

Ideology Chic

by [Larry McCloskey](#) (December 2023)



An Allegory of Propaganda– Paul Klee, 1939

The uber ordered Nazis were actually quite chaotic. Their administrative, military and political infrastructure was reasonably organized, but Hitler's megalomaniacal leadership style kept minions off balance and in competition. Always. How Himmler, Goering, Goebbels or Heydrick performed their often overlapping areas of responsibility was subservient to "working towards the Fuhrer."* Understanding Hitler and competing for ever more radical ways to fulfill his will, was the game Nazis leaders played as they razed Europe and killed millions.

None of Hitler's senior people was more subservient than Joseph Goebbels, Propaganda Minister. Goebbels was an extremist and an innovator in his determination to channel Hitler's will. There were no Joseph Goebbels actions independent of Adolf Hitler thinking.

The most revealing document into Goebbel's depraved mind was his diary, meticulously and faithfully recording the inner workings of the Nazis nightmare. For Goebbels, propagandizing was a sacred trust and its enactment required an exacting strategy. In 1950, Leonard Doob summarized Goebbel's Nazi propaganda principals, as follows:

- 1. Avoid abstract ideas—appeal to the emotions.*
- 2. Constantly repeat just a few ideas. Use stereotypical phrases.*
- 3. Give only one side of the argument.*
- 4. Continuously criticize your opponent.*
- 5. Pick one special 'enemy' for special vilification.*

Goebbels is generally agreed to be *the* master propagandist of all time, and yet his methods were not rocket science. One could argue they were particularly effective due to their simple understanding of the potential for malevolence in human nature.

I wrote a piece on the Hamas attack for NER on October 8th in a single sitting entitled '[Lament for What is Required](#).' I had always believed the two-state solution to be the eventual outcome since both Israelis and Palestinians need relief from war and destruction. Anything less than a two state solution will cause perpetual war, resulting in permanent generational anxiety. Israelis need peace; Palestinians need it more. But post-October 7th events have proven my inevitability assumption to be naive and most likely wrong.

Hamas—whose Charter calls for the destruction of Israel—is only the latest, most virulent reason for continued conflict. Until recent years, most Arab countries were opposed to allowing Palestinians to reach an agreement that acknowledged the existence of Israel. The middle-east has complicated moving pieces, with words and intentions often at odds, so it can be challenging to understand motives and methods. The Godfather's wisdom applies here. Generally he who benefits from murder is the murderer, regardless of the circuitous route leading to the perpetrator. Iran is the puppeteer to murderous Hamas, intent upon eliminating Israel as their means to regional and religious dominance, with Russia and China puppeteers to the puppeteer in order to disrupt the West—Russia in an attempt to resurrect a glorious past that never was, and China in its determination to achieve world hegemony by 2050 (it is their stated goal).

To the puppeteers, Palestinian misery and Israelis uncertainty for the past 75 years—their lives, their conflict, their

failed attempts at peace—are merely distractions from lowly pawns on the chess board of world politics. Even so, protests around the world in support of Hamas after their attack was and is shocking. But in a weird way—in admitting to the existing pathology of the modern world—it makes sense. The realization of a two-state solution can only happen if two parties are free to act in their own best interests unencumbered. Apart from the unholy encumbrance of Iran, Russia and China, the cultural wars that we are losing in the West are an encumbrance that no amount of facts and critical thinking can overcome.

I used to think facts mattered, same for inquisitive thinking that sifts through factual evidence over time to allow one to formulate objective personal and political views. Universities—those beacons of enlightenment from which dysfunctional cultural ideas seem to emanate—have managed to transform a generation of young people into unthinking ideologues.

The simple (remember Goebbels' dictates of simple) dichotomous message today is that the world must be divided into oppressors and the oppressed, and taking sides—even or especially in the absence of facts—is required to escape the much feared oppressor designation. A sort of perverse reiteration of Christ's: "whoever is not with me is against me," (Matt.12:30) logic has come to prevail.

For young people today, the world is so complicated and they so desperately want to belong. If you doubt the narrative that Hamas atrocities (murder, rape, beheadings, desiccation of civilians) are less egregious than what Israelis inflict upon Palestinians every day, then the need for justification is ratcheted up and young people are further seduced into discovering belonging in mindless campus protests. How in the world has such a distorted narrative become prevalent?

An answer to this question confronts us with the very bad news

about modernity. Today the search for truth we assume everyone craves for is found in all the wrong places— which is to say, there is no need to look since finding tumbles out of social media feeds every second of every day. Young people rarely get their news from conventional media outlets, even though most media are ideologically left and removed from journalistic impartiality. And yet, it is worse than that.

A 2022 Pew Research Centre survey shows that teens 13 to 17 use TikTok (Chinese created and controlled) 67% and YouTube 95%, respectively. Additionally, 97% of teens have access to smartphones or equivalent, up from 73% since 2015. Today, 97% of teens report using the internet, up from 92% in 2015. Most frightening, teens who report using the internet constantly is up to 46%, from 24% in 2015. Ideology is borrowed thinking in the guise of the right and only thing to do. Between ideological education without educational outcomes, device addiction, and social media manipulation, teens are led to believe that they are inspiring leaders even as they take their lemming-like plunge over the metaphoric cliff.

The capacity to be led is not restricted to teenagers. Across North American campuses, post-October 7th protests are unprecedented, and significantly, most are not protesting the Hamas attack on Israeli citizens. The gruesome facts of that attack don't matter. Hamas—wrongly equated to Palestinian suffering rather than the cause of it—has been granted victim status and therefore no amount of savagery enacted against Israelis, the victimizers, can ever muster critical analysis.

Professors, unwilling to mix it up with protesters, sign petitions calling for the end of the Israeli occupation, with the Hamas attack dismissed as an item to be “contextualized.” Rather than condemn Israel, one wonders why intellectuals don't contextualize Jewish history (living in Israel since 2nd millennium BCE) or the Holocaust (killing 2/3 of Europe's and 40% of the world's Jewish population) before levelling

accusations of colonialism and occupation. The ultimate contextual observation might be that two peoples belong and one agreement to do so has to be found.

Canada's teenage-like Prime Minister Justin Trudeau uttered predictable words of support for Israel after the attack, and then proceed to severely criticized Israel for doing anything about it. Netanyahu's response was unequivocal. "It is Hamas, not Israel, that should be held accountable for committing a double war crime—targeting civilians while hiding behind civilians."

Earlier Trudeau shamelessly obfuscated the incident regarding the missile that hit a Gaza hospital parking lot. Even after it had been proven (at great expense to Israeli intelligence) to have been an errant Hamas missile, and even after President Biden admitted to the obvious, Trudeau refused to walk back his comments, understanding that facts cannot undo the stench of accusation.

Trudeau is about glamour over substance. Though he couldn't sustain support for Israelis fighting for their lives, he is quick to jump on an opportunism opportunity. He loves to preen and wag his finger at unenlightened people by way of apology to the world for Canada's past sins. He apologized for Canada's rejection of 800 Jews aboard the ocean liner MS St. Louis in 1939. At least 250 of these refugees later perished in the Holocaust. This rejection was truly a stain on Canada's stellar Second World War record. But for Trudeau to not connect the dots between virtue-signalling after the fact and rescinding support for difficult events in progress, is the very definition of a man/boy leader/follower unconcerned with truth. The truth is, Netanyahu will fall on the sword for Israel's October 7th security failing, while Trudeau will likely continue his vainglorious preening without bearing any political cost. Sadly, and with coalition support, Trudeau's petulance may even be of political benefit.

Israel is always going to fight a rear-guard action, not only against multiple foes—attacking, funding, covertly supporting—but the propaganda machine that has infected the West has reared its head as never before. And that machine has been revealed to be astonishingly effective, particularly post October 7th.

Consistent with Goebbels' simple methods, we have been constantly bombarded (repeat just a few ideas) with Palestinian images of deprivation (appeal to emotions), and constant criticism of Israeli's disproportionate response without acknowledging Hamas' brutal unprovoked attack (one-sided argument and continuously criticize your opponent), who being Jews, deserve the enmity of the world (pick one special enemy for vilification). As such, genocidal protestors chanting "from the river to the sea" have become ubiquitous and innocuous among well-educated Western ideologues from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

There can never be a two-state solution without acknowledging the existence of one's enemy. There will always be enmity for Israelis if antisemitism is justified by the unalterable Palestinian victim narrative. The binary choice between oppressors and the oppressed only serves propagandists. My bottom line view is less bias toward Israel than it is a call for the warring propagandists to lay down their ideological weapons and allow Israelis and Palestinians to work out a solution. Which they would achieve, if left alone. Seems straightforward, is impossible at present. We need less in order to get more.

So, allow me to finish with a very simple Goebbelesque solution to a seemingly intractable problem:

1. *Let's avoid abstract ideas; that is, ideological ideas emanating from the universities that draw upon emotional*

responses in the name of faux-intellectual dribble.

- 2. Repeat #1, 'cause Goebbels advocates repetition in his diary. I will now stereotype both Israelis and Palestinians by saying that left to their own devices, that is, to their pragmatism and humanity, they would work out a lasting peace. Leadership actually wanting peace would be unencumbered in finding it.*
- 3. I am only giving one side of the argument. The binary, ideological pro-Hamas narrative/protests have been given far too much press and are antithetical to solution.*
- 4. I repeat, protesting ideologues are responsible for perpetual enmity between Israel and Palestine. Hamas, Hezbollah, all terrorist groups, need Western useful idiots to feed their justification beast or else its power is starved, and it dies.*
- 5. Universities have abnegated their function to produce educated and balanced critical thinkers. We are witnessing the pernicious power of the idea from those who never suffer the street outcome of their ivory tower ideas. We need to re-think the means of achieving education.*

Grievance is cancer. The metastasis of cancer to those with neither skin in the game nor reasonable ideas in their ideological heads, is how we drift from two-state solution dialogue to 'from the river to the sea' genocidal new normal. We need chemotherapy and radiation of our media and educational practices in order to avoid the progression of antisemitism towards its tragic, if logical, conclusion. While there is not much optimism for a solution, one-sided protests of support for Hamas has made the problem clear. That is a start.

*Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, 1997, New York.

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Larry McCloskey has had eight books published, six young adult as well as two recent non-fiction books. *Lament for Spilt Porter* and *Inarticulate Speech of the Heart* (2018 & 2020 respectively) won national Word Guild awards. *Inarticulate* won best Canadian manuscript in 2020 and recently won a second Word Guild Award as a published work. He recently retired as Director of the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities, Carleton University. Since then, he has written a satirical novel entitled *The University of Lost Causes*, and has qualified as a Social Work Psychotherapist. He lives in Canada with his three daughters, two dogs, and last, but far from least, one wife.

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