



The Brink of Madness

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Colaboraciones n° 1139

August 14, 2006

When I used to read about the 1930s – the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, the rise of fascism in Italy, Spain, and Germany, the appeasement in France and Britain, the murderous duplicity of the Soviet Union, and the racist Japanese murdering in China – I never could quite figure out why, during those bleak years, Western Europeans and those in the United States did not speak out and condemn the growing madness, if only to defend the millennia-long promise of Western liberalism.

Of course, the trauma of the Great War was all too fresh, and the utopian hopes for the League of Nations were not yet dashed. The Great Depression made the thought of rearmament seem absurd. The connivances of Stalin with Hitler – both satanic, yet sometimes in alliance, sometimes not – could confuse political judgments.

But nevertheless it is still surreal to reread the fantasies of Chamberlain, Daladier, and Pope Pius, or the stump speeches by Charles Lindbergh (“Their [the Jews’] greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio, and our government”) or Father Coughlin (“Many people are beginning to wonder whom they should fear most – the Roosevelt-Churchill combination or the Hitler-Mussolini combination.”) – and it is even more baffling to consider that such men ever had any influence.

Not any longer.

Our present generation too is on the brink of moral insanity. That has never been more evident than in the last three weeks, as the West has proven utterly unable to distinguish between an attacked democracy that

seeks to strike back at terrorist combatants, and terrorist aggressors who seek to kill civilians.

It is now nearly five years since jihadists from the Arab world left a crater in Manhattan and ignited the Pentagon. Apart from the frontline in Iraq, the United States and NATO have troops battling the Islamic fascists in Afghanistan. European police scramble daily to avoid another London or Madrid train bombing. The French, Dutch, and Danish governments are worried that a sizable number of Muslim immigrants inside their countries are not assimilating, and, more worrisome, are starting to demand that their hosts alter their liberal values to accommodate radical Islam. It is apparently not safe for Australians in Bali, and a Jew alone in any Arab nation would have to be discreet – and perhaps now in France or Sweden as well. Canadians' past opposition to the Iraq war, and their empathy for the Palestinians, earned no reprieve, if we can believe that Islamists were caught plotting to behead their prime minister. Russians have been blown up by Muslim Chechnyans from Moscow to Beslan. India is routinely attacked by Islamic terrorists. An elected Lebanese minister must keep in mind that a Hezbollah or Syrian terrorist – not an Israeli bomb – might kill him if he utters a wrong word. The only mystery here in the United States is which target the jihadists want to destroy first: the Holland Tunnel in New York or the Sears Tower in Chicago.

In nearly all these cases there is a certain sameness: The Koran is quoted as the moral authority of the perpetrators; terrorism is the preferred method of violence; Jews are usually blamed; dozens of rambling complaints are aired, and killers are often considered stateless, at least in the sense that the countries in which they seek shelter or conduct business or find support do not accept culpability for their actions.

Yet the present Western apology to all this is often to deal piecemeal with these perceived Muslim grievances: India, after all, is in Kashmir; Russia is in Chechnya; America is in Iraq, Canada is in Afghanistan; Spain was in Iraq (or rather, still is in Al Andalus); or Israel was in Gaza and Lebanon. Therefore we are to believe that "freedom fighters" commit terror for political purposes of "liberation." At the most extreme, some think there is absolutely no pattern to global terrorism, and the mere suggestion that there is constitutes "Islamaphobia."

Here at home, yet another Islamic fanatic conducts an act of al Qaedaism in Seattle, and the police worry immediately about the safety of the mosques from which such hatred has in the past often emanated – as if the problem of a Jew being murdered at the Los Angeles airport or a Seattle civic center arises from not protecting mosques, rather than protecting us from what sometimes goes on in mosques.

But then the world is awash with a vicious hatred that we have not seen in our generation: the most lavish

film in Turkish history, "Valley of the Wolves," depicts a Jewish-American harvesting organs at Abu Ghraib in order to sell them; the Palestinian state press regularly denigrates the race and appearance of the American Secretary of State; the U.N. secretary general calls a mistaken Israeli strike on a U.N. post "deliberate," without a word that his own Blue Helmets have for years watched Hezbollah arm rockets in violation of U.N. resolutions, and Hezbollah's terrorists routinely hide behind U.N. peacekeepers to ensure impunity while launching missiles.

If you think I exaggerate the bankruptcy of the West or only refer to the serial ravings on the Middle East of Pat Buchanan or Jimmy Carter, consider some of the most recent comments from Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah about Israel: "When the people of this temporary country lose their confidence in their legendary army, the *end of this entity* will begin [emphasis added]." Then compare Nasrallah's remarks about the U.S: "To President Bush, Prime Minister Olmert and every other tyrannical aggressor. I want to invite you to do what you want, practice your hostilities. By God, you will not succeed in erasing our memory, our presence or eradicating our strong belief. *Your masses will soon waste away, and your days are numbered* [emphasis added]."

And finally examine here at home reaction to Hezbollah – which has butchered Americans in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia – from a prominent Democratic Congressman, John

Dingell: "I don't take sides for or against Hezbollah." And isn't that the point, after all: the amoral Westerner cannot exercise moral judgment because he no longer has any?

An Arab rights group, between denunciations of Israel and America, is suing its alma mater the United States for not evacuating Arab-Americans quickly enough from Lebanon, despite government warnings of the dangers of going there, and the explicit tactics of Hezbollah, in the manner of Saddam Hussein, of using civilians as human shields in the war it started against Israel.

Demonstrators on behalf of Hezbollah inside the United States – does anyone remember our 241 Marines slaughtered by these cowardly terrorists? – routinely carry placards with the Star of David juxtaposed with Swastikas, as voices praise terrorist killers. Few Arab-American groups these past few days have publicly explained that the sort of violence, tyranny, and lawlessness of the Middle East that drove them to the shores of a compassionate and successful America is best epitomized by the primordial creed of Hezbollah.

There is no need to mention Europe, an entire continent now returning to the cowardice of the 1930s. Its cartoonists are terrified of offending Muslim sensibilities, so they now portray the Jews as Nazis, secure that no offended Israeli terrorist might chop off their heads. The French foreign minister meets with the Iranians to show solidarity with

the terrorists who promise to wipe Israel off the map (“In the region there is of course a country such as Iran – a great country, a great people and a great civilization which is respected and which plays a stabilizing role in the region”) – and manages to outdo Chamberlain at Munich. One wonders only whether the prime catalyst for such French debasement is worry over oil, terrorists, nukes, unassimilated Arab minorities at home, or the old Gallic Jew-hatred.

It is now a cliché to rant about the spread of postmodernism, cultural relativism, utopian pacifism, and moral equivalence among the affluent and leisured societies of the West. But we are seeing the insidious wages of such pernicious theories as they filter down from our media, universities, and government – and never more so than in the general public’s nonchalance since Hezbollah attacked Israel .

These past few days the inability of millions of Westerners, both here

and in Europe, to condemn fascist terrorists who start wars, spread racial hatred, and despise Western democracies is the real story, not the “quarter-ton” Israeli bombs that inadvertently hit civilians in Lebanon who live among rocket launchers that send missiles into Israeli cities and suburbs.

Yes, perhaps Israel should have hit more quickly, harder, and on the ground; yes, it has run an inept public relations campaign; yes, to these criticisms and more. But what is lost sight of is the central moral issue of our times: a humane democracy mired in an asymmetrical war is trying to protect itself against terrorists from the 7th century, while under the scrutiny of a corrupt world that needs oil, is largely anti-Semitic and deathly afraid of Islamic terrorists, and finds psychic enjoyment in seeing successful Western societies under duress.

In short, if we wish to learn what was going on in Europe in 1938, just look around.

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