

This Year in Jerusalem

By Roger L Simon

I am on a crowded plane from Budapest to Ben Gurion Airport. Flights into Israel are fewer these days hence every seat is taken, Some of the problem is due to our State Dept. that encouraged Delta, United, etc. not to fly into TLV.-too dangerous, they claimed. In the Trump Era, that should be over in short order like everything else.

Also over, I gather from X, is the Biden administration restriction on bunker buster bombs to Israel, bad news indeed for the Ayatollah and his friends.

I will be arriving TLV about twelve hours from the latest freeing of hostages that, word has it, were drugged by Hamas previous to their release, which would account for their smiling faces when surrounded by thousand of screaming terrorists. Among the many wonderful things our new president has been announcing in the few days I have been away from home, perhaps the one I am most looking forward to is the terror-supporting foreign students at our universities being sent home.

But first a few words about Budapest as I depart. If it's not on your bucket list already, put it there pronto. I had always heard it was a beautiful city, but never visited, even when Sheryl and I were living and working for almost a year in relatively nearby Prague in the Nineties. It certainly is beautiful but it is more than that. It is Europe as those of us who are over fifty remember it. In other words, it's as close to a purely European city in the old sense as exists, the way London used to be before it became Londonistan and Paris before it became whatever you want to call it, Macronville or something. (Whatever you do, you will be accused of Islamophobia, but my advice is either to shrug or pretend to

be hard of hearing.) Stockholm and Amsterdam, both exquisite cities I have visited recently, are more or less wrecked. The Pope seems to be ruining Rome by himself, although they have a decent prime minister who was able to help Biden from getting lost. Copenhagen appears to be hanging on. But Europe, beyond Eastern Europe, isn't Europe anymore. As a young guy, I once thought of living there—that's what writers do, right? I wouldn't dream of it now.



Beyond it's beauty, Budapest is also a city of ghosts, many of them being Jewish people, as you are reminded by the display of weathered shoes lined up along the Danube that belonged to children shipped off to Auschwitz in the waning years of World War II. The numbers of Hungarian Jews that were killed in a matter of months is so great I can't bear to write it. (You can look it up, if you want to put our current wars in perspective.) It was an amazingly artistic community some of whom, like Billy Wilder and Alexander Korda, among a surprising number, got out before the war and built Hollywood in its glory days. Has anyone made a movie near the level of "Sunset Boulevard" lately? Not that I've seen.

On the other hand, there was a rather different kind of Hungarian Jew in those days of a less artistic bent. One that has given me and a lot of people more than a little heartburn or worse over the years is the grandfather of the globalists George Soros. His bizarre relationship to the Holocaust, –if you don't already know it, you must look up, just Google "George Soros and Sixty Minutes."–explains a lot of his twisted, almost inhuman behavior, a man who thought he was helping our cities by increasing its crime. Regarding Soros, I read with amusement while abroad that his son says his aged father (George) now regrets his foundations are so top heavy with bureaucrats and wants to cut back. Has the Trump Affect reached Soros of all people?

One of the Hungarian Jews who managed to escape before the Holocaust was the most famous of all escape artists, Harry Houdini. He lived at one time on another picturesque street in the castle district in Buda. (Buda and Pest, on opposite sides of the Danube, joined together in 1873 to form Budapest.)

I am trying to integrate some of this mysterious atmosphere into the novel I am working on that is part of the reason for this trip.. I didn't even realize Budapest would figure in it. It was just meant to be a stop along the way, but now has become irresistible. I hope I am up to integrating it all. It will be a good challenge.

Considering what we are used to these days, most remarkable about Budapest is that it seems entirely safe, We walked everywhere at night without fear, Chalk one up for Mr. Orban.

As for this flight, it is filled mostly with Israelis but for some reason is operated by a Latvian company for El Al. The flight announcements are in English and Latvian with the Israelis, many know some English, having to strain to understand them, But they are a nation used to adversity. This is nothing to them.

My fellow passengers don't seem to be alarmed either that there might be missiles in the air, courtesy of the Houthis or some other group of psychotics or what the Associated Press prefers to call "militants." So I'm taking my cue from my fellow passengers. And from mister nonstop Donald Trump. Optimism, positivity always. Onwards.

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