

Opinion & Comment

HAARETZ הָאָרֶז

Hebrew Edition
Editor: Aluf Benn
Deputy Editor: Avi Zilberberg

English Edition
Editor: Charlotte Hallé
Deputy Editor: Simon Spungin

Deputy Publisher: Guy Rolnik

Managing Director, Haaretz Group: Rami Guez
Managing Director, English Edition: Aviva Bronstein

Haaretz Daily Newspaper Ltd.
21 Schocken St., Tel Aviv 61350 Israel.
Tel: 03-5121212 Fax: 03-6810012
Customer Service Tel: 03-5121750 Fax: 03-5121703
E-mail: iht@haaretz.co.il Advertising: 03-5121774, 03-5121112
Letters to the editor: letters@haaretz.co.il or fax: 03-5121156

A step against slavery

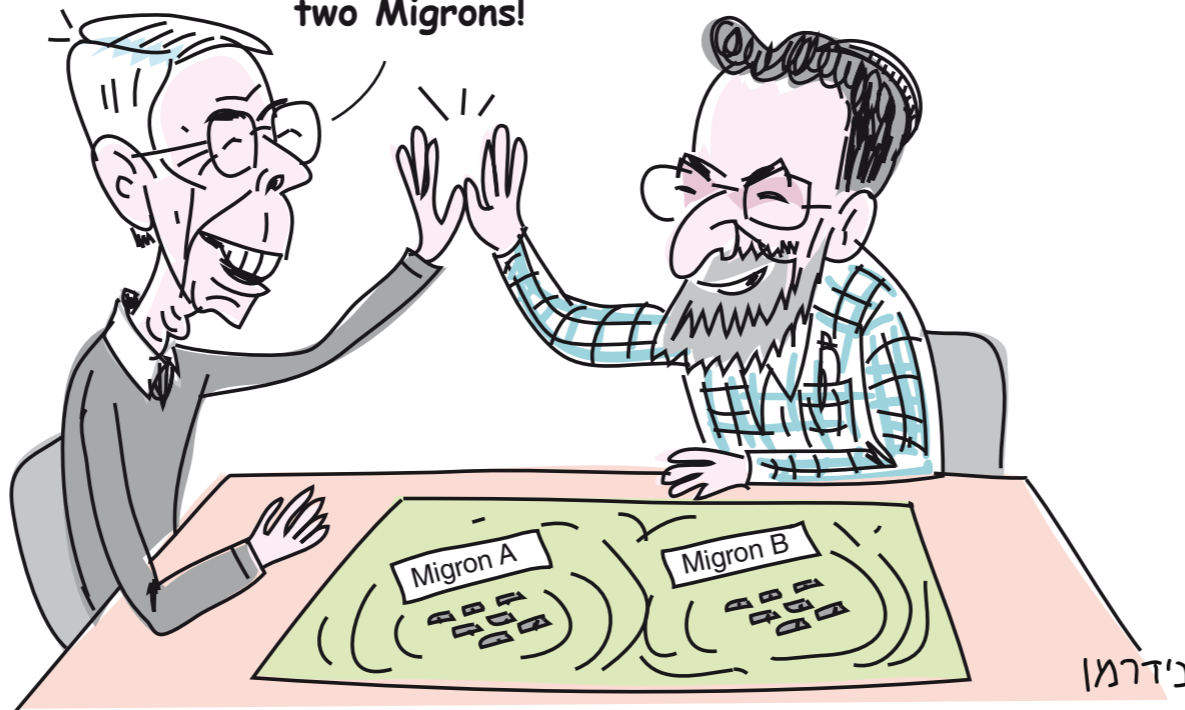
The decision by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation to support a bill that assigns criminal responsibility to the clients of prostitutes is praiseworthy. The bill, sponsored by MK Orit Zuretz (Kadima), is not intended to take revenge on those clients, but, for the first time, to raise the veil on one of the sickest evils in any society – an evil whose existence is often denied – and in Israeli society in particular.

Within the Western world, Israel is one of the countries with the worst record of trafficking in women. In the absence of stringent legislation and adequate resources, the police and courts are having difficulty reducing the scope of the trafficking. Enlightened lawmakers around the world have long understood that – despite the convenient, though illusory, aura of mysterious romanticism that has surrounded prostitution since, it seems, the beginning of time – prostitution is nothing other than slavery, in the deepest and most despicable sense. Some 15,000 victims of this form of slavery in Israel are controlled by pimps who do not balk at any means to strengthen that control, including violence and getting the prostitutes addicted to hard drugs. Of the prostitutes in this country, most are women and about one-third are young people (both male and female) who began selling their bodies between the ages of 12 and 14.

In an effort to fight this phenomenon, lawmakers in several European countries have exposed the link in the chain that had until then been pretty well protected: the prostitutes' clients. Imposing responsibility on the clients signals a deep-seated change in the relationship between the legislature and the prostitution industry. Whereas arresting and jailing the prostitutes essentially punishes them twice without affecting the chain of exploitation, Scandinavian and French laws assigning criminal responsibility to the clients have succeeded in significantly reducing prostitution.

But as important as such a reduction is in its own right, an even more important consequence of such a law is the change in social consciousness, which paves the way for a quiet cultural revolution. Let us hope that will be the result of the Israeli version of this legislation. Like similar laws in Europe, it takes a cautious pedagogical approach and calls for rehabilitation for a first offense and punishment only if a second offense is committed. Israel's 1998 anti-sexual harassment law has shown that legislation can indeed effect change, even when the law is far ahead of prevailing social norms. This new bill is another important stage in this welcome process of change.

Now we've got two Migron!



Amos Biderman | amosb@haaretz.co.il

Nehemia Shtrasler

A source of hypocrisy

Daphni Leef and Itzik Shmuli can hold their heads high today. Without the summer protests they led last summer, Histadrut labor federation chairman Ofer Eini would not have mobilized the large unions for a strike in support of the economy's weakest workers. Without the social protests, there's no way contract workers would have received anything.

The social protests, which pushed the Histadrut chairman from center stage, and the change in public opinion – which demanded more justice and fewer social gaps – were the driving forces behind the recent strike. Anyone who still claims that the summer protests didn't achieve anything is wrong, big-time.

But there are always a few people who will never be happy. No achievement will satisfy them, short of a revolutionary change that would move our economic system in the direction of neo-socialism. Therefore, they aren't satisfied with the very substantial raise that cleaning staff and security guards (very properly) received.

These dedicated workers will now earn a minimum wage of NIS 4,500 a month; they will henceforth receive the same raises as other public-sector workers, along with contributions to their pension funds and even professional training funds; and outstanding workers will get bonuses. No less importantly, they will now get holiday gifts and subsidized lunches at their workplace, just like other workers do. Granted, this isn't big money, but it is of great importance. No longer will cleaners and security guards be pushed to the margins; instead, they will be accepted and respected.

But those who complain about the agreement say that Eini failed to achieve the main goal: transferring 80,000 security guards and 60,000 cleaners directly onto the payrolls of the government, local authorities, universities, hospitals and the rest of the public sector.

It's true that he failed to achieve this, but we're lucky he did. For Eini wanted to force a single, uniform mode of employment onto the government: direct employment. It didn't interest him that no Western country – not Sweden, not Holland, not England – bans the indirect employment of workers. It didn't matter to him that the economy would have gone backward by 30 years, and investment, growth and employment would all have suffered. He wanted the models to be Cuba and North Korea, not Western Europe.

It's extremely fortunate that Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stood in the breach and refused to destroy everything that has been built here with great effort over the last 30 years.

Everyone should realize that buying services from an outside company is an integral part of the business world, and also of public administration. It stems from the critical need to specialize and devote one's time to one's core business, rather than wasting precious administrative hours on marginal matters.

Every enterprise, regardless of whether it's private or public, must try to be the best in its core business. So it's proper to purchase services such as cleaning, security, computerization or payroll preparation from outside companies. And not only is it proper, it's more efficient – as long as the outsourcing insists on these external workers

being given fair wages and respectable working conditions.

Here, however, it's worth noting that Steinitz and Netanyahu's achievement was very partial – because the Histadrut didn't promise "industrial peace" with regard to the whole issue of direct employment. So, it could declare localized labor disputes tomorrow in a particular hospital or local authority to demand the direct employment of contract workers in that particular workplace.

Many people argue that while Europe employs contract workers, Israel does so in much larger numbers. But they forget to mention that the reason for this is the Histadrut, and Ofer Eini himself.

When Eini became Histadrut chairman six years ago, in February 2006 he met with the head of the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce and said, "The Histadrut erred when it didn't agree that public-sector employers should have managerial flexibility, which would also include the ability to fire workers." Because there is no such flexibility, Eini continued, "the employers circumvented the Histadrut. Instead of hiring workers under the collective agreement, they hired workers on personal contracts" – the equivalent of today's contract workers.

But despite these fine words, Eini has refused throughout his term to grant the public sector "managerial flexibility." Instead, he has taken a militant line of opposing any change, any mobility, any possibility of moving a worker from one corner of the office to another. And now he is shedding crocodile tears over the ballooning number of outsourced workers. It's a truly impressive display of hypocrisy.

Adar Primor

Hitler's little mustache

Zagreb, October 1999, the Croatian presidential palace. In an attempt to eradicate his country's leprous image, Franjo Tudjman called a rare press conference at which he intended to present "a different Croatia" – democratic and pluralistic. Everything was carefully prepared. The marble floor tiles gleamed, the lawns were a manicured bright green and even the weather cooperated. Two things were not taken into account: the questions from the journalists and the character of Tudjman, "the father of the Croatian nation."

"You were quoted in the past as saying, 'Thank God, my wife is neither a Serb nor a Jew,'" I addressed him. "Moreover, in the English version of your book you corrected passages casting doubt on the extent of the Holocaust, but not in the versions of the book in other languages."

The president particularly astounded those present in his answer regarding the number of victims at the Jasenovac concentration camp. He said that at the camp, which became known as "the Auschwitz of the Balkans" and was administered by the Ustase (the puppet government established by the Nazis in Croatia from 1941 to 1945), "only" 40,000 people died.

These remarks aroused a tremendous uproar. According to most historians the number of dead Tudjman cited is less than half the actual number of dead at the camp. Some have cited 850,000, a quarter of them Jews. The nationalist president's revisionist answer led to the cancellation of a visit by him to Israel, which would have been historic.

A lot of water has flowed through the Sava River since then. About two months after that press conference cancer overpowered Tudjman. Stjepan Mesić, his successor during the past decade, has brought Croatia forward into a new era, aspiring to normalcy and openness. Hence, in the near future Croatia will become the 28th member of the European Union.

Even so, today too the struggle over Croatia's memory has not been decided. The nostalgia for the quisling state has faded but it has not disappeared, acknowledges Mesić in a phone conversation. In Zagreb and Split large public masses have been celebrated recently in memory of Ante Pavelić, the leader of the Ustase. Streets in a number of cities still bear the names of collaborators and memorials dedicated to Partisans and victims of Fas-

cism are destroyed. In 2010 the current president of Croatia Ivo Josipović was the first president to visit Bleiburg in Austria where, at the end of the war, masses of Ustase people were executed.

Historical revisionism has attained even more disturbing proportions in other parts of the post-Communist world. Hundreds of people marched recently in Ukraine in memory of the nationalist Stepan Bandera, who collaborated with the Nazis; in Estonia it was published that the Defense Ministry initiated recognition of a local unit that was subordinate to the Waffen SS and most noteworthy of all has been Lithuanian Foreign Minister Audronius Azubalis: He attacked eight members of parliament from his country who on the 70th anniversary of the Wannsee conference signed a European declaration of the uniqueness of the Holocaust. "Pathetic," said the minister's spokeswoman. "It is impossible to find differences between Hitler and Stalin, apart from the size of their mustaches. Hitler's was smaller."

With this Lithuania has joined the promoters of the concept of "double genocide." These – and they are multiplying – want to recognize Nazism and Stalinism as a joint European heritage and to hold a memorial day for victims of both the totalitarian regimes.

Croatian President Josipović is now visiting Israel. He sees it as a role model. His country's entry into the EU will strengthen the pro-Israel camp in Europe. Israel should greet him warmly. But it should also take the opportunity of his visit to express an uncompromising position against the "double genocide" thesis, which is nothing but a relativization of the Holocaust and an attempt to launder the opponents of the Soviets and their crimes.

Josipović's decision to lay a wreath at Bleiburg was done in the name of national reconciliation. Before that he visited Jasenovac. A visit versus a visit. A perfect balance. He condemned the crimes of fascism and knelt in memory of the victims of Communism. He has tried to draw a line in the past in order to build the future.

However, blurring between hangers and their victims will not lead to real reconciliation. Stalinism, with all its terrible crimes, did not develop a racial theory and did not engage in the systematic slaughter of peoples. The balancing is a sin against history, which will not forgive cheapeners and distorters of the Holocaust.

Salman Masalha

The number's up for monotheism

Right now, most governments in the world are keeping silent despite the calls by the Palestinian mufti [Muhammad Hussein] to kill Jews," said Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a speech last month to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Netanyahu added that he was horrified by the fact "that there is a legacy of hate and destruction, because this mufti is following in the footsteps of that other mufti [Haj Amin al-Husseini, who allied with Hitler] ... and rather than calling for peace and reconciliation, he calls for the destruction of the Jewish people wherever they may be."

Netanyahu was preceded by President Shimon Peres, who also sharply criticized the mufti of Jerusalem. "The mufti's words are dangerous and are liable to bring about an escalation in Jewish-Arab relations, and even loss of life," the president warned.

It's interesting to note that both men were quiet during the scandal raised by Rabbi Yitzhak Shapiro's "The King's Torah," a book giving Jews permission to kill Gentiles who threaten Israel. They and other politicians have also remained silent in the face of petitions and racist statements that have emerged from the study halls of "the sages of the generation" of one type or another.

It seems to me that the ones who ought to be coming out to defend the mufti are exactly those rabbis who cried foul and argued that the state is not permitted to intervene in matters of religion and religious law. So it is with adherents of the infantile monotheism, in all its branches and metaphors.

Whoever reads the literature of monotheistic religions, and it doesn't matter which religion, soon learns that it is full of moral abominations. The *hadith* that the mufti quoted does actually exist in the Islamic branch of monotheism: "Judgment Day will not come only when the Muslims fight the Jews and kill them; the Jew will hide behind the stone and the stone will

say, 'Oh Muslim, Oh servant of Allah, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'"

These *hadiths* and others are part of the eschatological traditions that deal with the End of Days and Judgment Day, and they exist in other cultures as well. Islam did not invent the eschatological wheel. It drew from Judaism and Christianity and invented these and other traditions to serve its very worldly purposes, namely broad conquests.

Muslims don't just fight Jews in the End of Days. These *hadiths* also tell us that the end of days will not come "until they will fight with Husa and Carman, who are among the Persian peoples." And in another version, "until you fight the Turkish peoples." This is what these people look like: "Red-faced, with flattened noses, narrow eyes, and with round, flat faces like shields."

And if the Jerusalem mufti and other muftis will continue to search through these desert *hadiths*, there's another surprise awaiting them. In the present cold Jerusalem climate, one wonders what kind of shoes the learned mufti is wearing, since if he would continue to read the fine print, he might find himself on the wrong side. After all, the *hadiths* also say that "the end of days will not come until you fight the men wearing padded shoes."

In short, not only has the time come to separate between this monotheism and the state – both the Jewish and Arab state – the time has also come to separate it from the national discourse. Because if we don't, this ridiculous and dangerous monotheism will take over and destroy whatever good that remains here.

The little politicians who pretend to teach us "what it means to be Jewish" or "what it means to be Arab" will continue to throw hollow slogans into the air. Meanwhile, we can say about the Israeli-Palestinian situation that not only is "the face of the generation like a face of a dog," but that the face of the "Bibi" is like the face of the "Tibi." As for the rest, go and learn it.

Moshe Arens

Nasrallah replies to Haaretz

Is it possible that Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah reads Haaretz? Not the Hebrew edition, of course. But does he read the English edition online, or is the print edition smuggled to him in Beirut by one of his agents in Israel? Or is it translated to him by one of his aides?

One way or another, he seems to have decided to react to an article on Haaretz's op-ed page, not very prominently displayed, on January 24; the piece discussed a statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his recent visit to Beirut. There he said Hezbollah's arsenal outside the authority of the Lebanese government was unacceptable.

Commenting on Ban's statement, the Haaretz article stated that whereas a situation where a terrorist organization had deployed tens of thousands of rockets aimed at Israel was unacceptable to the UN secretary-general, it was intolerable for Israel. What's more, it was creating a situation where all Lebanon was sitting on a time bomb. If Israel were forced to destroy this vast rocket arsenal, great destruction would inevitably rain down on all Lebanon. In other words, Hezbollah was putting all Lebanon in danger.

Hezbollah's rockets, it was pointed out, serve as a protective shield against Iran's nuclear ambitions and will be unleashed against Israel on orders from Tehran. Therefore, sooner or later, action will have to be taken to bring about the dismantling of these rockets.

It took Nasrallah about two weeks to digest the full meaning of this message and all its implications – just what the



Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in a broadcast to supporters last week. He must be really foolish if he believes he can hoodwink the people of Lebanon.

people of Lebanon, sitting on the powder keg he had built under them, would conclude, and how that would affect Hezbollah's standing in Lebanon. Also an issue was the danger of international moves forcing the dismantling of his rockets in Lebanon, and failing that the possibility of military action to destroy his rocket arsenal.

On February 7, from his hideout in Beirut, Nasrallah broadcast by video-link a message to the people of Lebanon, a message also of interest to Haaretz's readers. Yes, he said, Hezbollah receives financial and material aid from Iran, but he denied that it takes operational instructions from Iran. Then he added a key sentence. If Israel were to attack

Iran's nuclear sites, Iran's leadership "would not ask anything of Hezbollah." If that were to happen, he continued, Hezbollah's own leadership would "sit down, think and decide what to do."

So there you have it, believe it or not. Hezbollah, though it receives financial and material aid from its "brothers" in Iran, is an "independent organization," does not take orders from Tehran, and will decide when to launch or not to launch the tens of thousands of rockets it has deployed all over Lebanon against Israel. It will do this only after it has "sat down, thought about the problem and decided what to do." So, Nasrallah says, the people in Lebanon and the people in Tel Aviv have nothing to worry about.

Nasrallah must be really foolish if he believes he can hoodwink the people of Lebanon, the people of Israel or the international community. His ties to his masters in Tehran are too well known. It is they who call the shots. It is they who are trying to bolster the Assad regime in Syria. It is the continuation of Bashar Assad's rule in Damascus that assures the Iranian supply line to Hezbollah in Lebanon.

No wonder Nasrallah feels a little shaky and is trying to shore up his public image by insisting he's an independent factor in the Middle East equation. But the basic facts remain. Hezbollah's rockets in Lebanon are part and parcel of the Iranian effort to attain nuclear weapons, and neutralizing this rocket threat must be part of the strategy to keep Iran from attaining a nuclear weapons capability.