

Gulled By Gul

I am constantly amazed at the idiots politicians make of themselves when they say stupid things. They should know better. And the only defense I hear are such pathetic excuses as, "He has to satisfy his coalition partners, the street, his constituency or his mother-in-law." Take Bibi. Of course we know that Hamas wants to liberate Tel Aviv. The apparent deal between them and Fatah is as likely to last as long as the old United Arab Republic merger between Egypt and Syria. But why raise such a hue and a cry and cut off cash to Fatah? All it signals is Israeli obduracy, stubbornness and pathetic disregard for PR. Not only but the EU, those wonderfully neutral lovers of double talk, responded by doubling the subsidy they give. Why couldn't he just have said, "I welcome anything that may bring peace"? The devil is indeed in the details. Words are easy. No, I don't trust words. But would a little tact do any harm? PR won't guarantee survival. Just as America fools itself if it thinks there's anything it can do or say that will get Osama's followers to love it. But good PR is good for morale. It won't harm.

Take the president of Turkey, Abdullah Gul. You know and I know what his agenda really is. But he at least knows how to say things that sound good even if in fact they mask something else. He wrote an article to the New York Times (April 21) which perfectly sums up the blindness and self-delusion of so much of the supposedly moderate Middle Eastern world. It returns to the old canard that if only there were to be a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict everything would be hunky-dory in the Middle East. It calls on Israel to stop blocking peace, but not on the Palestinians. It implies that Israel exclusively is an apartheid state. It focuses on "the mote" in Israel and not on "the beam" in the Arab world. It ignores the crucial politics of the situation in which it is the Arab League offering a deal and not the Palestinians themselves precisely because half of the potential Palestinian state does not want peace under any circumstances.

How would Mr. Gul like it if I were to write the truth about Turkey describing it as an apartheid state that has consistently discriminated against and murdered thousands of its Kurds? That it has a record of Armenian genocide which it refuses to come to terms with or compensate the survivors for, and it diverts attention from its own crimes by trying to focus on others elsewhere? Why cannot Mr. Gul accept that the real problem in the Middle East is that Muslims/Arabs kill Muslims/Arabs (or Copts for a change). Why this continuing desire to blame others, to find scapegoats, preferably Jewish ones, and to believe it will all be solved by someone else? Why the belief that it is all about external intervention and nothing to do with internal corruption?

I agree with much of what Gul says. Of course it would be in Israel's interest to make peace. But with whom? Under what conditions? Gul writes:

"I call upon the leaders of Israel to approach the peace process with a strategic mindset, rather than resorting to short-sighted

tactical maneuvers. This will require seriously considering the Arab League's 2002 peace initiative, which proposed a return to Israel's pre-1967 borders and fully normalized diplomatic relations with Arab states."

Let him call on the Arabs to do exactly the same, and accepting Bill Clinton's proposals. Perhaps he is right that Israel makes tactical maneuvers. Doesn't everyone else in the area? If the Arab League had not intervened in Palestine in 1947 and refused UN Partition, if it had not invaded in 1948, there would have been a Palestinian state. If the Arab League had not refused at Khartoum in 1967 to negotiate at all, there would have been a Palestinian state. And if Yassir Arafat had been told to accept Bill Clinton's proposal, there would have been a Palestinian state. But all the time the Arab League made this a proxy war, made all the wrong decisions, and now calls on Israel to return to what? To borders? What borders? There was no agreement on borders in '48 , '67, or any other time. There were armistice lines, ceasefire lines, but no one on the Arab side was willing to agree to anything because they did then and do now still believe they will eventually get everything they want—namely the strangulation and elimination of Israel.

The Arab League offer was and is an obfuscation. It never raised the issue of Jerusalem, conquered and stolen in 1948 by the Arab Legion. It never addressed security issues or disarmament, and it refused to consider negotiations over refugees. It still refuses to accept that there are even more Jewish refugees forced out of Arab lands. Until these issues are discussed, everything else is just a slogan.

Of course I agree Israel has made serious mistakes and could have done better and should have done better. Yes it manhandles, mishandles and treats too many people including its own with disdain and aggression. But are Hamas Palestinians are all fuzzy-wuzzy softies and only the Israelis tough bastards? And if some Palestinians slit innocent throats and others glorify them, it is Israel's fault for brutalizing them? I suppose Israel is to blame in Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Chechnya, Indonesia, Iraq, Kashmir, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Qatar, to name only the obvious ones.

"Sticking to the unsustainable status quo will only place Israel in greater danger. History has taught us that demographics is the most decisive factor in determining the fate of nations."

The history of Judaism, Mr Gul, is the history of survival against odds and for far longer than Islam. Since when do numbers either decide justice or guarantee survival?

"In the coming 50 years, Arabs will constitute the overwhelming majority of people between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. The new generation of Arabs is much more conscious of democracy,

freedom, and national dignity.”

So who will the new Arabs be, Mr. Gul? Does revolution necessarily mean progress?

“In such a context, Israel cannot afford to be perceived as an apartheid island surrounded by an Arab sea of anger and hostility.”

But who is the real apartheid criminal here? Israelis wanted to stay on in Sinai after it was handed back, even if they would be under Egyptian rule. Who refused? Many settlers are willing to stay on the West Bank when it becomes Palestine. Who is refusing? Where is the real apartheid? Israel has Muslim and Arab citizens; Israeli Christians are allowed to build churches. No it's not good enough. But it's better than the Saudis.

“Turkey's track record in the years before Israel's Gaza operation in December 2008 bears testimony to our dedication to achieving peace. Turkey is ready to play the role it played in the past, once Israel is ready to pursue peace with its neighbors.”

Once, Turkey might have been an honest broker. But no longer. Its one-sided support of the Gaza flotillas was despite Israel's offer to transfer all humanitarian aid overland. It refused to consider that the Marvi Marmara hoodlums might have had a small part to play in the disaster. Even before the Gaza issue, Erdogan and others were insulting President Peres and other senior Israelis in the public arena. Turkey cannot be an honest broker. It cannot even be honest with itself.

“Moreover, it is my firm conviction that the United States has a long-overdue responsibility to side with international law and fairness when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.”

International law? Which law do you have in mind? Sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, dear Mr. Gul. Why haven't Turkish Cypriots abided by international law? And you have said nothing. And once again you echo the Arab complaint that it is all America's fault. America must solve the problem. Not the Arabs.

I see no honesty, no realism even from you, Mr. Gul. You are just another politician. Who will Israel negotiate with? What partners will they have in an Egypt dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood? Who will replace Abdullah in Jordan, Assad in Syria? Will they be Hamas clones? Israel would be mad to negotiate with proxies when the real feet on the ground will just as likely be Allahu Ahkbar Jihadis.

I don't like the barrier wall, but it worked. It saved lives. I don't like

unilateralism. I want peaceful negotiations. But until Israel knows what sort of regimes will emerge from the present chaos, Israel must be on its guard. And it should beware of Turks "bearing gifts".