

Column One: At least she's not corrupt

Caroline Glick , THE JERUSALEM POST

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The return of thousands of Israelis to the ruins of Homesh village in northern Samaria this week was a bolt from the blue. A rare combination of wisdom, morality and great timing, the demonstration forced the local media to acknowledge the strategic folly and moral bankruptcy of the expulsion and withdrawal policy that transformed some 10,000 Israeli Jews into internal refugees a year and a half ago.

Homesh was one of the 21 communities razed by prime minister Ariel Sharon's government in August 2005. On Monday, thousands marched to its ruins and pledged to rebuild it. Although by Tuesday radio and television newscasters were predictably agitating for the IDF to violently remove the demonstrators, their anti-settler prattle came off flat. The thrill was gone.

After the war in Lebanon last summer, and Gaza's post-withdrawal transformation into a mini-Taliban state, it is no longer possible to sound intelligent while advocating Israeli withdrawals and expulsions. Since few people are willing to sound like fools, most of the broadcasters acknowledged the withdrawal's strategic failure.

Without its strategic fig leaf, all that remains to defend the policy of ethnically cleansing areas of Jewish presence is the hatred card upheld by the Arabs and the Left. Both claim that Jews must be removed from their homes because their mere presence in their communities is responsible for the genocidal hatred that has taken control of the Palestinian and the Arab world's collective psyche.

The protesters at Homesh ably dispensed with this anti-Semitic nonsense by pointing to the fact that the IDF remains in the areas in spite of the removal of its Jewish residents. The IDF has remained in place because contrary to the promises of the plan's proponents, the expulsion of the Jews of northern Samaria and Gaza did nothing to mitigate the Palestinians' commitment to Israel's destruction. To the contrary, it simply whetted their appetite for war. Indeed, what the aftermath of the expulsions proved was that far from burdening the army, before they were destroyed, the communities in northern Samaria and Gaza protected the IDF by providing secure bases for operations.

As luck would have it, the demonstrators exposed the moral bankruptcy and strategic idiocy at the heart of the withdrawal and expulsion policy just as US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice arrived in Israel. Rice came to pressure the Olmert-Livni-Peretz government to conduct negotiations with the Palestinian Authority's Hamas-Fatah terror government. The ultimate object of Rice's the proposed talks is the expulsion of hundreds of thousands more Israelis from their homes in Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem just because they are Jews. There can be little doubt that their protest took the wind out of Rice's sails.

Since Israel's defeat in last summer's war, the public standing of most of the politicians who worked towards the 2005 expulsions has taken a pounding. But while Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's approval ratings languish in the single digits, the politician whose contribution to the expulsion policy was second only to Sharon's, and the minister who pushed hardest for Israel's defeat in last summer's war, continues to enjoy widespread public

support.

A *MA'ARIV* poll taken last week showed that were Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni to stand at the helm of Kadima in the next elections, the governing party would win 27 Knesset seats to 23 seats for Likud under Binyamin Netanyahu.

Given that Livni is a relative newcomer to the leadership ranks of Israeli politics, it is worth recalling the context of her rise to prominence. When Sharon first announced his lunatic plan to retreat from Gaza in early 2004, Livni was a junior minister in his government identified with the right-wing faction of the Likud.

But Livni saw her opportunity, and she took it.

Without pausing to ask questions, Livni abandoned all her previous ideological protestations and jumped on the expulsion bandwagon.

It was just a matter of months until the junior immigration minister was reinvented as the senior justice minister and Livni became one of the most powerful politicians in Israel.

In her new role Livni did two things that together ensured the expulsions would go forward. First, Livni protected Sharon's leadership position in the Likud by drafting the so-called "compromise" deal on expulsions in early 2005. Livni's compromise, which was approved by the government in February 2005, co-opted Likud ministers who opposed the expulsion policy by promising that it would be implemented in stages over a period of months and that each stage would require separate cabinet approval.

It took Sharon's advisers all of five minutes after the deal was approved by the cabinet to disavow it. But Livni didn't mind. Her safeguarding of Sharon's premiership at her colleagues' expense made her the media darling she has remained to this day.

And her colleagues weren't the only ones who Livni trampled on her way up the political ladder. Livni actively worked to subvert the rule of law in order to squelch lawful opposition to the expulsion plan. In her capacity as justice minister, Livni was one of the principal architects of the draconian judicial and law enforcement measures used against opponents of the expulsion policies in total contravention of the laws of the state.

Livni denied protesters their freedom of movement by blocking buses en route to legal demonstrations. She approved massive and arbitrary arrests and lengthy pre-trial incarcerations of thousands of citizens including minors for participating in protests. She blatantly trounced the civil rights, including property rights, of the residents of Gaza and northern Samaria. Taken together, the measures that Livni implemented caused the effective collapse of Israeli democracy in the summer of 2005.

Livni's contribution as justice minister to undermining of the rule of law and Israeli democracy is matched by her contribution as foreign minister to Israel's diplomatic collapse.

Last Sunday, former US ambassador to the UN John Bolton discussed last summer's war in Lebanon during an interview with the BBC. Bolton said that during the first weeks of the war the US rejected holding cease-fire negotiations because it wished to give Israel the time it needed to defeat Hizbullah. According to Bolton, the Bush administration only agreed to commence cease-fire discussions after it became clear that Israel was not winning.

In supporting an Israeli victory, the Americans apparently didn't count on the Livni-led diplomatic charge to

defeat. By her own admission, Livni was pushing to begin cease-fire negotiations on the second day of the war. Although (or perhaps because) a ground campaign was the only way that Israel could possibly have defeated Hizbullah, Livni consistently opposed conducting one. Instead she recommended deploying an international peacekeeping force at the border to separate Israel from an undefeated Hizbullah.

Livni's cease-fire discussions with Rice from the earliest stages of the war, coupled with her consistent rejection of the option of military victory were used by State Department officials to justify their opposition to President George W. Bush's view that Israel should be given as much time and maneuvering room as possible to defeat Hizbullah in battle.

Since August, Livni has exulted in UN Security Council Resolution 1701 which set the cease-fire terms. But far from the stellar achievement Livni claims it to be, Resolution 1701 marked an unprecedented military and diplomatic defeat for Israel.

As Livni mindlessly wished, the resolution places an international force on Israel's border. But rather than fight Hizbullah, UNIFIL forces act principally to prevent the IDF from blocking Hizbullah's rearmament and reassertion of its control over south Lebanon. Indeed under the cover of 1701 Hizbullah has in fact rearmed and reasserted its control over the south.

Diplomatically, the resolution treats Israel and Hizbullah as equals; makes no mention of Syria and Iran - without which Hizbullah would be little more than a vigilante gang of religious fanatics; and does not require the release of IDF hostages Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser.

Although Livni played a central role in ensuring Israel's defeat last summer, the media have given her a free pass. For the overwhelmingly leftist media, given the irrevocability of Olmert's political demise, Livni represents the last hope to maintain the Left's control over Israeli policymaking.

Livni's strategically calamitous embrace of defeat during the war in Lebanon is matched by her strategically calamitous embrace of PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas today. Since accepting Fatah's junior status in the Hamas government, Abbas has been reduced to nothing more than a Hamas toady. So by upholding Abbas as a credible partner, Livni has effectively provided Israeli cover to the terrorist unity government.

While most Israelis consistently voice their opposition to dealing with the Hamas-Fatah government, Livni has encouraged the US to pressure Israel to negotiate the surrender of Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem with Abbas. Most recently, Livni's diplomatic wrangling paved the way for the US's embrace of the so-called Arab initiative. That anti-Israel initiative states that the Arabs will conduct "normal" relations with Israel right after Israel commits national suicide by surrendering Judea, Samaria and Jerusalem to the Palestinians, the Golan Heights to Syria, and permitting millions of foreign Arabs to immigrate to its shrunken territory.

While Livni opposes the Arab demand that the so-called Palestinian refugees be permitted to settle in Israel, she openly supports their unlimited immigration to the Palestinian state in Jerusalem, Gaza, Samaria and Judea. Livni's position - as usual - ignores the reality on the ground. Since there is no natural geographical distinction between a future terrorist state of Palestine and a future defenseless Israel, if millions of Arabs come to Palestine, they will also come to Israel.

PUBLIC SUPPORT for Livni is based less on her policies, of which the public is largely unaware and overwhelmingly opposes, than on the fact that she is not currently the subject of any criminal probes. Due to her apparent non-involvement in criminal activities, in contrast to her colleagues in Kadima, Livni is perceived as honest and uncorrupt.

But corruption takes many forms.

Livni has repeatedly sold out Israeli's national interests for personal gain. Earlier in the year, Livni lied to the public in order to transfer \$100 million in tax revenues to the Hamas-Fatah terror government. As justice minister she prostituted the rule of law to advance the expulsions. Last summer she surrendered the security of northern Israel to the good graces of Iran, Syria and Hizbullah in order to sign on to a humiliating cease-fire. And now she advocates a policy towards the Palestinians that would imperil Israel's viability as a Jewish state.

In short, Livni sold out Zionism for a job promotion.

This week's return to Homesh was another important forward step in the nation's abandonment of the path of defeatism and surrender. But for defeatism to be replaced with a reassertion of Zionist ideals, Livni, who owes her career to her sacrifice of those ideals, must also be cast aside.

A blue banner for Sportingbet. On the left, there is a glowing football. The text "sportingbet." is in white and red, with "Sports • Casino • Poker • Games" in smaller white text below it. In the center, it says "Free \$50 Bet for new Canadian customers" in white. On the right, there is a red button with "Bet Now" in white. The letter "Be" is partially visible on the far right.

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