

The Three Things of Significance That Happened During Secretary of State Pompeo's Visit to Israel

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Three things of significance happened during Secretary Pompeo's visit to Israel.

First, he went to a settlement in Judea and Samaria (a/k/a the "West Bank"), Psagot, where he visited the winery that Israeli farmers and oenologists have managed to create in what was during Jordanian rule a wasteland. He is the first American Secretary of State to visit the "West Bank," providing a clear demonstration of the Trump Administration's view that Israel has every right to build settlements throughout that territory

(though it is a right it may choose not to exercise everywhere), based on the Mandate for Palestine maps that assigned to the future Jewish state all the land from the Golan in the north to the Red Sea in the south, and from the Jordan River in the east to the Mediterranean in the west. This visit reinforces the decision last year by Secretary Pompeo to reverse a 1978 State Department ruling, the so-called "Hansell Memorandum," which failed to mention either the Mandate for Palestine or U.N. Resolution 242, and declared Israeli settlements in the West Bank to be "illegal."

Second, before visiting Psagot and its famed winery, Secretary Pompeo announced a policy shift on the labeling of goods produced in the West Bank, wherever Israel exercises the relevant authority, notably in Area C, where Israel retains full civilian and military control, and which constitutes 60% of that territory. From now on these goods, for American consumers, will read "Israel" or "Made in Israel" or "Product of Israel." This new labeling should make it easier for the producers to expand their market, as their products will no longer be identified as coming from what BDSers want us to think of as "occupied" Palestinian land, and therefore, they claim, should be boycotted.

Third, Secretary Pompeo visited the Golan Heights, which was won by Israel in the Six-Day War and annexed in 1981, with near-total domestic support, as a permanent part of Israel. The Trump Administration already recognized the Golan as part of Israel in September, 2019. Pompeo's visit reinforced that recognition. By standing on the Golan Heights, from exactly where the Syrians for nearly two decades had intermittently shelled Israeli farmers in the Hula Valley far below, Pompeo delivered a history lesson to the assembled media: Here is where the Syrian artillery once stood, and way down there were the Israeli farmers on their tractors, whom the Syrians fired on. That's all over now. And it would be madness – "just look at how the Golan looms over that valley" – for Israel to ever

give it up. That's why the Golan was so soon annexed, without any domestic dissent, by Israel. And that's why the United States, rejecting the poorly-argued Hansell Memorandum of 1978, and following both the Mandate for Palestine, which assigned the Golan to the future Jewish state, and also U.N. Resolution 242, which entitles Israel to hold onto any territory that it won in the Six-Day War that it needs in order to have "secure [i.e. defensible] and recognized boundaries," chose to recognize the Golan as an integral part of Israel. Pompeo's visit was a visible reinforcement of that new policy, and a piquant reminder of how the Golan meant only one thing for Syria – a place from which to shell Israeli farmers in the Hula Valley below – while under the Israelis, the Golan has flourished, both with its farms, and as a tourist destination, while the population of Druze and Jews has grown, as both groups have prospered. And there is no longer any Syrian shelling to disrupt the work of Israeli farmers down below.

Pompeo's visit has enraged the Palestinians. How dare Pompeo visit an "illegal" settlement at Psagot? The rants continue, from the enraged *rais* in Ramallah, to the Palestinians venting on social media. You can imagine what they say; their messages are all variants on this:

"Don't tell us about the so-called Mandate for Palestine. That was long ago. It meant nothing. It had nothing to do with us, the Palestinians, living in our land for at least two thousand years. It was a colonial-settler scheme that Zionist Jews in Britain thought up, and got Mr. Balfour to endorse. How much do you think that Lord Rothschild paid him to write that famous letter, the one where he goes on about how 'His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object'? Who gave the British the right to help establish a 'national home for the Jewish people'? Pompeo, it's obvious,

is planning to run for president in 2024; he wants the evangelical vote. And the Zionist money, of course. What better way to get both than to visit an illegal West Bank settlement and declare it legal? His visit to our stolen land in occupied Palestine will forever be a stain on American diplomacy.

“As for his visit to the Golan, that is sacred Druze land. Pompeo can’t change that. Now the Zionists use that land to threaten peaceful Syrian farmers down below. He is hoping to legitimize Israel’s so-called ‘annexation’ of the Golan forty years ago. No one else in the world recognizes that land theft. Not even the U.S. did, until the Trump people came along. There have been six presidents since that Israeli claim to annex the Golan. Five of them refused to recognize it. Trump, only Trump, told the Israelis they could keep the Golan. But now he’s going back to his hotels and his golf courses. Good riddance. No one will miss him. And if the Israelis truly want peace, as they claim, they will return the Golan that they snatched from our Syrian brothers.”

Words, meretricious words, more or less to that effect. Meanwhile, Pompeo has done a good deed or rather, three good deeds, during his trip to Israel. First, he visited the settlement of Psagot on the West Bank, demonstrating that the Trump Administration does not think such settlements are illegal. Second, he gave a great boost to the West Bank economy, by changing the labeling on products made in the settlements for export to the American market to read “Made in Israel” or “Product of Israel.” This has made for much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth among the BDSers. Third, Secretary Pompeo visited the Golan, telling the world that “the Golan belongs to Israel,” and reminding the media accompanying him of how the Syrians only used that area to rain fire down on Israeli farmers, and letting them see for themselves how the Israeli farmers now use the Golan, to cultivate their dairies, their nurseries, their orchards,

their vineyards.

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