct polls and hold conference calls with their heavy hitters as if the events of the last year were a slight blip on the road to the original Rabin-Peres peace plan of Oslo.

Nothing could be further from the truth. It's as if they have become so obsessed with achieving peace that they have lost sight of the greater goal of guaranteeing Israel's welfare and security.

As a supporter of the Oslo agreement over the years, I have no regrets for having donated my time and money to promoting the process. I was proud of the 70 percent of the Israeli electorate that favored the deal — for the Israelis' sake, for the Palestinians' sake and for Israel's position in the international arena of public opinion.

I was also mindful that American support, which is crucial for Israel's survival, would not have been as forthcoming without Israel's earnest attempt to reach a peace agreement.

I believe an agreement at Camp David, which was so close, blew up because in the end Arafat could not agree to an end of conflict with the Jews. That agreement, no matter how fragile, would have been better than the current situation.

But now the world has changed and the dynamics of the Middle East beg a radically different approach. Although a negotiated arrangement is still the best near-term solution, the American Jewish organizations on the left must acknowledge and adapt to this new playing field.

It is the responsibility of these organizations to develop and promote a well-conceived strategy.

Only Kach and Hamas have put forth any sort of a solution other than a negotiated deal. The former wishes to transfer all the Arabs forcibly, and the latter calls for the destruction of the Jewish state. When considering that Israel, the West Bank and Gaza population is comprised of approximately 56 percent Jews, 3 percent Druze and others, and 41 percent Arab, it becomes obvious that unloading the territories is crucial to Israel's survival. (These percentages fluctuate depending on the source).

Ultimately, whether it's a negotiated agreement, a unilateral separation or a non-belligerency pact, the 5 million Jews, 3 million Palestinians and 1 million Israeli Arabs will still be there, and an arrangement of sorts is the only solution, although it won't be the peace for which we hoped and prayed.

While the American Jewish organizations on the left continue about their merry way, my red lines were crossed long ago. I have called upon these organizations that are committed to the peace process to take a stand that, in effect, sends a clear message to Arafat and his advisers. It would say, in effect: We on the left who have met with you, supported you and lobbied on your behalf to the White House for aid now condemn you, and reaffirm our full support for the Israeli government. Until you stop all violence, you have bankrupted your goodwill with the Jews of the world and all people of goodwill.

With the influence that the collective American Jewish peace camp has on Capitol Hill, such a statement would have a profound effect on White House and congressional reactions to Israeli measures deemed necessary to halt the terrorism. The unofficial response of some leaders of these organizations has been that their primary mission is to promote peace between the Palestinians and the Israelis. They do not wish to blow their own goodwill, not to mention the tens of millions of dollars they have spent in developing it.

I do not agree, and call upon these organizations to acknowledge the new reality and the will of the Israeli people. And if such a time comes that negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis start in earnest, then those who believe in it can once again become the ardent supporters of a new peace process.

Our enemies are for the most part united in their missives, in their hate and in their use of the media to get their message across. Statements that give fodder to those that oppose us, and statements that can be misconstrued even by our friends in the State Department, must stop.

I am resolute in my conviction that all of Jewry (but especially those on the left who advocated and lobbied on behalf of the peace process) must show and advocate a united and unconditional support for Israel during this time of war.

We condemn the terror; we condemn Arafat and the Palestinian Authority and hold them responsible for it. We must reiterate this so that Israel hears it, Arafat hears it, Congress hears it and the White House hears it in a united voice.

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