

All kinds of rockets rain down on Israel

Real rockets are raining down on civilians in Israel, but at the same time, antisemitic rockets are raining down on Jews the world over and there is no respite. Kinda like Heil Hitler in the Nazi era.

by Phyllis Chesler



Real rockets and arson balloons are relentlessly raining down on civilians in Israel—the so-called truce has not been honored—but at the same time, other kinds of rockets are also raining down on both Israel and world Jewry. I am talking about the non-stop, subtle, brazen, and demonic propaganda against Israel and Jews which is now in full force.

There is no respite. There is no effective rejoinder. It just

continues and, increasingly, it seems to be...everywhere.

For some time now, whatever I seem to pick up—a newspaper, a book, a book review, a literary journal, an anthology of poems—I find that ‘Palestine’ has inevitably been slipped into the mix, a signal, a code, for political righteousness.

Kinda like “Heil Hitler” during the Nazi era. People feel they have to say it in order to be published, not shunned by the Censorship Police.

For example, last week, a poet friend gave me an anthology of poems “Riverside Poets Anthology.” Volume 18, 2018. Idly, I turned to the poem titled “Balfour” by Miriam Stanley. The poet does not seem to like Balfour—or her own father who told her: “We always support Israel no matter what, we circle the wagons/The country protects us and so we protect her.” The poet responds: “This land of emptied Arab villages paved over/Asphalt over the evidence.”

The *Women’s Review of Books* (they sent me a free copy, I do not subscribe) also arrived a few weeks ago. What did I see? A long and glowing review of a new book “A Rebel in Gaza: Behind the Lines of the Arab Spring, One Woman’s Story” by Asma al-Ghoul.

My God! She is the very woman who reached out to me after she was fired from her job as a journalist on the ‘West Bank’ and in Gaza, roughed up, and nearly arrested by the Arab Palestinian version of the Taliban. Asma asked me to edit and publish her work on honor killing which I promptly did. Years passed. I never heard from her again—not even when she was brought to New York City and honored. I thought nothing of it. We are all busy people.

Now, according to the reviewer, Israeli-born Hagar Scher, Al-Ghoul is a woman “who has stuck to her convictions despite harassment, ostracism, verbal abuse, surveillance, physical violence, and death threats. Al Ghoul’s unfiltered and vivid

dispatches are themselves an act of courage, shedding light on the savagery of the Israeli siege of Gaza and decrying the rise of Islamic extremism and anti-woman repression in her beloved home.”

As best as I can recall, the brutalities and death threats Asma endured were all perpetrated by other Palestinian Arabs because of her feminist work. But the reviewer goes on to position Al-Ghoul’s work in this way: “(this book) pulls no punches in exposing the brutal everyday realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that has terrorized the people of Gaza, but a large part of the book’s power resides in Al-Ghoul’s refusal to relinquish joyous memories.”

I have not read this book. Perhaps it is wondrously even-handed. But the reviewer positions her work as a rebel not only against Islamic fundamentalism and Jihad—but against an alleged Israeli occupation. Those unfamiliar with history and lacking all context will easily conclude that Islamic fundamentalism in Gaza and on the ‘West Bank’ arose in response to alleged Israeli aggression.

If so: How do we explain Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan, a country that has never been occupied by foreign powers? How to explain misogyny in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan, countries which have never been occupied by Israel?

Last weekend’s *New York Times Book Review* had a number of long and glowing reviews of books by and/or about African Americans and an interview with an author (Laila Lalami) who primarily recommends books written about and by African-Americans—a view that comprises a long overdue corrective. However, when asked which writers, both living and dead, Lalami would like to have dinner with, she names two African-Americans (Toni Cade Bambara and James Baldwin) and, Edward Said.

Edward Said! How does he fit in? That consummate Dhimmi, a Christian whose claim to fame was arguing the Islamic and

Islamist Palestinian cause, and whose book on "Orientalism" has been most honorably and fully discredited by my dear friend, Ibn Warraq.

White America is in for a long overdue comeuppance—and the *New York Times*, also owned and run by white men, is leading the charge. Hopefully, they will be seen as above reproach. These days, race even trumps gender. It is presumably the most important identity marker—although being transgender is close behind.

The same issue of the *New York Times Book Review* features a positive review of a fictional Memoir by Marwa Helal, an Egyptian American. The reviewer quotes Helal as writing an Ode to DJ Khaled; she "imagines his music as a resource for displaced Palestinians: 'Yours is the rhythm they rebuild to/what do you say/we give them all the keys?'"

No doubt there are many other passages to quote. The reviewer, Stephanie Burt, chose this one.

But here is where I'm going. These reviews and interviews appear early, on pgs 8, 12, 16 and 18; all but one take up a full page. And then there is a review of award-winning Mati Friedman's new book, "Spies of No Country. Secret Lives at the Birth of Israel." It is given a mere half page and appears on pg 21, near the back of the book review.

Neal Bascomb's review is largely positive but is also somehow vague, minimal. Bascomb (or his editor) carefully, almost purposefully misses some of the most important points of this work, points that do not support the *NYT's* version of the pro-Palestine narrative; namely, that men in Friedman's book who became spies before Israel became a nation, were Jewish Arabs, Jewish men of color, Jewish men who had formerly been occupied both by their Muslim masters and by foreign imperial powers—Friedman is writing about Jewish Arab men of color who were exiled from or who had to flee for their lives from Arab

countries.

This deserves a sentence or two, yes? However, Bascomb's review ends this way: "...over all, Friedman succeeds in portraying the 'stories beneath the stories' that acted as a bedrock to the rise of the Mossad and serve still as a window into Israel's troubled soul.""

A passing reader might assume that Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Iran do not have "troubled souls," that only Israel does. And should due to their various sins and crimes.

Such pandemic and blatant anti-Israel propaganda both signals and has led to the downfall of independent and critical thinking, the collapse of the American university system, and to the dangerously toxic hatred of Jews and Israel which is rising at quantum speed.

This is precisely why a young woman came to consult with me this past week. She is a radical feminist and a Zionist and can find no place to "be" among her leftist millennial peer group. She has decided she must create such a space since one does not exist. I saluted her and ended our meeting with the well-worn words: "Hazak v'Ematz."

She will need both strength and courage.

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