

SEEING THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH ROSE-COLORED GLASSES

Marc Susselman, J.D., M.P.H.

In the December issue of the WJN, there were several letters and articles decrying Israel's aggressive military response to Hamas's October 7 massacre of 1,200 Israelis and foreign nationals, and the abduction of several hundred more. What I am about to write will likely be denounced by their authors as inhumane, heartless, and contrary to Jewish values. But what are these so-called Jewish values? If someone comes to kill you, kill him first. Sanhedrin. If a thief is seized while tunneling his way into a house during the nighttime and is smitten so that he die, there is no bloodguilt. Exodus 22:1. Judaism does not condone the Christian value of turning the other cheek. Such conduct is not commendable, but a sin, for it only encourages bullies and more aggression.

What do these so-called "progressive" Jews – implying that those who disagree with them are "regressive" - know about the history of the IsraeliPalestinian conflict? They accuse Israel of "occupying" Palestinian land on the West bank, land which Israel acquired defending itself in 1967 against the invasion by three Arab nations determined to drive the Jews into the sea. Despite Israel's numerous efforts to give the West bank back to the Palestinians, they have time after time refused to sign a peace treaty, insisting that Israel accept as a condition of peace the right of return of the so-called "refugees" who fled their homes in 1948 – many at the urging of the invading Arabs with the promise that they could return once the Jews were driven into the sea – a condition which is nonnegotiable for Israel if it is to remain the only nation on Earth with a Jewish majority. For 75 years, these "refugees" have refused to emigrate to another of the 47 nations in which Muslims are a majority. Israel's Arab neighbors have refused to take their fellow Muslim "refugees" in as citizens. They prefer to let them stagnate in the West bank in order to capitalize on their anti-Israel propaganda value, claiming that their children and grand-children are also "refugees." Are the thousands of Jews who survived the Holocaust and made new lives for themselves by emigrating to the United States, to Israel, to Britain, to Argentina, to South Africa, are they too still refugees? Are their children and grand-children refugees?

These so-called progressive Jews self-righteously condemn Israel's self-defense tactics as disproportionate and "genocidal," an Orwellian use of language that distorts the very meaning of the word "genocide." Did they not see the videos of the Palestinians in Gaza and the West bank cheering the Hamas murderers as

heroes? Did they not see the report of Imam Usama Abdulghani who spoke at the "Al-Aqsa Flood" protest at the Ford Centennial Library in Dearborn, Michigan on October 14, 2023, saying that October 7 was a "day of God," a "miracle come true"? He said that the "lions" are defending not only Palestine, but the nation of Muhammad the Messenger. He added that the "honorable soldiers" of Palestine have chosen the only path to victory. Abdulghani asked: "How dare you compare Hamas to ISIS?" He added that Israel is worse than ISIS. Addressing the "friends of the Zionist occupiers," he said they should advise their friends that "the jig is up," that Israel is over, "the Titanic is sinking."

Neither of the articles published in the December WJN issue discusses the history of the repeated futile efforts of Israel to make peace with the Palestinians. During the 2000 Camp David accords, hosted by President Clinton between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PA Chairman Yasser Arafat, in order to settle the dispute over the status of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, Barak dropped Israel's opposition to the division of Jerusalem, accepted future Palestinian sovereignty over the Temple Mount, and asked that the Palestinians only recognize that the site was also sacred to the Jews, to which Arafat stunningly responded that no Jewish Temple ever existed on the Temple Mount, only an obelisk. When the talks fell through with no agreement, Arafat complimented President Clinton as "a great man," to which Clinton responded. "The hell I am. I'm a colossal failure, and you made me one."

In the article written by the three University of Michigan students who are members of J Street U, they accuse Israel of engaging in "wanton, retaliatory violence against civilians," without considering the morally significant role which intention plays in evaluating the ethics of human actions, and glibly state, "the entire ideology of the current Israeli government is incompatible with true democracy and basic morality," as if these young men are experts in what constitutes "basic morality."

In the article written by Shifra Epstein and Clare Kinberg, they quote from the moving eulogy which Moshe Dayan delivered in Nahal Oz following the brutal murder of Roi Rothberg, in which he stated:

"It is to us that the blood of Roi calls from his shredded body. Although we have vowed a thousand vows that our blood will never again be shed in vain – yesterday we were once again seduced, brought to listen, to believe. Our reckoning with ourselves, we shall make today. We mustn't flinch from the hatred that accompanies and fills the lives of

hundreds of thousands of Arabs, who live around us and are waiting for the moment when their hands may claim our blood. We mustn't avert our eyes, lest our hands be weakened. That is the decree of our generation. That is the choice of our lives – to be willing and armed, strong and unyielding, lest the sword be knocked from our fists, and our lives severed." (Emphasis added.)

Of Moshe Dayan's eulogy, the authors state: "Moshe Dayan's eulogy for Roi Rotberg 66 years ago is as poignant – and true – today as it was then. Dayan called upon Israel to search its soul and probe the national mindset. In contrast to many Israelis, Dayan showed an understanding of, and respect for, Arab hostility." This purported exegesis of Dayan's eulogy is a total distortion of what he said. Although he referenced "the hatred that accompanies and fills the lives of hundreds of thousands of Arabs," he was not stating that the hatred was justified, nor was he blaming Israel for the existence of the unjustified hatred. Rather, he was warning that in the face of that unjustified hatred, Israel had to be always vigilant, "to be willing and armed, strong and unyielding, lest the sword be knocked from our fists, and our lives severed." The authors' distortion of the message Dayan was delivering is typical of the liberal, left-wing Jews, who are always quick to blame Israel, and acquit the Palestinians of responsibility for their current plight.

I, too, love John Lennon's "Imagine" as an inspirational expression of hope. But I can only imagine peace in the Middle East if the Palestinians also want peace. Their conduct over the last 75-years, however, has not demonstrated that they want peace with the Jews, or are willing to share the land with the Jews. They rejected the UN partition plan in 1947, and have rejected every peace proposal which Israel has offered them since, insisting instead on the right of return, a nonnegotiable condition for Israel, while they also pay bounties to suicide bombers.

To paraphrase Emerson, a foolish pacificity is the hobgoblin of deluded and ignorant minds. The so-called "progressive" Jews focus on the number of Palestinian casualties which Israel's self-defense tactics have inflicted on Palestinian civilians. They fail to understand that a war against aggression is not about the current innocent casualties, but about preventing future aggression which will cost the loss of thousands more innocent civilians – both Israeli and Palestinian. After D-Day, as the Allies marched to Berlin to defeat the Nazis, thousands of innocent Germans who were not members of the Nazi party also fell victim to the use of brute force, but no one condemned the Allies for inflicting these losses in order to defeat

Nazism. In the minds of so-called humanitarian critics, however, only Israel deserves such condemnation – condemnation which serves to encourage anti-Semites, like the anti-Semites who are still picketing in front of Beth Israel synagogue every Saturday morning in the guise of condemning Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, and have added new signs to their panoply of anti-Semitic messages, signs which state: “Gas Chambers? REALLY?!” and “Anti-Semitism – Always Earned, Never Given.” Like the so-called Palestinian freedom fighters who have been holding pro-Palestinians rallies, chanting “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,” a call for the annihilation of Israel as a Jewish state and death or minority status for the Jews who live there.

So, to all you good-hearted, “progressive,” “Not in My Name” Jews who demand a cease-fire, which would allow Hamas to regroup in order to kill more Israelis, I say, grow up, take off your rose-colored glasses, and see the world for what it is, not for what you imagine it should be. Your myopic vision and self-indulgent sense of benevolence are not just misguided, but are fostering and justifying increased anti-Semitism and Jew hatred in the minds of those who oppose Israel’s right to exist, here and around the world, and endangering the welfare and survival of the State of Israel, of Israelis, and of Jews.