

Whose Side Are You On?

The latest round of fighting between Palestinians and Israel continues what has been a Hundred Years' War and will in my opinion continue possibly for another hundred. The reason I say this is a conference I attended in Chatham House in London, twenty years ago. It included the UK Foreign Office, Anglo Jews, Anglo Palestinians, and representatives of both Fatah and Hamas. At that conference, Hamas made its position very clear. They will never make peace until Israel ceases to exist. The most they would agree was a *Hudna*. A cease-fire pending further, later action to achieve the Islamist goal of removing Israel from the Dar El Islam.

The Oslo Peace Accords of 1993 were the only time that the Palestinians and Israelis agreed on what would be a temporary mutual recognition pending final talks. Which never happened. The term Intifada applies to any Palestinian demonstration against Israel and there have been regular outbreaks dating back as far as Hebron and Jerusalem in 1929. All attempts so far at resolving, the conflict, have failed partly because there are issues such as the return of refugees on both sides. No one is prepared to be blamed for what would be seen as capitulation. This is an existential struggle.

Both sides accuse the other of failing to negotiate in good faith. Both sides claim they were misled by the true intentions of the other side. Both sides argue that it is political machinations and self-interest that have caused every violent inaction. And they may well both be right. In my view, it is pointless to try to argue the case. On both sides, there are well-meaning sincere human beings who have been trying for years to mediate, compromise, and build bridges. But they are outshouted, outvoted, and vilified by the extremes. And on both sides, there is religious, ideological, and political in-fighting. What was once a battle between two secular states, is now a battle of religions.

In a situation like this, what can one do? The old analogy is of two families sharing the same home. They have two options. To compromise or to fight. And in the end whoever is stronger wins. Over the past 100 years, all well-meaning or not so well-meaning attempts from outside have only resulted in prolonging the agony. I see no resolution. And so, I pray.

But there is another dimension, the universal leftwing hatred of Israel. Which has, since Marxism, always spilled over into hatred of Jews. For fifteen hundred years Jews were only tolerated when we were second-class citizens, *dhimmi*s. The idea that we now seek equality with Muslims and have achieved a single state committed to Jewish identity represents a humiliation that will only be erased with Israel's end. And let no one say it is only Anti-Zionism (whatever that means) because everywhere Jews have been attacked and cursed as Yahud, as much as Israel.

In the age of social media and mass communication, so many people only believe one propagandist side of the argument and make no effort to hear another point of view. This saddens me in the same way that Jihadi Islam has

given Islam a bad name when it is only the most primitive, insecure, and misled who think that way. But these are the tools of the prejudiced yahoos and mass movements from the left and the right.

I do not expect the world to side with Israel. What disappoints me most is the extent to which much of what is called American Jewry just does not care and even goes over to the other side. Most American Jews have had no experience of Judaism. They are Jews only by accident of birth. They have seen no religious or cultural commitment to the survival of Jewry and Israel. They have never experienced existential threats. They blithely believe Jews do not need a home of their own either for self-realization or at worst a refuge. They have swallowed the hateful poison of the racist anti-racists. They have been brainwashed by academia, Hollywood, and the overpowering memes that are either selected, edited, or faked about Israeli actions (but not about its enemies' crimes).

Assimilation in the USA is running at 64%. Except amongst those religiously committed who are the only sector of Jewish life in the Diaspora that is flourishing and growing but only represent one third. So that now we cannot count anymore on the support of many of those who claim to be Jewish but are in fact marginal.

At the disgusting United Nations, I hear the hypocrisy, double standards, lies, and hatred when we are condemned for defending ourselves. All of this feeds into stoking more and more hatred. All of which encourage attacks on Jews. And it is not as if they are all Jihadis. Which tells me that the hatred is endemic.

But in the meantime, I believe we Jews have as much a right to our homeland and to defend it as any other people in the world. But it is obvious to me that we are the only people who can take responsibility for our survival. And that being the case I believe that we must sadly recognize that we cannot rely on many of those who still call themselves Jews. There is such a thing as family loyalty. Even when a member of the family lets it down, or even commits a crime. Those who think Israel should not defend itself or try to pre-empt death, cannot be members of my family. We Jews are not just divided by denominational differences, but also by whether we want to see Israel survive and thrive or could not care less.

I want peace, I believe in peace. And I want a negotiated settlement. I want to see people living with dignity and amity not ruled by violence. I would love to see the extremists on all sides transported up to heaven to enjoy whatever it is they think they will find up there and leave the rest of us to cope on earth. No matter what ceasefire is agreed on, this is not the end of the war.