

MEMO**Date: March 4, 2001****From: Leonard Fein****To: Esther Lederman, Eric Yoffie, David Saperstein, Bob Heller and the CSA
Task Force on Israel and World Affairs**

The Lantos et al. letter seems to me plainly at odds with both established UAHC policy and current UAHC sentiment:

1. The letter specifically establishes a “prior constraint” on “concrete actions” by Israel, asserting that until the Palestinians have met a series of tests – including one so vague as to likely be a trap – nothing can be expected of Israel. (The vague condition is “true accountability and transparency in Palestinian government.” The idea that the purposefully opaque Bush administration can or should set “transparency” as a condition for another government is breathtaking – but that is, of course, here at most tangential.) The UAHC has not preconditioned its call for a settlement freeze on the prior Palestinian fulfillment of diverse stipulated conditions, nor do I think we would were such a sequence explicitly proposed. At most, I should think, we might suggest a simultaneous set of actions. The call for a prior end to Palestinian violence before Israel undertakes any “concrete” action may be emotionally satisfying, but, given the various forces at play among the Palestinians, it is in effect, if not in intent, a call for indefinite postponement of any peace process at all.

2. I am still more concerned with that paragraph in the letter that asserts – not quite in so many words, but quite plainly nonetheless – that the involvement of the EU, Russia, and the UN along with the United States “might only lessen the chances of moving forward on a realistic path towards peace.” I doubt that was true before Iraq; it is nonsense to imagine it will be true in the wake of Iraq. I leave aside the disquieting question of whether the United States will be seen as a paper tiger; none of us can yet know how soon and at what cost this war will be concluded. But surely no one can claim that the United States, essential though its participation in a peace process, and even leadership in such a process, remain, is any longer capable of pulling off the requisite initiative on its own, without the active participation of (at least) the EU and the UN. We may applaud that development or lament it, but I hardly think the UAHC wants to associate itself with the casual dismissal of the Quartet as a meaningful interlocutor. Moreover, we cannot very well be, as we are, for the Road Map and, at the same time, against the Quartet.