

Israelis, Arabs mustn't let extremists write a 'Bosnian future'

BY GOEFF BERG

NOW, more than a week after Baruch Goldstein's murderous rampage in the mosque in Hebron, Israel, I've come to the conclusion that something in me has died. For the first time in my life, I am truly and unequivocally ashamed of the actions taken by another Jew as a Jew. As a strong, lifetime supporter of Israel, I was ready when I first heard to news to join with Palestinians in calling for the immediate establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. And I thought, if I, a lover of and constant advocate for the state of Israel, am having such thoughts, what must the rest of the world be thinking?

World opinion now falls on Israel like a crushing weight. The government of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has announced tough measures against extremist settlers and released about 1,000 Arab prisoners as an act of good will. Palestinians and Israeli Arabs are doing battle with the Israeli army. The peace talks have broken off. The PLO has demanded an immediate dismantlement of all settlements and an undefined "international presence" in the Occupied Territories to "protect Palestinians." Early this past week, an Israeli soldier shot and killed two Jews.

At the United Nations, the Palestinians and other Arabs are asking for a Security Council resolution which would impose peacekeeping forces on Israel and call for a halt to all building in the territories, including Israel's capital, Jerusalem.

I have begun to rethink my position. Without question, the actions and political aims of Baruch Goldstein and Kahane Chai (the group to which he belonged) are no different than the racist Hamas Organization, the leading Palestinian terror group opposed to the peace talks. But why has the world come down so hard on Israel? President Ezer Weizman called the act "the worst in Zionist history" and Prime Minister Rabin said that it was "anti-Jewish." Clearly, the gov-

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ernment of Israel is doing all it can in a very difficult situation. But the bombardment has not let up.

Even Syria and Lebanon have broken off talks with the Jewish state to show solidarity with the Palestinians. And still the world condemnation of Israel continues.

Goldstein has put the world's Jews in an unfamiliar and uncomfortable position. Today, we must defend Israel by saying that "there is terrorism on the other side, too you know." Terrorism on the other side? Who could have imagined that the world would ever need to be reminded? What reaction to Goldstein's act points out is an enormous double standard that is applied to the Middle East.

Since the signing of the peace agreement, more than 20 Israeli Jews and many more Palestinians have been killed by Arab terrorism. Where has world outrage been since the mid-1980s when Hafez Assad, undisputed dictator of Syria, slaughtered 20,000 of his own unarmed people in Hama? Why has the U.N. Security Council not met to take up the issue of Syrian occupation of Lebanon?

Is there daily coverage of the wild slaughter by the Islamic fundamentalist Sudanese government of that country's Christians? No one said a word about Saddam Hussein's gassing of the Kurds until we went to war over Kuwait. What of the Jews who were butchered in a synagogue in Istanbul by Arab terrorists?

The crime committed by Baruch Goldstein was immediately denounced in the strongest possible language by all governmental institutions. All of the acts listed above were committed or sponsored by Arab governments. The atrocities committed by despotic Arab regimes are dismissed out of hand. Why? If a barbaric dictator like

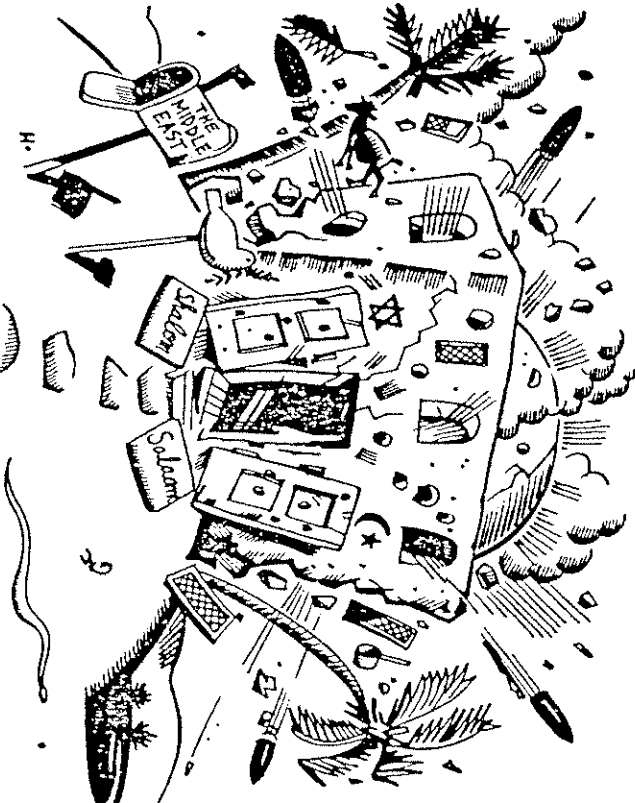
Hafez Assad wishes to murder brother Arabs, is it OK because the landscape is dotted with other barbarians?

Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East. Because it is, distasteful, racist groups like Kahane Chai and Kach have been allowed to form there and spout their racist trash. Now that their words of hate have inspired an unspeakable act of hate, Israeli law will empower the government to act against them. The members of these and

other groups have called the Israeli prime minister a "traitor" and worse.

Would Saddam Hussein tolerate such dissent? The answer is an unequivocal "no." Just ask Iraqi dissidents who are, as the Arabic expression goes, either in London or dead.

The PLO should not ride the tide of world sympathy over the shedding of Arab blood in order to fashion a new deal with Israel. The Declaration of Principles and the Cairo



Agreement put aside the question of settlements and Jerusalem for now. In those contracts, both sides agreed that the immediate need was for Palestinian empowerment in the territories.

If the PLO goes to the U.N. Security Council and receives an order for an alteration of the agreements, how can the Israelis trust them? Let Yasser Arafat show some status-ness and stick by his word. If he does not, there will be no foundation on which to base future treaties on which two peoples will have to rely.

The PLO and the other Arab parties must return to the table and negotiate with Israel. Their hand has been strengthened; they should break with tradition and forgo the rhetoric of the past. The Arabs must face their perceived enemy, Israel, and talk, as my father used to say, like men.

For Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians the only alternative is war with Israel and so far they have only lost precious land in their acts of military aggression. I do not wish to downplay the public pressure being exerted on Arab leaders at this moment. It would indeed be difficult for them to sit in the limelight with Israel right now. Hopefully, they have learned from the Oslo example: If they meet in secret, and come together publicly only to announce an agreement, wide public acceptance can be expected. Exactly that should be done here.

The PLO and Israel should adjourn back to Oslo or some other neutral city and hammer out the details of the agreement. When it is complete, they should implement it right away. Any public dissatisfaction could then be dealt with by a Palestinian police force in Gaza and Jericho, under the direction of the PLO.

The fate of both Jews and Palestinians is inexorably intertwined, for good or ill; the destiny of Israelis and Arabs is fixed for all time to The Land. If trust and understanding cannot be built between the two, a Bosnian future awaits both, as demonstrated by a man who personified all that is rotten in the human spirit, Baruch Goldstein.