

# The Silly Political Season in Washington and Europe

Life is changing. The summer winds came blowing in a little early this year. For many years summer or late summer has been regarded as the silly season for politics. The French knew this time was *morte-saison* (dead or dull season) when the media would be devoid of stories unless it published frivolous, ridiculous, or absurd sensational items.

During the silly summer season we are accustomed to reading in the papers or hearing on television that musicians are frantically searching for the lost chord, or the U.S. is threatened by an invasion of mosquitos from Mars, or that teachers in the Alaska school district area inform their students of the context of the examinations before they are taken.

Yet now several months in advance, the media is full of such peculiar eccentric items regarding American and European politics that purport to be accurate and to be taken seriously. Let us look at a few of the more enticing items and their exponents.

The silly season starts with the stark division among the ten commissioners of the 9/11 Congressional Commission who reported in 2014. The two respected leaders of the Commission, former Republican Governor Tom Keane of New Jersey, and former Democratic Congressman Lee Hamilton, praised Saudi Arabia as an ally of the U.S. in combatting terrorism, and identified only one Saudi Arabian as being implicated in 9/11. However, John F. Lehman, former Republican Navy Secretary, and most of the others believe that a number of Saudi government employees were implicated in the support network for the 9/11 hijackers. There are still 28 pages of the Congressional report that have not been declassified and made public. Only silliness, not any

form of problem, legal, diplomatic, or otherwise, prevents their release by the Obama administration.

President Barack Obama appears concerned that serious and important issues are not being discussed by the present presidential candidates of both parties, and wants to change the agenda. On May 13, 2016 he issued a sweeping directive that every public school district allow transgender students to use bathrooms that match their gender identity. Schools choosing not to abide by this directive can face lawsuits or lose federal aid.

It must be said however, or it might be considered silliness, the President does not yet require that every student come to school with a copy of the gender informed birth certificate. Nor did he inform the school districts on the exact dimensions, instillations, and facilities of the bathrooms to be used, nor if police or armed forces are to monitor the facilities.

In Britain, Boris Johnson, the Conservative M.P. who has just quit the office of Mayor of London, does not want to leave references to Adolf Hitler to the number of the leftist and Muslim members of the Labour Party who have had a monopoly of these detestable comparisons of Israel and Nazi Germany in recent weeks, and for which five Labour Party officials have been suspended from the party. Boris, a major and highly articulate proponent of Britain exiting from the European Union, now compares the European with the Nazi leader's attempt to conquer Europe. He gave us a history lesson and a warning. Napoleon, Hitler, and various (unnamed) people tried this out and they ended tragically. The EU is attempting to do this by different (unstated) means.

The leader of the British Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, is articulate, even blunt, on many of the issues confronting Britain, but apparently he does not know his own identity. Asked a simple question, "Do you think of yourself as middle

class," his eloquent reply was "Oh, gawd, I dunno." He did acknowledge that he was an owner-recipient of his own house with a mortgage. He also confessed that every member of British Parliament has a life style that is more or less middle class. Not wanting to make enemies, or leave anyone out, or perhaps still confused, Corbyn informed us that as an MP he represented a "community of the poor...and the better off." He left out aliens from outer space.

First prize must go to France that did not want to be left out of the silly season. In late May 2016 France will host a conference to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Leaders of many countries have been invited to seek for a consensus on a "set of parameters for a permanent solution" to the conflict. France cannot be suspected of ignoble motives, nor is it concerned to make or allow criticism of Israeli policies or actions. However, there is only one small problem: no Israeli or Palestinian representatives have been invited to the conference.

The intention of France appears to be that if an international consensus is reached on the parameters it will be presented to the two parties, Israel and the Palestinians, who will be invited to a second international conference.

There are two issues involved. One has been the disastrous failure of international conferences and proposals on the subject, especially by units of the United Nations. Almost all have suffered from the bias or hostile spin fabricated by organizations such as the UN Human Rights Council, UN General Assembly, UNESCO, or the UN Commission on the Status of Women, not to mention the Palestinian driven BDS movement.

The second factor is that it has been abundantly clear from the beginning, and reiterated in UN Security Council Resolution 242, that a solution can only be found by direct negotiations by the two parties, Peace can only come after the difficult choices and compromises made at the negotiating

table. France should forgo the silly season of an international conference and call on the Palestinians to enter into negotiations without preconditions.

It is appropriate to remember that a hundred years ago on May 16, 1916 an accord was signed between Mark Sykes for Britain and Francois Georges Picot for France, with Russian participation, deciding the division of territory to replace the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. Their recommendations, ignoring the strong ethnic and religious divisions in the area, led to the creation of the multiethnic and multi confessional states, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, now all failed states.

In this premature silly season the lesson can be drawn, international agreements, whether open or secret, without the participation of those affected are doomed to disaster. International powers at conferences rarely are successful or right in agreeing on and imposing a formula for a specific problem. No outside formula can be successfully imposed on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, other than one calling for Palestinians to come to the negotiating table.