

Direct talks spark hopes for peace in Middle East

■ Concessions necessary for negotiations to succeed

By MARTIN COMINSKY, JACK LASCAR and LEE WUNSCH

THIS is a hopeful time for Israelis and for Jews around the world. The Obama administration has just launched a new round of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, and it is optimistic that those talks will result in some sort of agreement within a year.

The Jewish High Holy days are imminent, bringing a time of similar introspection, reflection and renewal. Jews traditionally assess the past and look toward a brighter future during these special and very sacred holidays. These special days in our faith are setting the stage.

As Palestinians and Israelis enter into direct talks for the first time since Barack Obama was elected president, we at the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston and American Jewish Committee (AJC) hope that for both Israelis and Palestinians, this will be a new beginning.

We hope that prior direct negotiations that resulted in peace treaties between Israel and Egypt, and Israel and Jordan, will serve as a model of what can happen. With statesmanship and compromise on both sides, such talks could provide a peaceful resolution to what some have declared an intractable conflict.

One thing is certain. Violence and disregard for human life don't work. The peacemakers already have been provoked by a barbaric attack on civilians by Hamas. The recent terrorist attack that killed four Israeli civilians near the Israeli town of Kiryat Arba

was meant to derail the peace talks, but it did not. Still, further violence could scuttle any progress and even set negotiations back. We hope the Palestinians who sincerely want peace will publicly and strongly reject terrorism and violence so that open and productive negotiations can occur.

Time and time again, Israel has proven its willingness to compromise in search of peace. Seventy percent of the Israeli public supports "painful concessions" if they will lead to peace. We hope Palestinian leaders also will compromise and finally recognize Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. This means giving up the "right of return," which would destroy the Jewish identity of Israel.

In exchange for Israel's concessions, the Palestinians should work to stop the incitement of hate

directed at Israel and Jews in schools, educational materials and Palestinian television. Without a true desire for peace among all Palestinians, negotiations will fail. In the past, the Palestinians have had multiple opportunities to accept Israeli concessions that would have given them the state they profess they want, but those opportunities have

been rejected. This is another opportunity, and it's vital to the future sovereignty, safety and security for both Israelis and Palestinians.

During the holiest of days on the Jewish calendar, Jews around the world will be praying for understanding, for a brighter future, and most of all, for peace. Perhaps this time our prayers will be answered.

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VINCENT THIAN : ASSOCIATED PRESS

FLOOD VICTIM: A Pakistani boy displaced by flooding carries a bag of relief supplies at a temporary camp operated by the Pakistan Army in Makli, Sindh province, southern Pakistan.

Flood-ravaged Pakistan could use a helping hand

■ Other crises attracted far more contributions

By JAMES A. BAKER III

THE four weeks of flooding across Pakistan are truly historic. More people have already been affected than the combined total of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 2005 Pakistani earthquake and 2010 Haiti earthquake. This catastrophe has already touched 17 million people and an area the size of the state of Florida.

We are witnessing a tragedy of epic and frightening proportions that precedes what experts predict will be further human suffering. Four weeks of heavy monsoon rains have produced wave after wave of deadly flood waters from the Indus, Kabul and Swat Rivers and their tributaries. To date the flooding has washed away a million homes and left additional millions homeless, decimated crops, killed countless livestock, and inflicted billions of dollars worth of damage. Meanwhile, the high waters continue to spread.

More than 3.5 million children are at risk from waterborne diseases, malaria, skin diseases, respiratory infections and malnutrition. The toll in human lives has been mercifully low, thanks in large part to heroic rescue efforts by Pakistani and U.S. military. But it is expected to worsen.

The U.S. government, both civilian and military, was the first international responder. So far, it remains the largest contributor to Pakistan's immediate relief as well as its long-term reconstruction. Our country has promised \$200 million, and that number will grow when the flood waters recede and the extent of the damage to Pakistan's infrastructure is clear.

But we cannot and should not expect the government to respond to this unprecedented natural disaster alone. Donations from private Americans, corporations, foundations, church groups and service organizations played a significant role in the relief and reconstruction of the nations slammed by the tsunami in late 2004 and the earthquakes that struck Pakistan and Haiti. Yet, to date, private contributions from America for the floods in Pakistan have only trickled in.

According to the Chronicle of Philanthropy, 22 aid groups have raised only \$10.6 million to assist Pakistanis affected by the floods. By comparison, in half the time following the Haiti earthquake earlier this year, 40 aid groups had raised \$560 million. Private giving for the 2004 tsunami was estimated at more than \$1.5 billion.

Experts are debating why private giving for the flood disaster is low. Hopefully, their

analyses will allow our aid agencies to devise better strategies for private fundraising. But Pakistanis can't wait. They need our immediate help to start rebuilding their lives as soon as possible.

This is a critical point in Pakistan's history, and the response from Americans is crucial to our relationship with that key country. If the Pakistani people lose hope amid this catastrophe, extremist groups seeking opportunities to exploit the floods for their own ends will find even more fertile recruiting grounds.

Successive U.S. administrations, both Republican and Democratic, have committed the country to a strong partnership with Pakistan. It is in America's best interest to assist Pakistan in the struggle against insurgent groups that operate in tribal areas, project terror into Afghanistan and sow fear throughout Pakistan itself with regular terrorist attacks. Americans benefit from a partnership with the Pakistani people that is founded on moral and humanitarian grounds. But there are other reasons for Americans to assist Pakistan's recovery, including our long history of care and generosity that people across the globe admire and respect.

Fortunately, there are trusted aid groups with decades of solid experience operating in Pakistan — including the Red Cross, CARE, Catholic Relief, the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children and Mercy Corps. These organizations are working on the ground to provide lifesaving assistance in flooded areas. But they need greater funding. Your tax-deductible contributions to these fine humanitarian organizations will go to work quickly to ease suffering and restore hope for Pakistan's future.

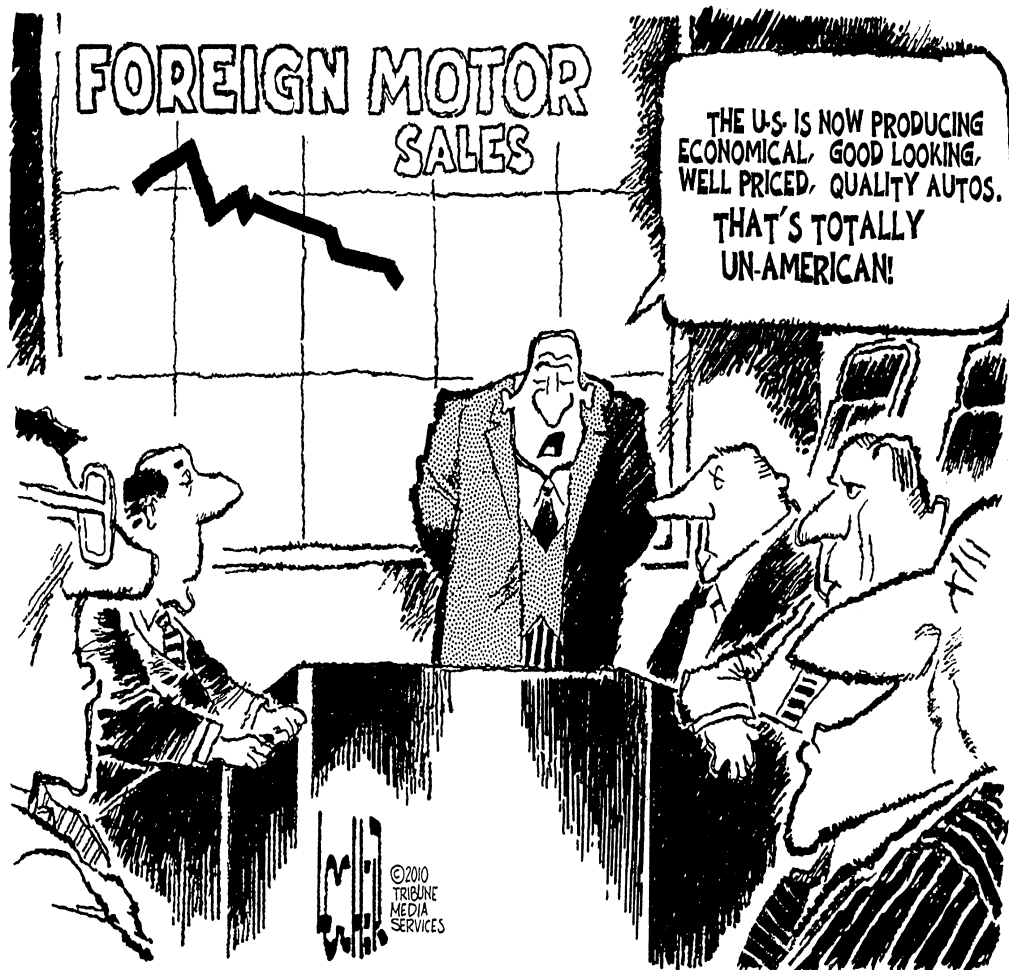
You can find a list of more than 30 American organizations working in Pakistan by going to www.interaction.org and making a contribution online or by mail directly to one or more of the organizations.

If you aren't sure which organization to support, you can also make a tax-deductible contribution to the Department of State's Pakistan Relief Fund (www.state.gov/pakistanrelief).

You can even use your cell phone to give. Text SWAT to 50555 to make a \$10 contribution to the United Nation's refugee program for Pakistan. Or text FLOOD to 27722 to make a \$10 contribution to the Pakistan Relief Fund managed by the State Department.

Your contributions will add up, and together with our government's response, make a lasting difference for the Pakistani people. If we give now, and generously, we will remind the people of Pakistan that the American people are standing with them during this darkest day.

Baker was the 61st U.S. secretary of state.



Beck acolytes could learn a lot from earlier populists

FROMA HARROP says the followers of William Jennings Bryan understood that unregulated banks and industrial giants were oppressing the lower classes.

MORE than a century ago, William Jennings Bryan presided over mass rallies of mostly middle-class Americans angry about economic inequities. The tea party activists gathered in Washington last weekend for Glenn Beck's event shared similar concerns. Both leaders framed their populist mission in Christian terms.

But Bryan's people knew the source of their insecurity. Beck's don't.

Bryan's populists blamed unregulated banks and industrial mammoths for oppressing the middle class on down. They wanted government to protect them from marauding monopolies.

Beck's populists see government as the marauder. Government, in his rhetoric, is the bully harassing individuals and business alike.

Populist sentiment against the business elite helped get Republican Theodore Roosevelt elected president in 1904. (He had moved up from the vice presidency with the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901.) But Beck slams Roosevelt for his reformer vision. He froths over Roosevelt's belief that the pursuit of great wealth should benefit the wider community as well as rich people as "the cancer that is eating at America."

It's always dangerous to compare periods separated by more than 100 years. Back in the late 1890s, the government was tiny, and the big corporate powers were free to trample workers and small businesses. Standard Oil and the future U.S. Steel had bigger budgets than the U.S. government.

In sharp contrast, today's populists don't see the recent economic meltdown as the

product of the financial industry allowed to run amok. The same folk agonize over growing deficits and see the widening gap between the super rich and everyone else — yet still oppose a modest tax hike on the top few percent.

In one breath, the tea partiers rail against the bank bailouts. In the next, they object to efforts in Washington to reregulate the banks and make future bailouts unnecessary. And they see their political home in a Republican Party that tirelessly serves the interests of the Wall Street princes and the industries that dine on taxpayer dollars — for instance, health care.

It's hard to remember that Wall Street was rather sympathetic to the surging Democrats only two years ago. During the presidential campaign, the party took in 70 percent of Wall Street's political contributions. Republicans are now receiving 68 percent.

The financiers turned on Democrats as the Obama administration sought to reregulate the financial industry. They denounce a proposed return to the top marginal rates of the Clinton era as a gross injustice. They indignantly defend the ludicrous loophole that lets hedge and private-equity fund managers pay taxes at a lower rate than the police who guard their mansions.

Hedge-fund manager Daniel S. Loeb angri-

ly wrote his investors that "this country's core founding principles included nonpunitive taxation, constitutionally guaranteed protections against persecution of the minority and an inexorable right of self-determination." Who's arguing with that?

These guys are not necessarily "conservative." They generally don't care a fig about the social issues. Some, like Loeb, are registered Democrats.

But the name of their game is to amass the highest number of billions. Nothing is ever enough. Anyone who slows the play is their enemy. And these days, it's the Republican Party that can best help them rack up their scores.

The plutocracy hated and feared Bryan, especially after he won his first of three Democratic presidential nominations. In 1896, Republican operative Mark Hanna went directly to John D. Rockefeller and said, "We need money to defeat Bryan." Rockefeller wrote a check.

One would think that the populists who lament the alleged decline of their economic status — and America's real economic decline — want to stop the big players from repeating their excesses. Amazingly, they don't.

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