

The "Animal Farm" Syndrome and the Arab-Israeli Conflict

by Norman Berdichevsky (June 2006)

The attitudes, opinions and analyses of the Arab-Israeli conflict have been portrayed by both the media and the political Left by turning history and the current reality of the Middle East upside down. Just as the Stalinist Left's view of the world in the 1950s could be epitomized by the Orwellian dictum of "Two legs bad; Four legs Good!", from his classic "Animal Farm", so the present mantra has become Israel Bad; Palestine Good!. Whether it is global strategy, human rights or football, this adage must be repeated by the faithful several times a day.

Israel's top football club that won the Israel Cup and participated in the 2004 UEFA Tournament was Bnei Sachnin (a small Arab village in Galilee). The team is made up largely of Israeli Arabs but also includes a number of Africans "on loan" and a manager and several key players who are Jews. No other country has a national team in which Whites, Blacks, Jews, Arabs, Christians and Muslims are represented.

Had such a team represented any other country, media giants like CNN and BBC would have outdone themselves in holding up the club as an example for the civilized world to follow. Instead there have been no more than a few grudging references laced with sarcasm denigrating the team as "renegades" and "puppets" from those who prate endlessly about the "international community" as an example to follow and consider themselves as moral arbiters of the world's "conscience".

Even many Jews in the Diaspora whose parents and grandparents rejoiced at the rebirth of Israel in 1948 and regarded it mystically as partial compensation for the Holocaust have been psychologically intimidated by the constant anti-Israel line of the media and of the torrent of bloody confrontations picturing enraged Muslim mobs ready for constant mayhem to avenge what they regard as the worst injustice in human history (i.e. the creation of the Jewish State rather than the failure to establish an Arab

Palestinian state).

Some prominent Diaspora Jews, particularly among those who cannot escape the narcotic-like trance they have inherited as “progressives” and are essentially secular and ultra-critical of capitalism and American society with its underlying Christian values, have developed a new kind of psychological self-hatred to exhibit a disassociation from the State of Israel and their religious heritage. They are upset over the close Israeli-American friendship and outdo themselves in slanderous attacks on President Bush.

They easily see Israel's many flaws (both real and imagined) among which, the worst is that Israel, like America is a “privileged” society enjoying wealth amidst a world of misery. They flatter themselves that they are the modern day prophets who see “the writing on the subway walls” (as Paul Simon sung). They have earned for themselves the justifiable contempt of most Israeli Jews (both religious and secular) for their moral duplicity.

As long ago as 1958 this trend was clearly seen in the interviews given by Leon Uris, the author of the best selling novel “Exodus” in explaining why he wrote the book. He had in mind successful Jewish authors such as Philip Roth, Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud whom he called “professional apologists” (for being Jews). Uris set out to tell the story of Israel's rebirth as the story of Jewish heroes rather than the psychological analyses of individuals who grew up damning their fathers and hating their mothers and wondering why they were born.

Uris unapologetically made a pro-Israel film only a decade after every Jewish movie producer had turned down making the film “Gentleman's Agreement” (1947; starring Gregory Peck) about polite anti-Semitism. It was made into a film by the great Greek-American producer, Elia Kazan who was later turned on with vengeance for cooperating with the House un-American Activities Committee revealing communist influence in Hollywood. Uris himself has been in the front lines in Guadalcanal and Tarawa island and felt an immense respect for the Israelis who had defeated the invading Arab armies and defied the legion of pro-Arab diplomats in the British Foreign Office and the leadership of the Labor Party (a sin the

British Left has never forgiven).

Today's crowd of "progressive" Jewish actors and entertainers outdo even the writers Uris attacked fifty years ago. Woody Allen, Barbra Streisand, Dustin Hoffman and Richard Dreyfus are among the most visible and acidic critics of American policy in Iraq and have called for the impeachment of President Bush. They are sarcastically referred to in Israel as "beautiful souls" by those who reject their elitism of supposed high moral values so out of place in the Arab Middle East and as remote from the real world as were the great majority of the victims of the Holocaust whose Jewish values prevented them, from attributing such evil to the Germans. Most of the victims were as deaf and blind to the fate that awaited them as surely today's Hollywood "stars" are with regard to their calls for a selective "hands-off policy" or the future consequences of a return to Baathist rule in Iraq, the likely outcome of their incessant calls for immediate withdrawal of Allied involvement.

Two of these "stars", Streisand and Hoffman recently played the lead roles in self-mocking doubly ironic roles of a liberated Jewish couple in the comedy "Meet the Fockers". This is a grotesque example of art imitating reality (or is it the other way round?). The couple in the film have nothing but disdain for traditional American manly heroic virtues of military valor or achievement in sports nor do they demonstrate any respect whatsoever for what were classical Jewish virtues of learning and piety. They exhibit the most crass, offensive loud and vulgar behavior constantly embarrassing their son. For them and much of the Left, the very concept of civility is regarded with contempt.

Whatever the differences between secular and religious Israelis, they pale before the monumental differences that separate life in the State of Israel with all its inherent promises, risks and dangers from the Diaspora's ultra idealized concerns and sensibilities. American Jews residing in Israel voted 70% for President Bush in the 2004 presidential election whereas American Jews gave more than a 75% majority to the Democratic contender, Senator John Kerry.

At the Islamic Conference in October 2003 in Malaysia, Prime Minister Matathir received a standing ovation when he warned leaders of dozens of

Muslim states of a Jewish plot to control the world. He even held Jews responsible for the “corrupt” notions of democracy and human rights. Now, President Ahmadinejad has trumped him with naked threats to “wipe Israel off the face of the map”. Of course, this threat has literally been carried out long ago in all atlases and geography texts in the Arab countries and Iran. Israel was never put on the map in those books and all foreign atlases and texts were corrected by eliminating any indication of the presence of the State of Israel. “Occupied Palestine” was and remains the pseudonym accepted universally in the Arab media by academics and the “man in the street”. Ahmadinejad has demonstrated his paranoia in emulating Hitler all the way to the height of the Iranian troops' goose step.

Déjà vu? Déjà vu in spades! We are back in the world of 1933-45. George Orwell wrote in 1944 “However true the scapegoat theory may be in general terms, it does not explain why the Jews rather than some other minority group are picked on, nor does it make clear what they are the scapegoat for” Mark Twain had put it succinctly almost seventy-five years earlier when he said that “The worst thing that could be said about the Jews is that “they too are part of the human race”. I used to think such aphorisms had entered into the general psyche after 1945. I know now that that this was too optimistic.

It long ago dawned on me how unfair I had been towards my parents. As a child growing up in the Bronx, in what was then (1943-1955), the most preponderant Jewish precinct (Melrose-Morrisania and Grand Concourse) in the largest Jewish city in the world. I was ashamed of them. I believed that they should have cried out and demonstrated in the streets to awaken the world's conscience.

I now marvel at their courage for simply having had the courage to carry on and have children amidst a world when, for more than a decade, no day went by without some further charge in the media by either Hitler or his many sympathizers and imitators that “the Jews” (i.e. us, our friends and neighbors), were responsible for the depression, world tensions and every imaginable and unimaginable crime and evil.

If there is anything to be learned by their trauma, it is a better

understanding of their dilemma and that we can only judge others when we stand in their shoes. On a Yom Kippur (Jewish Day of Atonement) not long ago, soon after the death of my parents, I vowed not to passively let the many slurs, obscenities distortions and outrageous lies go unanswered.

I spent a childhood free from the complexes, persecutions and humiliations of the past agonizing over Jewish identity. Unlimited opportunity beckoned to me and my friends whether we went to college or started our working careers after graduation. My friend Ralph (whose grandfather had been a Rabbi in Greece) even became a celebrated hero in the New York Police Department first by being awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor by Mayor Lindsey in 1970. No anti-Semitic ghosts or demons from the European past threatened our sleep.

Thirty years later, Israel had become an outcast among the nations and the Jews a pariah people once again. How did this occur? From Darling of the Left to Pariah State; subject to continual venomous attacks coming from those who consider themselves "progressive" and "morally sensitive", i.e. the mainline churches, university faculties clamoring to boycott and "disinvest" from Israeli owned companies, the media elite and those on the Left side of the political spectrum. In an exercise similar to that of Stalin's staff of photographers who could surgically extract and obliterate old time Bolsheviks who had fallen out of his favor, many of these same "progressives" now proclaim that the birth of Israel was fostered primarily by the United States and it was American support for Israel since 1948 that has inflamed the Muslim world.

What is so shocking is that hardly any "progressive" critic of Israel is ready to admit that in 1947-49 Israel's struggle was endorsed by the entirety of what was then called "enlightened public opinion," above all by the political Left. The most famous and colorful personality of the Spanish Republic, the Basque delegate to the Cortes (Spanish Parliament), Dolores Ibarruri, who had gone into exile in the Soviet Union, issued a proclamation in 1948 saluting the new State of Israel and comparing the invading Arab armies to the Fascist uprising that had destroyed the Republic. Just a few months earlier, the hero of the American Left, the great Afro-American folk singer, Paul Robeson had sung in a gala concert in Moscow and electrified the crowd with his rendition of the Yiddish

Partisan Fighters Song.

Andrei Gromyko, at the UN, asserted the right of **“the Jews of the whole world to the creation of a state of their own.”** Taking (as always) their lead from Moscow, the (hitherto anti-Zionist) Palestinian communist organizations merged their separate Arab and Jewish divisions in October, 1948 giving unconditional support to the war effort and urging the Israel Defense Forces to “drive on toward the Suez Canal and hand British Imperialism a stinging defeat”!

In the vote on partition in the UN, apart from the states with large Muslim minorities (like Yugoslavia and Ethiopia), the Arabs managed only to wheedle a few abstentions and one lone negative vote out of the most corrupt non-Muslim states. These included Cuba (voted against partition) and Mexico (abstained) eager to demonstrate their independence of U.S. influence and Latin American countries whose regimes had been pro-Axis until the final days of World War II such as Argentina and Chile (both abstained).

The major Arab armies who invaded the nascent Jewish state were British led, equipped, trained and supplied. The Syrian army was French-equipped and had taken orders from the Vichy government in resisting the British led invasion of the country assisted by Australian troops, Free French units and Palestinian-Jewish volunteer forces in 1941. In their War of Independence, the Israelis depended on smuggled weapons from the West and Soviet and Czech weapons. On January 7, 1949, the Israeli air-force consisting of former Luftwaffe Messerschmidt fighters (transferred secretly from Czech bases to Israel) shot down five British-piloted Spitfires flying for the Egyptian air-force over the Sinai desert causing a major diplomatic embarrassment for the British government.

In contrast, the American State Department declared an embargo on all weapons and war material to both Jews and Arabs in Palestine – but not to the Arab states which sent in their forces to crush the Jewish state. The embargo substantively affected one side – those sympathetic to the Zionists who were forced to smuggle weapons to the beleaguered nascent Jewish army. The U.S. vote in favor of partition was only *de facto*

reflecting the State Department's care not to unnecessarily offend the Arab states whereas the Soviet vote recognized Israel *de jure*.

There was nothing "progressive" about those who supported the Arab side. The acknowledged leader of the Palestinian Arab cause was the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who had fled from Palestine to Iraq to exile in Berlin where he led the "Arab office," met with Hitler whom he called "the Protector of Islam," served the Germans in Bosnia where he was instrumental in raising Muslim volunteers among the Bosnians to work with the SS. At the end of the war, the Yugoslav government declared him a war criminal and sentenced him to death. Palestinian Arabs still regard him as their original supreme leader. Lending active support to the Arab war effort were Falangist volunteers from Franco's Spain, Bosnian Muslims and Nazi renegades who had escaped the Allies in Europe.

All the West European nations (except Great Britain) voted for partition as well. No other issue to come before the U.N. has had such unanimous support from the European continent or cut across the ideological divide of communist and western sectors. The Jewish state was even supported by Richard Crossman, a member of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine who had been handpicked by Britain's anti-Zionist Prime Minister Clement Atlee. Crossman, taking a principled stand, refused to endorse the Labor Party Line.

He had visited the Displaced Persons camps in Germany where Jews who had sought entry into Palestine were being detained. He realized that their sense of desperation derived from a world with no place which they as Jews could truly call home. He wrote that when he started out he was ready to believe that Palestine was the "problem," but his experiences made him realize that it was the "solution."

Atlee's Foreign Minister, the abrasive Ernest Bevin barely contained his anti-Semitic attitude and argued that Britain must support the Arabs. He negotiated "the Portsmouth Treaty" with Iraq (signed on 15 January 1948), which was accompanied by a British undertaking to withdraw from Palestine in such a fashion as to provide for swift Arab occupation of all its territory. According to then-Iraqi foreign minister Muhammad Fadhel al-Jamali,

“It was agreed that Iraq would buy for its police force 50,000 tommy-guns. We intended to hand them over to the Palestine army volunteers for self-defence. Great Britain was ready to provide the Iraqi army with arms and ammunition as set forth in a list prepared by the Iraqi General Staff. The British undertook to withdraw from Palestine gradually, so that Arab forces could enter every area evacuated by the British in order that the whole of Palestine should be in Arab hands after the British withdrawal. The meeting ended and we were all optimistic about the future of Palestine.”

Up to 1956, Israel's closest ally was France, which was also its major military supplier. When, together with Great Britain, the Israelis and French sought to turn back Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal, it was the United States under President Eisenhower that forced an Israeli, French and British withdrawal. In 1967, American pressure prevented Israel from rolling on towards Damascus. In the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Americans prevented the Israelis from closing their siege of the Egyptian Third Army. Despite this, the myth persists, and is constantly reinforced, that Israel owes its existence and military superiority to the United States which unlike the “Europeans” has never followed an “even-handed” policy in the Middle East. The “animal farm” mantra has become a substitute for historical truth. As Goebbels had demonstrated so aptly, the more often a lie is repeated, the greater the chance it will be accepted as truth.