

all of those territories and the dismantling of settlements, along with serious attention to the claims of the refugees.

As I write, the death toll is close to 250, well over 90 percent of whom are Palestinians, with thousands wounded. Whatever the temporary fixes, there is every prospect of further bloodshed, at least until more Jewish Israelis realize (as some have begun to do) — and can bring their government to realize — that Israel will never have peace if it continues to insist on annexations, settlements, and continued domination. Will that realization come? It's hard to be optimistic right now. But unless it does, it's a safe bet that more dark days lie ahead, for both

Palestinians and Israelis. In the meantime, the violence and repression that the Israeli state perpetrates, not just in the name of its citizens but in the name of all Jews everywhere, should make it impossible for any of us to remain silent any longer.

Zachary Lockman teaches modern Middle Eastern history at New York University. He has been writing, speaking, and teaching on Palestine, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the Middle East for 25 years. His books include Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906–1948 and (with Joel Beinin) Intifada: the Palestinian Uprising against Israeli Occupation. He is currently a contributing editor of Middle East Report.

Oslo and the Crack-up of the Jewish Left

Jonathan S. Tobin

The signing of the Oslo Peace Accords on the White House Lawn in September 1993 was the crowning event of the crack-up of the nationalist camp in Israel. To the applause of most Israelis, the Diaspora, and international opinion-makers, Oslo signaled Israel's rejection of the ideology of the Land of Israel movement. Proponents of holding onto all of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza never came up with a solution for dealing with the Palestinians who lived there that most Israelis could accept.

While few Israelis, outside of the Peace Now camp, were sanguine about the idea that the Palestinian Arabs had come to accept the legitimacy of Israel, most were convinced that the status quo was untenable. Holding onto the territories meant Israeli reservists would continue to police the mean streets of Gaza and Nablus indefinitely.

When Yitzhak Rabin reluctantly shook hands with a grinning Yasser Arafat, the majority of Israelis and friends of Israel in the United States were prepared to believe that peace was possible. However, at the time, I was among the skeptics about Oslo. That opposition was based, in part, on my own unwillingness to give up my sympathy for the settlement movement and Israel's rights to the territories. I also agreed with those in the Israeli opposition who believed that there was no rational reason to think that the P.L.O. had fundamentally

changed and could now be trusted.

I thought the assurances that Israeli officials gave me and my fellow journalists about their determination to enforce Palestinian compliance with the terms were disingenuous. There was no way Israel could stop the dynamic of Israeli concessions and Palestinian empowerment simply because the Accords were not being lived up to by Israel's new "peace partners."

Even more, I believed that the Israeli concessions spoken of in September 1993 were only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Though few Israelis could envision a partition of Jerusalem that would satisfy Arafat's ambition to place his capital there, I wondered how Israel could make the case for holding onto the entire city. After all, Israel's claims to that undivided sovereignty were no greater than their equally compelling legal, historic, and religious rights to Judea and Samaria. Having morally disarmed itself of those claims, Israel would, I thought, be powerless to resurrect them for the sake of Jerusalem. That would be, I wrote then, especially true if a final status agreement hinged on the disposition of Jerusalem.

For most of the last seven years, such opinions have been not only unpopular, but also viewed as dangerously anachronistic. The peace camp and its leaders, besotted with their messianic vision of a "New Middle East" where the Arab-Israeli conflict would be nothing more than ancient history, ignored or rationalized every indication that the Palestinians

continued on page 10



had a very different notion of peace. The campaign of incitement and the inculcation of hatred for Israelis and Jews on the part of Arafat and his new Palestinian Authority (PA) never ceased. Nor did Arab terror, which in the years of "peace" after Oslo claimed more Jewish lives than in the years of conflict that preceded them.

Nothing could stop the momentum of "peace." None of the facts about the P.A. produced by the critics could disabuse the majority, let alone the true believers on the left, that Israel had made a tragic blunder. Thus, by the summer of 2000, despite much disillusionment with Arafat's corrupt regime, the peace camp looked forward to a successful conclusion to the process. The only problem was that as surely as the right had cracked up in 1993, the left was heading for a similar disaster.

Even when Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat more than 90 percent of the territories and a share of Jerusalem, the answer from the old terrorist was "no." Arafat's terms were a complete retreat to the lines of June 4, 1967 coupled with the "return" of an unnamed number of Palestinian refugees to Israel. These were concessions that even most of the Israeli left understood to be the end of the Jewish State.

The fiasco of Camp David was followed by a new *Intifada* that allowed Palestinians to play the victim for the international media. At the same time, Palestinians continued to enjoy the benefits of control over territory that Israel had given up and the ability to defend that territory with 40,000 well-armed police who could join in the riots against Israelis.

Oslo has proved a tragic failure. It has not improved Israel's strategic position. And far from ending terrorism, it has actually made it much easier for Palestinians to murder and maim Israeli men, women, and children. Israel's rights to Jerusalem have been compromised and it is no closer to that messianic hope of a conclusion to the 100-year-old

conflict with the Arabs than it was in 1993. Indeed, the current situation was the direct result of a policy of unending concessions that had dangerously emboldened Israel's enemies.

Peace remains the hope of all who love Israel but those who cling to belief in Oslo must now be judged as believers in a religious faith rather than a rational strategy. Arafat and the Palestinians are at war with Israel. It is merely a matter of time before the Jewish world wakes up and acknowledges this fact.

I take no satisfaction in seeing my skepticism about Oslo proved correct. The fact is, I have no easy solutions to Israel's dilemma. Even worse, nobody else has, either. Having seen the pet ideologies of both the left and the right fail, Israel is in a quandary. Talk of "separation" from the Arabs is in the air, but it is no more viable than the "autonomy" or "transfer" rhetoric of years past.

In the end, Israel and its supporters in the Diaspora are faced with the unpleasant task of reassembling the "iron wall" of defense that Zionist leader Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky wrote of over 70 years ago. Bereft of its Oslo fantasies of peace and rightist fantasies of expulsion, Israelis will have to sit behind it and wait for the Arabs to make peace on terms Israel can live with. It may be a long and painful wait, but seven years after Oslo, it appears that the only viable alternative to Oslo is survival.

Jonathan S. Tobin is Executive Editor of the Jewish Exponent in Philadelphia. He is the winner of numerous journalism awards for his commentary on politics and Jewish life. These include first-place honors from the American Jewish Press Association's Simon Rockower Awards for Excellence in Commentary and Excellence in Arts and Criticism News and Features for the year 1999 and the Pennsylvania Newspaper Association's Keystone Award for editorial writing.

Even in These Rage-Filled Times

Thomas Smerling

A few years ago, I proposed writing a pair of Op-Eds with a very conservative colleague. We would title both "...But I Could be Wrong." My hawkish friend would explain why the peace process is a sham, but — *since he could be wrong* — Israel should give diplomacy every chance.

I would argue that peace was both possible and imperative, but — *since I too could be wrong* — Israel needed to retain the military capability to prevail in even the worst case scenario.

More urgent projects called and the dueling Op-Eds gathered dust. But since Sept 28 I have had to