

The Jihadi "Troubles"

Nancy Hartevelt Kobrin reviews my book in 

In Paris at Shir Hadash bookstore
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The subtitle of *Troubled Dawn of the 21st Century* by Nidra Poller is revealing – “A Chronicle.” The word “chronicle” is generally defined as a “usually continuous historical account of events arranged in order of time without analysis or interpretation. Examples of such accounts date from Greek and Roman times, but the best-known chronicles were written or compiled in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. These were composed in prose or verse, and, in addition to *providing valuable information about the period they covered* [emphasis mine], they were used as sources by [William Shakespeare](#) and other playwrights.”^[1] The word “chronicle” harbors its Greek root, which entered English through the Latin *chronica*, from Greek ???????, from ??????, chronos, “time”.

But when I read the subtitle, I associated to the *Book of Chronicles* in the *Tanakh*, the Jewish Bible, called *Divrei ha-Yamim* in Hebrew literally translated “*Divrei – devar/dabar* words or deed *yamim* “of days” i.e. the words and actions of the past: chronicles, history, legends of the past. For the Hebrews it was not a day by day listing of acts and sayings, but a coherent, orderly, revelation of the Divine Word in practical events and ordinary speech” as my colleague and friend Prof. Norman Simms notes. Indeed Poller has written a modern day *divrei ha-yamin* concerning Islamic Terrorism, turning the jihadi chaos into something comprehensible that demands responsibility in countering.

Why might this be important and why is this a profound collection of writings? The fundamental objective of Islamic terrorism is to wreak chaos in terror in order to soften the

targeted population for conquest and its submission. This book may be thought of as a roadmap for the violent ground that Poller and we as readers have been forced to travel since September 28-30 2000 to the Gaza withdrawal and beyond. Unlike a dry historical presentation of fact Poller plumbs such events, and presents these writings in a chronological order while revealing the profound powers of good and ill, raising all sorts of questions along the way as to how and why Israel and the Jews have been repeatedly maligned by journalistic prejudicial framing. Poller did not start out her writing career focusing on Islamic terrorism. She was involved in creative writing, a 1969 graduate of the prestigious John Hopkins Writing Program. The fascinating and serious trajectory, which she has forged for herself is breathtaking. Poller is not only an accomplished novelist, writer of children books but also the gifted translator of many and most especially of Emmanuel Levinas. Her work began to cross over into the challenging realm of terrorism as she could not remain passive and silent. I wondered for a moment if her translation of Michel Jeanneret's *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from da Vinci to Montaigne* gives us a glimpse into Poller's uncanny skill to detect and describe changes fluently because she does so with regard to terrorism's chaos, violence and its never ending annihilation, particularly here in the Middle East. She herself notes that she gravitated toward terrorism as she sought to explain and describe the injustice and warped reality of Islamic terrorism. She understood intuitively its perverse reverse world: where good is bad and bad is good. In her *Al Dura: Long Range Ballistic Myth* (2004) Poller created and coined the invaluable and much needed term – the lethal narrative – narratives that incite and kill. The Al Dura hoax created a myth, which continues to incite Jew hatred leading to murder of Jews. Such narratives are part of the slippery slope to genocide. *Troubled Dawn of the 21st Century* lays out the background writings to her developing this important

concept.

I contend that her leaving the U.S. for France in 1972 has given her an important perch from which to feel, think and write about what she perceives (and I agree with her) there is now unfolding before us a new world order for which we are responsible. Poller pens a stunning and sober view concerning the deterioration of France and by extension Europe as we knew it. True, Poller was not an expert on the subject when she first started out tracking Islamic terrorism in 2000. I have heard her modestly say that she does not feel herself to be such an expert but by the end of this chronicle, there is no doubt in my mind that she possesses more commonsense and analytic skills than many of the well meaning but uninformed counter terrorism professionals. Just consider the horrific attack in London this past week perpetrated by Khalid Masood aka Adrian Elms born in Britain. The experts tragically minimized and dismissed a jailhouse Islamic convert with a documented history of violent crime as “tangential” to the nefarious endeavors of Al Qaeda or the Islamic State. What in good heaven’s name were they thinking?? This is NOT rocket science and Poller knows that and so much more. In my review of her 2015 book *The Black Flag of Jihad Stalks La République* Poller proved to be prophetic.

With the publishing of *The Troubled Dawn of the 21st Century: A Chronicle*, this collection of diverse writings from op-eds to almost rabbinic commentaries on articles to analyzing mug shots, her prose is gripping, poignant and at times appropriately biting as when she deconstructs Noam Chomsky’s Wail; these writings move her to the fore on Islamic terrorism. While she may have started out composing a *cahier d’une honnête citoyenne* [notes from a simple citizen], Poller has wound up writing a *divrei ha-yamim* for Islamic terrorism. This book is a major source for those who seek to have a coherent account of the unfolding new world order. As far as I am concerned Poller merits being called an expert on Islamic

terrorism. We are fortunate to have her write at Family Security Matters and I am more enlightened for having read her writings. *Troubled Dawn of the 21st Century: A Chronicle* is not to be missed.

[1] <https://www.britannica.com/art/chronicle-literature>