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Jealousy is a human trait, cultivated by petty people who will never be what they want to be, or will never have what they want to have.

Raphael Cohen-Almagor

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Bleak



I received some comments about the February Newsletter, saying that the picture painted by Uzi Dayan and endorsed by me is bleak, and that surely there are at least alternatives that are more hopeful.

Well, the picture is bleak, but so is reality. As long as Hamas dictates the moves in the Palestinian camp, and do not change their basic position

which speaks of one Palestine at the expense of Israel, there is no hope. No sane Israeli prime minister will seriously consider any peace initiative, be it of Bush, Abu Mazen or Saudi Arabia. Israel's withdrawals from occupied territories were perceived by our enemies as signs of weakness and as invitations for further acts of terror, which manifested themselves in a variety of ways: suicide bombing, rockets, missiles, shooting etc.

Olmert understands this well. He would not take high level risks, especially when his prime concern is to survive, and this task is becoming more difficult as he continues to serve in office. It is a great pity that such a dovish government has Hamas to deal with. But Olmert is paying a high price for his hasty decision to wage war on the Hezbollah. We all await the interim results of the Winograd Committee which may dictate personal conclusions for Israel's leaders, and undoubtedly will be very critical of the war's conduct, and the way the government took responsibility to relieve more than 1 million at the north of Israel from war horrors and nightmares.

The Israeli public understands the situation. Despite the intense criticism of the government's functioning, the Jewish public in Israel support its policy on foreign and security issues. According to the February 2007 Peace Index published by Prof. Tamar Herman and Prof. Ephie Yaar, a majority of the Jewish public thinks the establishment of the Palestinian unity government reduces the chances of reaching a political settlement, and does not believe an

agreement based on a two-state solution can be reached with this government. A large majority also supports the official policy of not negotiating with the Palestinian unity government until it recognizes Israel and fulfills the Quartet's other conditions, particularly fighting terror. At the same time, though, the prevailing opinion is that Israel cannot allow the present situation to continue and must make greater efforts than in the past to reach a political settlement with the Palestinians.

On the Syrian issue, as in the past the dominant position is against a peace agreement in return for a full withdrawal from the Golan, and a majority also supports not responding to the Syrian initiative to renew negotiations as long as it supports Hezbollah and other terror organizations. The Syrian approach is seen as resulting from weakness and not from a genuine desire for peace. At the same time, the widespread assessment is that Israel's policy stems mainly from the United States' opposition to negotiating with Damascus because of its position on the Iraqi issue, though Israelis believe it was right to accede to the American demand even if the Israeli leadership sees things differently.

As for Iran, the unanimous view is that its nuclear armament constitutes an existential danger to Israel, and a small majority also says Israel should attack the Iranian nuclear facilities even if it has to do so alone. Again similar to the official position, the majority favours adhering to Israel's traditional policy of ambiguity regarding its nuclear capacity.

In the domestic sphere, the Jewish public continues its overwhelming support for the efforts at rooting out corruption in the public sector, and only a small minority thinks these efforts are excessive and harm the government's ability to function.

The Hezbollah War



Prime Minister Ehud Olmert commented that Amir Peretz was appointed defense minister because Labour insisted on the portfolio.

This outraged Peretz, who rejected Olmert's comments outright. "There were coalition negotiations. I wanted the finance portfolio, but Olmert said under absolutely no circumstances,"

Peretz said.

Prime Minister Olmert also admitted that it was decided to open the Hezbollah War as early as March 2006, four months prior to the beginning of the war in Lebanon.

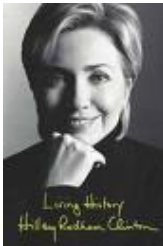
As was largely expected, Hezbollah officials seized on reports published by Ha'aretz according to which Olmert told the Winograd Commission that he decided to launch a military operation in case of a kidnapping incident along the Lebanese border. All throughout the war and afterwards, Hezbollah's

leader Hassan Nasrallah defended himself from internal Lebanese criticism by claiming that Israel had already been planning the war and that it "exploited" the abduction of Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev to go to war, therefore trying to paint Hezbollah as a victim of circumstance.

The report from Israel could give a much-needed boost to Hezbollah which is losing power, especially in southern Lebanon. Nasrallah's bank credit is no longer bottomless, to say the least. Iran, long since Hezbollah's chief benefactor, has financial difficulties of its own and it was reported that its government intends to subsidize gasoline to deal with the impending economic sanctions it faces.

Olmert also needs a boost. Polls conducted in early March showed that he "enjoyed" 2% of support. I guess one could still go lower than that. Just a bit, though.

Hillary Clinton



Recently Senator Clinton made a speech about incitement in Palestinian schools. Here is her speech:

Good morning everyone, and thank you very much for being here. It is my privilege once again to join Palestinian Media Watch for this press conference, and for the latest report that they have compiled about the Palestinian textbooks.

Director Itamar Marcus, who has been a steadfast leader, has helped to deliver this message which we repeat again today - we must stop the propaganda to which Palestinian children are being exposed. That must be a priority for all people who care about children, who care about the kind of peace, stability, safety and security that Israel deserves to be guaranteed. And it should be a priority for everyone who cares about the future of the Palestinian people. I'm also pleased that with us today is Associate Director Barbara Crook, with whom I have also met in the past to discuss these issues.

I have been speaking out against the incitement of hate and violence in Palestinian textbooks for years. In 2000 I joined Nobel peace prize winner Elie Wiesel in New York to denounce the lessons of hatred and violence that are part of the curricula in Palestinian schools. I wrote, with my colleague Senator Schumer, a letter to President Bush, urging his Administration to do everything in its power to persuade the Palestinians to reverse their hateful rhetoric and embrace the opportunity to move toward a strong and lasting peace in the region.

I joined with Itamar at a Senate hearing, where I reiterated the importance of our country making it clear in every way - these children deserves an education that instills respect for life and peace instead of glorifying death and violence. The videos we viewed at that Senate hearing were a clear example of child abuse. I said that at the time and I repeat it again today.

Children were encouraged to see martyrdom and armed struggle and the murder of innocent people as ideals to strive for.

Today, we are here once again to release a report that is deeply disturbing, particularly for the denial of Israel's existence and the historical omissions of the Holocaust, to cite just two examples.

These textbooks do not give Palestinian children an education; they give them an indoctrination. When we viewed this report in combination with other media that these children are exposed to, we see a larger picture that is disturbing. It is disturbing on a human level, it is disturbing to me as a mother, it is disturbing to me as a United States Senator, because it basically, profoundly poisons the minds of these children.

Hate has no place in the curriculum of schools, and the glorification of violence has no place in the education of children.

This propaganda is dangerous. You know, words really matter. Some people sort of downplay the importance of words. But words really matter. Because in idealizing for children a world without Israel, children are taught never to accept the reality of the State of Israel, never to strive for a better future that would hold out the promise of peace and security to them, and is basically a message of pessimism and fatalism that undermines the possibility for these children living lives of fulfillment and productivity.

This has dire consequences for prospects of peace for generations to come. Very briefly, the report finds the following in these textbooks: the founding of Israel is described as "a catastrophe that is unprecedented in history." There is a portrayal of the region in both maps and text in which Israel does not exist. There is the denial of the Holocaust by the omission of historical facts connecting Nazi ideology and actions with the persecution and murder of Jews.

For example, the report states, "The textbook teaches the military and the political events of WWII in significant detail including sections on Nazi racist ideology, yet neither the persecution of Jews or the Holocaust is even mentioned."

Now we will hear more in a minute about this, but I believe education is one of the keys to lasting peace and security in the Middle East and the greater region. For this reason I am deeply concerned by these findings. We cannot build a peaceful, stable, safe future on such a hate-filled violent and radical foundation.

In the years since, I and others - who have been doing it long before I did in 2000- raised this issue, there has still not been an adequate repudiation of this by the Palestinian Authority. A few days ago several of my colleagues from the New York City Council, including my friend the Speaker Chris Quinn, were in Sderot, and the city came under attack from Palestinian rocket fire. The attacks are not diminishing, they are continuing. Every opportunity that there can be for an attack seems to be seized by those who are rejectionists of any different future.

And I worry about the chance for peace when the next generation is learning that fighting Israel is a glorious, religious battle for Islam, as this report points out.

So it is now my privilege to introduce Itamar Marcus, Director of Palestinian Media Watch, who will present the deeply disturbing findings of this report and speak to the importance of action.

Itamar Marcus's overview of PMW's report on Palestinian schoolbooks, US Senate Building, February 8, 2007



Thank you very much, Senator Clinton.

I want to review in greater detail some of the main points that Senator Clinton touched on about the content of the new Palestinian schoolbooks.

The new Grade 12 Palestinian schoolbooks were produced last year, and were released in November 2006.

Significantly, the books were produced by the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center, a center established under the Fatah governments of Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas.

The head of the committee is Dr. Naim Abu Al-Humos, former PA minister of higher education. As such, this schoolbook report is not reflecting Hamas ideology, this is reflecting the Fatah ideology. This is very significant, because the new schoolbooks indicate a merging of Fatah towards Hamas ideology.

I want to touch on five themes:

1. In the new schoolbooks, the Palestinians define the battle with Israel as a religious battle – a Ribat, as follows:

Ribat for Allah: Islam urged (Hadda'ala) Jihad for Allah, in order to defend the [Islamic] Nation's honor, greatness, and land. The Ribat for Allah is one of the actions related to Jihad for Allah, and it means: Being found in areas where there is a struggle between Muslims and their enemies... staying on this land strengthens the Muslims facing their enemies... The reward of the Murabit [people in Ribat] is ongoing, as Allah, praise him, increases the [reward] for his action until the Resurrection Day..." [Islamic Education, grade 12, p. 86]

Ribat is a religious term. This teaching transfers the conflict from a territorial, nationalistic conflict to a religious conflict where there is no room for compromise. More than that, they teach:

"The endurance of Palestine's people on their land in these days, and their persistence against the damage and the aggression they endure – is one of the

greatest of the Ribat and they are worthy of a great reward from Allah."

[Islamic Education, grade 12, p. 87]

This conflict with Israel is said to be a unique Ribat in Islamic history with a special destiny:

"The reason for this preference [of the Palestinian Ribat] is that the momentous battles in Islamic history took place on its land [Al-Shaam – Greater Syria includes Israel] and, its residents are in a constant struggle with their enemies, and they are found in Ribat until Resurrection Day. The history testifies that: The battle of Al-Yarmuk decided the struggle with the Byzantines, and the battle of Hittin decided the struggle with the Crusaders, and the battle of Ein Jalut decided the struggle with the Mongols". [Islamic Education, grade 12, p. 87]

The message to the student is that Islam has had numerous battles, momentous battles with significant turning points in Islamic history following the victorious battles on this land against earlier enemies – Byzantine, Crusades, the Mongols.

The Palestinian children are taught that they have an Islamic destiny to hold onto this land – (meaning Israel) as others have done in the past.

This teaching parallels the ideology of Hamas as written in the Hamas charter:

"The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine has been an Islamic Waqf (Trust) throughout the generations and until the Day of Resurrection, no one can renounce it or part of it, or abandon it or part of it."

[Article Eleven, Hamas Charter]

The schoolbooks bring mainstream Palestinian ideology much closer to that of Hamas, by defining this as a religious battle and Israel's land to be Islamic land.

2. In the schoolbooks it is clear that when they teach about "Palestine", they are not teaching about the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The books mention over and over again that Israel's very existence is being challenged. For example, as the Senator cited:

"Palestine's war ended with a catastrophe that is unprecedented in history, when the Zionist gangs stole Palestine ...and established the State of Israel." [Arabic Language, Analysis, Literature and Criticism, grade 12, p. 104]

The establishment of Israel is the challenge, not the West Bank or Gaza, this is the problem. Israel is defined as "colonial imperialism... centered in Palestine", [History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 6] and other similar language that denies Israel's right to exist.

They talk about the United Nations resolutions equating Zionism with racism, and teach:

"These racist operations that Israel carried out since its establishment in 1948, motivated the UN to pass the resolution ...which views Zionism as a form of racism..." [History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, pp. 125-126]

They are legitimizing the UN resolution teaching that it was based on the factual reality of Israel as a racist state since 1948.

Other examples of terminology that rejects the legitimacy of Israel: Israel and Israelis are referred to as "Zionist gangs", "Zionist enemy", "Zionist entity", "enemy of the people", and many more terms throughout the schoolbooks that deny the legitimacy of Israel.

3. Beyond denying the legitimacy of Israel, the books present a world as if Israel does not exist at all. **Examples from maps were shown- see graphics.**

No map mentions Israel in any of the Palestinian Authority schoolbooks. However, beyond the pictures, the new schoolbooks define "Palestine" as if it's an existing state, a "Dawla", which is not a geographical area but a "state", and teach that it has water access to the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Teaching that a state, "Palestine", has access to the Red Sea is describing a world in which Israel does not exist.

They also teach that the state "Palestine" is larger than 10,000 square kilometers. The size of the West Bank and Gaza together is about 6,500 square kilometers, so again are describing a world in which Israel does not exist.

4. Holocaust denial, which the Senator mentioned: The books create a World War Two without the Holocaust. There are extensive details about the history of World War Two -- they teach about the "race theory" of the Nazi movement:

"Race theory evolved during the thirties of the previous century, when the Nazi movement appeared in Germany in 1933 and divided the nations into superior and others who were inferior. It espoused the superiority of the Aryan race, from which the Germans originated, passed racist laws..." [The History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 123]

They even talk about the trials of the Nazi war criminals at the end of the war: "The Allied states established an international court to bring to trial the senior Nazi leaders as war criminals." [The History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century, grade 12, p. 46]

...but they don't teach why they were on trial. They teach the history of WW2, the Nazi racism, and the trial of war criminals. But the Holocaust is not a part of that history.

5. Finally, the new PA schoolbooks divide the modern world into two camps fighting in a "Clash of Civilizations": the West, led by the United States, and the Islamic-Arab world. The US is presented very aggressively in the schoolbooks as an enemy of the Palestinians, and American foreign policy is criticized as being of:

"self-interest... its policy... didn't change during one president or another, as is clearly apparent in Afghanistan, Cuba, Iran... its blockade of Libya, Sudan and the occupation of Iraq." [Contemporary Problems, grade 12, p 21]

All of these conflicts present the US as a source of friction in the international world.

Human rights. They talk about the US abusing human rights for its own purposes; for example, "the belief that human rights is nothing but an excuse

used by the West and the ruling states for interfering in the matters of other states, as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Darfur..." and more examples, so that the US is presented as an enemy of Islam and the Arab world.

The apex of this is the definition of the insurgency in Iraq fighting against the US:

"The Iraqis did not surrender to this American and British occupation, but succeeded in organizing themselves into a brave resistance to liberate Iraq." [History of the Arabs and the World in the 20th Century , grade 12, p. 147]

Those who are killing American soldiers are defined as "brave resistance." In addition, there is one glaring omission about the US in the schoolbooks. The Palestinians felt it important to mention that Israel is getting economic aid from the US, but they left out the more than \$1.5 billion that the PA and the NGOs have received from the US. The greatest financial aid to the PA from any single country has come from the US. The books leave that out, but they put in the fact that Israel is a strategic ally getting economic and political support.

So we see from this omission as well, that there was a clear intention to put the US in an enemy camp.

Because of this total picture, violence against Israel since its founding is legitimized as Mukawama – meaning resistance.

"Since 1948, the Mukawama – resistance - in which the inhabitants carried acts of most glorious heroism and sacrifice, which have become lessons imitated by resistance to colonialism, occupation and persecution around the world." [Arabic Language, Analysis, Literature and Commentary, grade 12 p 105]

Essentially, they are teaching the children that Palestinian terror isn't negative -- it is glorious heroism. And all the other "resistance" nations around the world who have adopted this are learning from the Palestinians. They are actually citing themselves and their terror as a role model and they're proud that they have been a role model for other terrorist movements around the world.

And finally, the message: "Palestine will be liberated by its men, its women, its young and its elderly," the eventual destruction of Israel is promised in the textbooks.

PMW studies everything in Palestinian society. Sports, crossword puzzles, television, as the Senator mentioned. And all of these (schoolbook) messages are coming to children from every part of society – culture, even sports. And I want to just show you two examples.

We mentioned the Holocaust. I want to show you how children were taught the Holocaust on a program on official Palestinian television:

Video:

"They [the Jews] are the ones who did the Holocaust ... They opened the ovens for us to bake human beings... And when one oven stopped burning they lit a hundred more ovens. Their hands are covered with the blood of our children." [official PA TV Mar. 25 2004]

This isn't just Holocaust denial. This is turning the whole Holocaust on its head. Israel, the Jews, created ovens for the Palestinians. And this was on official Palestinian television, on a children's program.

I'll just end this with one item from yesterday, to show you how current this is. This is from February 7th, an interview on Palestinian television with a university lecturer from Birzeit University.

"What the American culture creates is a danger to humanity... 100,000 [Iraqis] are killed in Iraq, and it doesn't interest him... he lives the racism in his culture, he is saturated in it, only his pocket interests him... Zionism is the same thing, carries the same thought [pattern]. Nazism carried that same thought. This is the Western product, it is the product of Western philosophy." [PA TV, February 7, 2007]

This is a total attack on Western society, and is a reflection of the tragic reality of the Palestinian media. It is constantly demonizing the West, demonizing the United States, demonizing Israel, with parallels like this to Nazism, and it creates an environment of profound hatred for the youth.

To sum up, there are many problems in the Palestinian schoolbooks. I think that the problem of packaging the conflict as a religious conflict is very significant – and it marks the disappearance of the difference between Hamas and what is seen as the more mainstream Fatah. That difference disappears when this conflict is portrayed as a religious conflict for Allah. **The well-meaning student is left with no justification or religious option to accept Israel as a neighbor in coexistence.**

The schoolbooks, the TV, the culture, the entire society, must educate for peace. Our desire is to have peace with our Palestinian neighbors, and our goal is that through awareness and actions like the Senator's, a change will be forced on the Palestinians to educate for peace, so that we can have peace in the next generation. Thank you.

Please feel free to forward this bulletin, crediting Palestinian Media Watch

Palestinian Poll

The Palestinian territories are an overwhelmingly youthful place — 56.4 percent of Palestinians are under 19, and in Gaza, 75.6 percent of the population is under 30, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Opinion polls show a generation more supportive of armed struggle and terrorism than their parents, according to Waleed Ladadweh of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. The violence is directed not only toward Israel, but also toward one another.

On March 12, 2007 Steven Erlanger published a piece in the New York Times titled “Years of Strife and Lost Hope Scar Young Palestinians” in which he brought some of the poll results. These are not promising. Some 58 percent of those under 30 expect a more violent struggle with Israel over the next 5 to 10 years, and only 22 percent believe that there will be a peaceful negotiated solution between Israel and the Palestinians. About 48 percent believe such an agreement is impossible, and 20 percent more believe it will only come “in a few generations.”

There are no comparable polling figures from the late 1980s, when the first intifada broke out. But in 2000 only 32 percent of Palestinians 18 to 30 believed there would be conflict and violence with Israel in the next five to 10 years.

About 21 percent thought there would be more peace, while 16 percent thought there would be less. Those older than 30 expected more peace and less conflict.

In 2000 only 7 percent of all Palestinians (and only 6 percent of those 18 to 30) identified themselves as favouring Hamas. Forty-six percent (and 47 percent of those 18 to 30) favoured Fatah. But today, even after a difficult year of Hamas rule, the two factions are roughly equal. Among those 18 to 30, the spread is wider, with 36 percent favouring Fatah and 27 percent Hamas.

The Democratic Catch



Any form of government that is based on coercion is objectionable. One can presume that if given the opportunity, the people would rebel against the oppressor and retain their liberty. We are born free, would like to live our lives as free human beings, and die with dignity, free of pain and suffering.

Thus, we can assume that despots will survive as long as they are successful in upholding and monitoring a successful machinery of internal police, intelligence agencies, and security offices whose role is to deny freedom, including the freedom from oppression. The very principles of the oppressing system, be it dictatorship (rule of one), oligarchy (rule of few), theocracy (rule of religious sages) or fascism (rule of one who embodies the state) are those that will open the way for its destruction. It has been said that you can do almost anything with bayonets, but one thing you cannot do: sit on them.

Sitting on bayonets for a long time will cause you to bleed, and eventually will exhaust your energies and consume your power. The very principles designed to bolster the power of the one, or of the few, at the expense of the many, would lead eventually to the system's destruction.

Democracy is said to be a different form of government. It is not based on despotism and coercion. Quite the opposite. It is based on freedom.

It does not based on the rule of one or of the few. Rather it is based on the rule of the many. It is not based on intolerance. Rather, it is based on tolerance. Unlike forms of oppression that deny basic human rights, the dignity of the person, and that harm others, liberal democracy promotes human rights, the dignity of the person, and its motto is not to harm others. As John Stuart Mill said: the only justification for inflicting harm upon others is self-defence.

Having said that, I would argue that democracy is no different from other forms of government in that the basic principles underlying the system might open the door for the destruction of the system. This is what I call “The Democratic Catch”. Let me explain.

Democracy is based on granting people freedom to advance themselves, to develop their capacities, to enrich their world, to self-govern. Liberalism put the individual in the centre of attention: everything revolves around the individual. Everything stems from the individual. Everything is directed for the individual to promote and advance his or her autonomy. However, this liberty is not without constraints. People are autonomous to advance themselves and cultivate their freedoms as long as they do not harm others. There should be boundaries to liberty, otherwise we might be left with no liberty. Liberty is not a recipe for anarchy. Thus, there is a delicate balance to maintain: The government should provide opportunities for freedom and at the same time maintain law and order. Too much freedom might destroy the system. Too little might lead to lack of trust in the system.

Another cherished democratic principle is tolerance. Respecting our fellow citizens entails that we should see them, in Kantian terms, as ends rather than means, appreciate diversity and differences, and not be quick to judge the others as “strange” or “peculiar” only because they adhere to a different way of life, or conception of the good. In a democracy, government and people are said to tolerate others, providing others with scope to develop themselves and their respective ways of life. However, here again the important proviso is to tolerate as long as the subject of tolerance do not harm others. Tolerance should not be exploited by extreme, intolerant groups, to destroy the very foundations that prescribe tolerance. As Karl Popper said, it is absurd to assume that we should tolerate the intolerant no matter what. Here again, the delicate task is to maintain a delicate balance between tolerance and intolerance, otherwise the very foundation of tolerance might provide the intolerant the tools to destroy democracy.

A third basic tenet of democracy is equality. Now, of course people are not equal. We are not equal in the way we look. Some of us are pretty. Some are less pleasant to the eye. We are not equal in the way we behave. Some are friendly and pleasant. Others are reserved and obnoxious. We are different in the tastes and hobbies we cultivate. Some like champagne and basketball. Others prefer beer and cricket. We are not equal in earnings. Some inherited large sums of money. Others inherited nil. Some earn handsome salaries. Others are unemployed. We are not equal in our health condition. Some are healthy and fit. Others are struggling and suffering. We are unequal in our mental and intellectual capacities. Some are sharp and astute. Others can hardly understand their bills.

Some are hopelessly romantic while others are alien to the concepts of dusk and sunrise.

So, in what respect does democracy further equality? First, people are entitled to equal respect and concern in their dealings with the government. The affluent and not-so-smart deserve the same attitude as the poor and the clever. Note that parents are not expected to treat the stranger with the same respect and concern reserved for their children. The government is expected to treat all equally notwithstanding their stand in society.

Second, people are equal before the law.

Those who sin and transgress the law should be penalized for their deeds in accordance with “blind” penal schemes and tables. People who abide by the law should enjoy the same rights as others.

Third, equality prescribes one person, one vote. Generally speaking, adult citizens are accorded voting privileges. Women are not excluded as, for instance, Swiss women were excluded until 1971. All cultural minorities enjoy the voting right as do members of the cultural majority. Lecturers in fine universities do not enjoy dual voting, as did dons in Oxford and Cambridge up until 1948.

Fourth, all people enjoy the equal right to compete for tenders and access to resources. It does not mean we have equal resources, but we prima facie enjoy access to resources.

Again, there are difficulties involved with the implementation of equality. As much as we aspire to be egalitarian, often personal connections and social standing are important considerations that interfere in procedures. Proteksia in some countries (i.e. Israel) is unavoidable and leads to the obstruction of equal respect and concern in governmental matters. We see time and again that affluent people have a better chance to seek justice in courts than the poor and neglected. And middle-class people have an unfair chance to compete with the rich on important tenders. They may present their offers but stand little chance to weigh in with a good fight against the upper echelons of society. Democracy needs to be aware of these challenges and keep them under some control, otherwise they will corrupt the system and lead to its destruction.

Furthermore, there is also a tension between equality and liberty. Some people are so preoccupied in their endeavor to achieve equal status in society, often via finance, that they neglect protecting their basic liberties. Instead of investing in public matters, and in checks and balances against governmental abuse of power, some people invest in partisan initiatives to increase their wealth. Democracy needs to maintain a balance between equality and freedom, and to protect human rights as well as individual rights.

Now we turn to the mechanism of democracy: Participation and representation. Participation is so important for democratic life that democracy is being termed “participatory democracy”. Democracy in which citizens do not take active part is a stagnant democracy. Citizens should not limit their participation only to election days.

Such a behavior might be preferred by some politicians who would like to be left with the power and responsibility to behave as they please. However, leaving public affairs only to public figures might lead to horrendous results. Lord Acton said: Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Providing politicians with opportunities to take full responsibility for public matters might result in confused identification between the public and the private, leading to egocentrism (“I embody the will of the people”) and corruption. Hence, citizens need to participate, voice concerns, raise issues, communicate with representatives, be involved in public life, show content and discontent, help shape public agenda. Participatory democracy is a living democracy, a lively democracy.

On the other hand, too many demands might suffocate the system of government. Too many demands might result in flooding, where government will not be able to cope with the amount of inputs. If each and every citizen will write a letter to her representative on every issue of concern, public representatives will not be able to function. Recognizing the democratic catch, democracy is required to maintain a delicate balance between too much participation, and too little participation. Both are unhealthy and unwelcome. A middle way is required.

The same is true for representation. Most modern democracies employ representation schemes: proportional, single majority districts, or a combination thereof. In modern democracies, citizens elect representatives to parliament and these are said to represent their interest and safeguard them. However, democracy does not prescribe that each and every interest will be represented. If this was the requirement, parliaments will be enormous and the sheer number of representatives will debilitate their ability to govern. On the other hand, if significant number of interests will not be represented, parliament would lose the people’s trust as many segments of society would become estranged from the institution. Here too democracy needs to maintain a delicate balance: to represent the majority of interests in society without hindering its ability to make decisions and reach conclusions. This is no small feat. Parliaments that represent too much will find it difficult to function. Parliaments that represent too little will not survive.

Thus, we have seen that democracy is no different than other systems of government in that the very principles that underlie the system might bring about its destruction. The democratic catch, like Joseph Heller’s “Catch 22”, is unavoidable. Only our awareness of the catch, and our venture to reach compromises within and between democratic principles will make liberal democracy viable and sustainable. This is a delicate and compelling task. One that demands integrity as well as cautiousness, sensitivity and political astuteness.

MK Esterina Tartman



In 1981, a very ambitious reporter named Janet Cooke published her story, "Jimmy's World" in the front page of the Washington Post. It was a moving account of a young boy addicted to heroin. The paper's editors decided to nominate the story for the Pulitzer Prize, which Cooke won. Immediately afterwards, when Cooke's biography was published, some concerns were raised regarding her credentials. Eventually it was discovered that Cooke's CV was largely fabricated, as was "Jimmy's World".

The newspaper returned the prize, Cooke was fired with disgrace. The last I searched, she became a salesperson. The over-motivated journalist lost her world.

In 2004, when I visited the Post, senior editors told me that Cooke's spirit is still hovering above the place. The episode is still traumatic for the paper, as it lost part of its reputation as a result. Lessons, I was told, were learnt, and it is hoped that something like this could not be repeated in the Post.

Why do I tell you this story? Because Olmert who pulls every trick in the book to survive, including bolstering his government, and setting the agenda with spins and nominations, decided to do some reshuffling in the government, moving Herzog from the Ministry of Tourism to the vacated Ministry of Welfare, thus providing an opening for Lieberman to have another member of his party as minister in Olmert's collapsing and weak government. It was decided to nominate Esterina Tartman to the high post. And, as you can imagine, this nomination was also problematic. This government is unable to nominate one decent person to any position. All nominations are questionable. All are problematic. This one was no exception.

First, we learned that her credentials as having a Master's degree are dubious. She fabricated the degree. Then designated Tourism Minister Tartman sustained yet another blow to her already shaky reputation following reports that she did not successfully complete her first degree in accounting and finance management at Bar Ilan University.

Bar Ilan University administrators said they could not find her name on a list of undergraduates going back to 1977, adding that they would prefer it if Tartman confirmed or denied the claims herself.

In addition, it was revealed that in May 2002, Tartman hit a pedestrian at a crosswalk in Jerusalem. Witnesses reported that "she asked to keep driving, since she didn't believe she was involved." She only stopped when one witness ran after her and threatened to call the police, they said. The traffic court judge Avraham Tennenbaum said that the witness testimonies indicated that "an accident had been caused, for which she was responsible." Tartman was convicted of causing injury through negligence. She was fined NIS 3,000 (about \$700) and had her license revoked for a year and a half. The pedestrian, Gideon Shoshani, told Ynet: "She hit me and ran, people chased her and stopped her. She said she hadn't hit me. All through the trial, she didn't tell the truth, but the judge believed differently."

Despite all this, her party leader and Strategic Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman declared: Tartman is the only Yisrael Beiteinu (Israel Our Home party) candidate for Tourism Ministry. Good standards. Good leadership. Good public person, with high values. A minister. A symbol. Someone to look upon and set standards.

Lieberman slammed the media for "inflating" the issue of Tartman's false claims, saying that the media has become a "dictatorship." As far as he is concerned, the minister and party chairman said, the matter is "behind us." "Nobody can cast doubt on our credibility," Lieberman said. "Yisrael Beiteinu is not the Shin Bet or the Civil Service Commission. I don't subject candidates to polygraph or security test."

"Sometimes mistakes happen, [but] there is loss of proportion here and intoxication on the part of the media," he said.

The Prime Minister's Office called the appointment "problematic" but said it would not intervene in the faction's internal matters. "There is no known precedent in which the prime minister told another party who will be its minister," a statement from the office said. Nonetheless, officials close to Olmert say they expect Lieberman to forestall further embarrassment and to ask Tartman to pass on the position.

Yisrael Beiteinu's Web site stated that Tartman holds "a graduate degree in economics and marketing from Hebrew University." The Knesset Web site stated that Tartman holds an MBA with a specialization in management and marketing from the university in Jerusalem. An inquiry at the university showed that Tartman has never studied at that institution. Once Yedioth Ahronoth reporters began their probe, however, the statement on the party's Web site was altered to say that Tartman had undertaken "graduate studies in business administration in Jerusalem." Later, the mention of "Jerusalem" had also been removed.

In an interview on the Knesset channel, after she was designated tourism minister, Tartman explained the reasons for which she was qualified for the job. "Every minister needs to be knowledgeable in budgetary issues. I come with a management background... and a clear background in economics: I have a B.A. in accounting and finance, and an MBA."

The Knesset Ethics Committee, an ethical-professional body of the highest standard that the Israeli Knesset is capable of, decided not to take any steps against Tartman, despite harsh statements she previously made against Israeli Arabs and the ministerial appointment of Ghaleb Majadele. The committee decided that despite the severity of Tartman's statements, there was no room for dealing with the matter any further on grounds that what she said constituted a personal worldview and did not undermine the Knesset, or its members. I presume they assume the Knesset is so down that it is impossible to undermine this institution further.

For a few days in late February 2007, the headlines dealt with "tartarina" (her nickname by fellow MKs, alluding to the amount of noise this lady generates; "letarter" means in Hebrew "to make noise"). It is good that the media did not have other issues to deal with but with this fabrication.

After further contemplation, the Israel Our Home secretariat decided that MK Yitzhak Aharonovitch would be appointed tourism minister instead of MK Esterina Tartman.

Aharonovitch, 57, served as deputy police commissioner between the years 2002 and 2002. He currently serves as deputy Knesset speaker and as a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

I met tartarina once, as I was exiting Channel 2 TV talk show. Tartman, who was schedule to appear on a later panel, approached me and congratulated me for my appearance (“healthcare should include coverage of medication that saves life”; unfortunately, this is not obvious in Israel’s struggling economy). I had no idea who that woman was, and asked her for her identity. She told me her name, and further explained that she is a MK. I wished her good luck. I thought she was a friendly politician who tried to make contacts when and where she can, and obviously had a lot of time. She arrived at the TV studio before me, and was supposed to appear later. Many MKs arrive to such talk shows just prior their panel, and leave immediately afterwards. Tartman took her time to speak with the producers, the guests, and obviously the TV host Menny Peer, hoping -- I assume -- to be re-invited.

Beverley

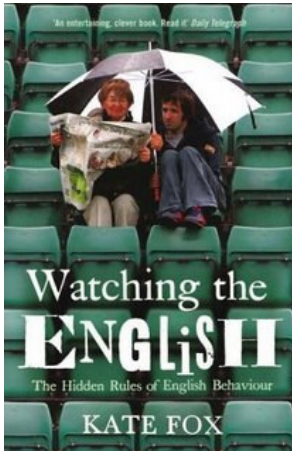


On March 1, 2007 we moved to our new home in Beverley, some 40 minutes from Hull. We were helped by a group of four movers, all from Northampton, the best movers I have ever met. They were experienced, strong, patient and pleasant. A winning combination of characters. One of them was even a Spurs supporter.

Beverley is a picturesque market town. It is very different from Beverley Hills. I wonder whether the Hills got its name from the English Beverley. Unfortunately, it certainly did not acquire its character.

Dana and Roei go to Swinemoor School. I would choose a different name. Gilad goes to Beverley Grammar, the oldest school in Britain, founded in 700 A.D. It is a boys only school. Gilad wears a tie every day, and has to ascertain that his white shirt is actually within his trousers. This is mirror image of what he was used to. The “in” is now “out” and the “out” is “in”. A confusing plus. People, including pupils, are pleasant and friendly. The kids feel welcomed in their respective schools, and brush up their English.

English Ways



In our 4 bedroom house there is one telephone socket. Presently, our sole operating TV, sole telephone and one computer are all in the living room. I am told it is customary in England to have one phone socket. Brings you to realize, once more, to what extent Israel had drifted away from the legacy of the British mandate and adopted the lavish American standards of life.

SKY TV



For the past few weeks I have been connecting our new home to civilization. Bureaucracy is unavoidable and expected. Of all companies, the most trying experience was with Sky TV. You call a number in Scotland. A man with heavy Scottish accent answers after you are requested to monitor your way through lengthy menus of options (3-4 minutes), listen to elevator music and finally reach a human being. He began to take details, but when he heard that I need installation he referred me to his colleague. Elevator music again. A woman picks the call. She asks the same questions he asked before, and then fills the forms. Lengthy. About 40 minutes long. I am not joking nor exaggerating. All conversation is in my difficult Israeli accent, and her heavy Scottish accent. Meaning, a lot of “excuse me”, “could you please repeat this?”, “sorry?”. After I think I got what I wanted, she confirmed the details by quickly reading a form (did not understand much, but it was quick), and gave me a list of numbers (ref. no.; job no.; few phone nos.). I think this was a record talk for me to install one thing, that is within five working days.

After consultation with my family regarding this very crucial issue, television, I was asked to call Sky again to change one detail in the order. With a heavy heart, and much anxiety, I called Sky the following day, after stopping at the coffee shop to gather some liquid against exhaustion. After the lengthy set of menus, finally I heard a nice but Scottish voice who asked whether she could help. I certainly hoped so, but she could not. Elevator music, but you cannot go up or down. Then another Scottish voice. I explained I wanted to change one item in my installation reservation and then she said: “If this is the case, I need to cancel your previous order and take all your details again”. I could not believe my ears. I tried to protest in a calm voice, zipping my drink, but she said: “Sorry, these are the regulations”. Well, she did not sound sorry and I would not wish to fight regulations. Usually this is futile.

In one key stroke, presumably delete, she deleted a 40 minutes of talk. Then we embarked on a 60 minutes talk (believe me that I am sad to say that I am not joking nor exaggerating) when we finalized the new order. Within one day, I broke the same record twice. Because my first order was cancelled, my family was punished and the installation was rescheduled for Monday instead of Saturday. When we finished, I needed a long cup of coffee, alone, away from my office. This was a trying lesson in tolerance and patience.

On Monday, the engineer arrived, only to discover that the dish on the roof is unreachable while safeguarding Sky's safety regulations, hence he could not carry out his job. I asked him some questions and he answered that as the installation was effectively cancelled, for all practical issues he was not present at my home, and was unable to answer any questions. I said to the ghost bye bye and off he went.

Now I hope never to call Sky again. If any of my British friends have an idea why Sky needs to delete the entire file upon changing one item in the order, please do let me know. I am anxious to understand the hidden, mysterious logic.

English Football



Watching English football is a real treat. That is, for football lovers. The pace is amazing, thrilling, breath-taking. I wonder how players can play the game so fast, running up and down the pitch, for 90 minutes, sometimes more. Only watching Barcelona is as exhilarating as English football. No wonder that within the top 8 teams of Europe, three are English. Don't be surprised if one of them will take the European championship.

Statement of the Month



Amir Peretz : “I should get very good grades for my performance as defense minister... I am doing a much better job than many of my predecessors”.

Thank You



My heartfelt gratitude goes to Mira and Yizhar Nozick for all their help. Yizhar is a beautiful person and a kind friend.

Thanks also to Carmel Avi-Yitzhak. Calm, calculated and sharp as an excellent lawyer can be.

I also express deep gratitude to Sharon Amir, my right-hand loyal anchor. I wish Sharon would be kind to herself as she is kind to others.

Finally, I thank Ruth Wodak and David Sugarman for inviting me to deliver a lecture at Lancaster. It was good to see Ruth again, and get to know David and colleagues.

With my very best wishes,

Yours as ever,

Rafi

My last communications are available on <http://almagor.blogspot.com>
Earlier posts at my home page: <http://hcc.haifa.ac.il/~rca/>
<<http://hcc.haifa.ac.il/~rca/>>