

What Do They Want?

by Nidra Poller (December 2015)

(Nidra Poller's two previous articles on the Paris terror attacks are "[Bonjour Tristesse](#).")

Our French feminine newscasters are attractive, charming, refined, and fashionably dressed. (Though a few have disfigured themselves with silicone lips that interfere with their ability to speak). Compared to their American and British counterparts, they are stunningly beautiful. And it just might have something to do with French culture, because women on the French channel of Israel's i24 news are in general better looking than their colleagues on the English channel.

I'm not sure of the appropriate vocabulary for their profession. Some are simple newsreaders, others are full-fledged journalists. They don't go into the grimy field like the American and British big names that stood up, rain or shine, at Place de la République for hours on end last week. Decades ago they were called "speakerines," a word that has been dumped, along with "concierge" for custodian and "garcon" for waiter. For some reason that escapes me, our indoor journalists have taken to baring their arms to the shoulder when temperatures drop and normal people are bundled up in sweaters and jackets. In my experience, TV studios are more likely to be cool than overheated. But I was surprised to see a sweet young thing on the 14th of November dressed in a summery pastel sleeveless top reciting press releases filled with shock and gore. By the end of the day the word had apparently gone out. Since then, it's jackets or long sleeves, all black for the first week, now varied but still appropriate to a grieving nation.

Since Paris was attacked, these anchors have been asking invited guests, "What do they want?" Well, if they're terrorists it follows that they want to terrorize us and résistance consists of not being afraid. We'll go to concerts, restaurants, cafés, and shopping centers. The terrorists will not prevail. Then, since they are all Muslim, it means they want to divide our society, turn us against all Muslims, so we will resist by holding hands, forming human chains, and proclaiming friendship with our Muslim fellow citizens. TV cameras focused on a blindfolded man at Place de la République carrying a sign that said "I'm

Muslim, give me a hug." Of course he got lots of hugs. No one seemed to notice that the blindfold was a keffieh... like the ones worn by the caliphators that brought the jihad flag to the statue of Marianne in the summer of 2014.

What do they want? From time to time, an enlightened Muslim guest responds: they want to establish a caliphate in every corner of the world. That leaves the newspeaker speechless. Of course, if you call them jihadis instead of terrorists, the answer is in the question. Today, words are increasingly calibrated with realities. French citizens demand decisive action, authority, power. They want to fight back individually and collectively, morally and militarily.

Every day there's a small increase in activity, more human presence, but far from normal. Shops are still empty. Concert halls and movie theaters are deserted as if they were all marked for death. None of the usual bustle in cafés and restaurants. Guards are posted at the entrance to supermarkets and shopping centers. Some have metal detectors. Nothing that could resist a commando armed with Kalashnikovs. The idea is to show their concern for public safety and their hope that business will pick up.

Last Sunday and Monday the weather was clear, crisp, and dry. I spent the day on Sunday at a colloquium organized by Shmuel Trigano, founding director of l'Université Populaire du judaïsme. A welcome relief from the all-day all-night news channels that we cannot bear and cannot escape. Attendance was weak...a handful of people in the morning, 50 or so in the afternoon. Speakers came from Canada, from Israel, from shell shocked Paris to share their deep thoughts with us—the heights of Judaism and its never-ending struggle to reach itself, the path to sovereignty, inner and outer obstacles. Surely a wider audience will catch the lectures on the UP site. [<http://www.unipopu.org/>] Thought is too precious to waste in these critical times.

Monday afternoon I met Shmuel in a café near la Place de la République. Through the plate glass window we saw riot police coming and going past a long line of police cars parked in front of the café, a reminder that these vital moments of intellectual communion, as early winter darkness gathered, could be engulfed in the smoldering rage that he and I have been chronicling for fifteen years. Is night closing in on people like us who write real books, is it closing in on colleagues that are being hounded by the guard dogs against Islamophobia, are we

left with the choice between being ignored or targeted?

On the way home I savored the fresh clear air. It is so good to be alive. Every day, every minute, every gesture is more delicious than ever before. The moon was plump and piercingly bright. The next day at the same hour all métro lines that converge on la République were stopped for an hour or more and the Place was evacuated. For verifications. Brussels was shut down for four days as the police combed through the city looking for the Most Wanted and the Also Rans. Paris had left itself wide open to attack; Brussels closed the metro, schools, shops, restaurants, streets and squares. They ordered a press lockdown too. No news reports or videos of police operations were allowed. A handful of suspects are in custody now, including the pair that drove to Paris after the attacks to bring Salah Abedslam back to Belgium. And the police can't find out where Salah is? How about some waterboarding, my friends?

PA President-for-life Mahmoud Abbas must be fuming. Not only does he have Hamas and Daesh in that order breathing down his neck, now Daesh has taken over the news cycle and no one cares about the Palestinians. Just before jihad hit Paris, Abbas was on his way to the ICC to accuse Israel of torture because interrogators yelled at a 13 year-old boy who had stabbed a Jewish boy his age nearly to death. On the video of the interrogation you hear one man holler at him in Hebrew, "Why did you do it?" and then another shouts the same question at him in Arabic. That's torture, in case you don't understand.

Today, the French population seems to be speaking with one voice. Wherever you turn you hear distress, defiance, and a demand for law and order. It's all common sense. You talk to repair men, store managers, neighbors, or read comments on newspaper articles. They understand the causes, they know what has to be done. But specialists and politicians are still promising to deliver...without committing evil. They have to round up some of the 10,000 flagged security risks, but "we're not going to create a Guantanamo." We're under a 3-month state of emergency, but "we're not going to make a Patriot Act." The police shot 5,000 rounds into the St. Denis hideout of the chief operator of the November 13 assault, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, but no one is accusing them of using "excessive force." When you see the thickly clad Swat teams in France and Belgium you can't help remembering snide footage of t-shirted Palestinian shababs facing up to armored Israeli soldiers and tanks.

The commentators don't say "we're not going to do like the Israelis"—extra-judicial killings, preventive detention, security barriers, and guards at every doorway. They don't say it because Israel is absent from the debate. Israelis aren't invited to round tables, no comparisons are made, certainly not to say we have a lot to learn from them, they've been dealing with this for decades. Jewish thinkers and leaders aren't invited to the heated debates that make the screen shake. Unless you read "other" media, you don't know that Israeli intelligence informed German services that an ambulance filled with explosives was waiting to do its thing outside the stadium in Hanover where the chancellor was attending a life-goes-on soccer game. The stadium was evacuated before the opening play. Maybe the Europeans don't want to admit they were wrong about Israel but, behind the scenes, everyone with any sense is collaborating with Israeli security.

Update: I'm told that Pierre Servent said (in a C dans l'air TV debate that I missed) it was time we rethought our way of looking at Israel. While at the lowest point in the spectrum, a recently retired France 2 Jerusalem correspondent pissed into the gutter a pox on "racist" Israelis that, unlike dignified Parisians, don't know how to behave politely after a "terrorist" attack. I couldn't read past the first paragraph.

Iran, for very different reasons, is also nearly invisible. The idea seems to be "the less said the better." Who can keep track of our "allies" in the motley crew that is fighting Daesh or defending Assad, or both, while attacking each other? I like to hear or read a variety of commentaries by all sorts of specialists. They are so knowing...especially about the past. Full of hmph, it was obvious we/they shouldn't have done this/that. You know, the Kurds aren't interested in liberating the Sunnis from Daesh but the Sunnis will not be happy to see Westerners coming in, accompanied by Shia, to put their house in order. As for the present, they serenely spin new illusions: first we have to smash Daesh, then we'll have a provisional Syrian government that will organize UN-guaranteed elections open to residents and the Diaspora that will form a democratic pluralistic government, and...

Iran has one foot on the battlefield and the other standing in the shadows ready to pounce once Daesh is undone.

Abaaoud and his surviving team planned, we are told, to blow themselves up at la

Défense, the modern business district just across the city line that looks like a cheap imitation of a 5th rate American downtown. The best bet to catch the crowd would have been the 4 Temps shopping mall. The jihadis would have hauled a lot of banlieue dudes and chicks in their explosive net; the business district is something of a Hebron, where a small minority of well-heeled executives and upper level employees is surrounded by a large population of the relegated disgruntled lower classes. Recent leaks suggest the killers also planned to hit a Jewish target. What else is new?

Paris prosecutor François Molins gave a long detailed update the other day. Every time I see him I am reminded of the press conference after the atrocious murder of Ilan Halimi, where he announced that the crime would not be qualified as anti-Semitic. The error was corrected shortly afterward, but the memory still has a sting. In the present affair, the prosecutor sketched out a polka dot map of cell phone pings with blood-chilling implications—Abaaoud, after mowing down unsuspecting people in cafés and restaurants, abandoned the car, hopped into the metro without paying, and zipped down to the Bataclan where the victims of his co-killers agonized on a carpet of blood and the raid was still underway. The whereabouts of Salah Abdeslam are also traced in a macabre hopscotch that night. His unexploded vest was discovered this week on a dead-end street in Montrouge. It wasn't in a normal garbage bin, where it would have been collected the day after it was chucked; it was on a pile of "objets encombrants," cumbersome objects like broken furniture and overworked mattresses. And, now, unused suicide vests.

Media coverage is thinning. Two weeks after the jihad outburst, the government organized a tribute to the victims at les Invalides. The ceremony was elegant and moving. The national anthem was honored by a resounding chorus of professional voices. La Marseillaise, composed by revolutionaries from Marseille that came up to Paris to overthrow the king, is so demanding that only a highly trained opera singer can do it justice. The president asked French citizens to adorn their façades with the national flag for the occasion. In neighborhoods I visited, flags are few and far between but the nationalistic fervor is in the air, awakened by the atrocious massacre. A sense of identity and pride that just a few weeks ago was decried as extreme right jingoism is embraced, with predictable exceptions, across the political and intellectual spectrum. The chord has been struck. It would be a mistake to underestimate the transformation

of French society. In fact, no, it is not a transformation. It's a revelation of something that was always present but never recognized at its true value.

Pilgrimages to the murder sites continue. Volunteers clear away wilted flowers and burned out candles, quickly replaced by fresh ones. And the police are at work, searching for weapons, putting people under house arrest, gathering information, deporting imams. The French government informed the Council of Europe that it may have to infringe on human rights during the state of emergency.

Attention has finally turned to the lair of those not so lone wolves that have been spilling blood abundantly, but the glaring evidence of the articulation between "this is Islam" and "this is not Islam," has hardly been explored. The "white emir," a 69 year-old naturalized French citizen who goes by the name of Olivier Corel, has been running an Islamic academy in Lanes, a clump of rustic houses in the hamlet of Artigat in the Ariège hills outside of Toulouse. The Syrian Salafist Abdel Ilat Al-Dandachi aka Corel, is a sort of celestial body around which dozens of planets gravitate, wreaking havoc as they explode, immediately replaced by more of the same. Take a look at this graphic illustration of his galaxy: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/2015/11/27/01016-20151127ARTFIG00226-15-jours-apres-les-attentats-le-point-sur-l-enquete.php>

This week the emir was given a six month's suspended sentence for illegal detention of firearms, apparently an old hunting rifle, and allowed to return to his humble abode and chummy neighbors. Since 1987, when the steely-eyed Muslim Brother established his community in Artigat, his disciples have been implementing his spiritual message with Kalachnikovs and other murderous instruments. To mention only a few graduates of the self-styled academy:

Mohamed Merah, his brother Abdelkader, jailed as an accessory to the Toulouse-Montauban murders, and his sister Souad, believed to be in Syria.

Merah's buddy Sabri Essid, who has joined Daesh and recently appeared in a video with a kid-executioner who shot a man in the head. The victim, an Israeli Arab that had joined the caliphate was accused of being a Mossad spy.

Fabien and Jean-Michel Clain, converts originally from Reunion Island, who recited the text taking credit for the latest Paris attacks. The brothers

influence, organize and micro-manage activities from their base in Syria. Fabien was imprisoned in 2009 for his role in recruiting jihadis to fight in Iraq. Last spring the brothers piloted Sid Ahmed Glam's botched attack on a church in Villejuif. In 2009 Fabien Clain had personally threatened to punish the Bataclan for its Zionism. The Jewish proprietors, who sold the concert hall just a few months ago, hosted an annual gala concert—systematically hounded by raucous demonstrators—for the benefit of Israel's border police, the Magav.

The Clains, like almost every jihadi mentored by the white emir, have Belgian connections. They were involved with a commando that attacked French lycéens on a school trip to Egypt a few years ago... Corel/al-Dandachi has been detained several times for questioning and always released, because existing law denies the connection between “this is Islam”—self-styled or officially appointed imams preaching real Islam—and “this is not Islam”—the killers who activate their message. The emir doesn't fire a Kalchnikov and the mass murderers don't look “religious.” The media and their experts report with a sigh of relief that Abaaoud's team was composed of petty to middling criminals, known more for taking drugs and womanizing than for praying at the mosque. One-eyed specialists prefer to implicate the Net as the untouchable radicalizer while ignoring one of the major sources of French jihadism.

September 21, 2001, a massive explosion at the AZF chemical plant in Toulouse left 31 dead and thousands maimed or injured. No “chemical” explanation for the blast has ever been found, but the possibility of a terror attack ten days after 9/11 has been stubbornly dismissed. Former anti-terrorist judge Jean-Louis Bruguière drafted a report on elements that were overlooked in the investigation. Without claiming to have found the cause of the accident, or the culprit, the judge details all the reasons why investigators should not have ignored troubling information about Hassan Jandoubi a truck driver killed in the blast. Jandoubi, an interim worker hired by an outside agency, allegedly had contacts with the Artigat Islamic community. [<http://www.v921.net/ACTUALITE/2011-03-01%20Rapport%20Bruguiere/2011-03-01%20Rapport%20Bruguiere.pdf>]

Two weeks after the attacks, Christmas decorations go up, the initial shock is no longer visible in the streets, the media have turned their attention to the COP21, leaving loose threads everywhere. The Green Summit is taking place at Le Bourget, where the UOIF, our Muslim Brotherhood affiliate, holds its annual

Congress, a huge event chock full of hijab, inflammatory literature, sharia friendly speakers, and separation between men and women. The UOIF was conspicuously present at a summit meeting of French Islam held the other day to consecrate the fight against radicalization.

It's simply impossible to close a chapter in this ongoing drama. So much is left to be said: Samy Amimour, one of the 13 November executioners, worked for several years as a bus driver. It seems that Salafists have been ruling over certain depots in the Parisian transportation network. Political figures from all parties are now asking for a thorough review of flagged security threats employed in sensitive fields. Amimour's passport had been confiscated after he was caught trying to join the Caliphate. But his lawyer persuaded authorities to give it back to him so he could find employment. All of these murderous thugs have lawyers, usually young women with long blonde hair. Not court appointed lawyers, dedicated counsel which has been defending them for years. Why did the three shahids posted outside the soccer stadium jerk off without waiting for the crowd to pour out and get smashed? Who was their prompter? What language were they speaking? I don't know why they missed their cue, but they illustrate the idiocy of the refugee numbers game. What does it matter what percentage of the intruders are Daesh, when six weeks after the photo-choc of Aylan Shenu hit the screen, three unidentified men who came through Greece with false passports were in position to assassinate the president of France?

The squeaky clean intentions of the ecologists were brutally contested on the eve of the COP21 by another branch of the enemies of decency that, despite countless house arrests and a non-negotiable prohibition against demonstrations, made their contribution to the misery that assails us. Anarchists determined to impose their law, opportunists jumping at a chance to make trouble, extremist ecologists and, who knows, maybe some jihadis too, hiding under the same black hoods gathered at Place de la République Sunday night to fight the police. In the heat of the battle the insurgents attacked the police with rocks, glass bottles, canisters, and candles grabbed from the memorial at the feet of the statue of Marianne. According to one eyewitness they used children's drawings as wicks to light candles. They even threw bouquets. More, I suppose, as a sign of contempt than with any illusion that the flowers could penetrate the riot policemen's shields. A dialogue between an assailant and a concerned citizen, possibly an ally in his combat shocked by the means he chose, reportedly went

like this:

“How can you do this? [sacking the memorial] How can you disrespect the victims?”

“It happened in my neighborhood. I don’t give a damn. I don’t want a state of emergency, I don’t want a state.”

Like the caliphators of July 2014, the anarchists also took part in anti-Zionist anti-American rampages years ago. I wrote about them at the time--Pitbulls for Peace--when the mass media pretended they didn’t exist. They were called peace marches back then. And now, the French president is doing his utmost to find allies in the war against Daesh. British forces are in position to strike as soon as the parliament gives the ok to David Cameron who has designated a prime target, Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the real mastermind of attacks in Europe.

And our charming newscasters have started alternating the term “Islamic State” with the Arabic acronym Daesh that, though accurate, has been used to avoid linking Islam to atrocities.

Nidra Poller’s latest book, *The Black Flag of Jihad stalks la République*, is available [here](#).

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