

POOF!

That's how the Secretary of State described the failure of the current peace process. Poof! It just blew up. All of a sudden. Because the Arabs went to the UN in violation of the agreement not to do so, because the Israelis wouldn't release any more prisoners, because the Palestinians refused to recognize Israel, because the Israelis put in that demand at the last minute, because we're building in Gilo, because, because, because...zzzz.

Diplomats don't say what they believe, or believe what they say, but if that's in fact what the Secretary thinks, he just doesn't get it. That **Poof!** had nothing to do with what we did or what they did. The so-called peace process was dead before it ever started. It never had a chance, because it was born of a deal that was fatally flawed at conception.

Israel should never have made that deal with Arafat in 1993. A few academics met in Oslo, gulled the Foreign Minister (Peres, willing as always to believe anything) into buying it, which suckered the Prime Minister (Rabin) into agreeing, which gave the American President (Carter) something to say he accomplished, and which made Arafat king of Palestine without ever asking the Palestinians whether they agreed or not. Everybody was a winner, except for the Palestinians, who got a jungle, and a thousand five hundred dead Israelis who got blown up as a result.

I wrote about this at the time: **YOU DON'T MAKE DEALS WITH TERRORISTS**; you kill terrorists. Arafat had no intention of ever making real peace and had refused every reasonable offer from the previous governments of Barak and Olmert. And after his departure things got worse. Because half of the Palestinian population split away to Islamic Hamas in Gaza¹, which absolutely refuses to be part of the deal. While the part that remains, the PA in Ramallah, has neither the stability nor the legitimacy—it's leader elected to a four-year term 10 years ago, now age 78 with no successor in sight—to make a meaningful treaty.

So there was never the slightest chance of a treaty, and the Secretary of State should have known that. Now the American administration is blaming us and leaning on us (of course; because we are the only ones who can be leaned on!) and friend Noel writes in to tell us we're losing the propaganda war. I wrote back:

You're right, Noel, of course. We are losing the propaganda war. Thing is, we will always lose it because we can never win it.

First thing is an absolute Arab rejection of our right to exist. That absolute and extreme position exists even though it is against the self-interest of the Arabs themselves. They know it too. They don't mind death, starvation and misery; as long as we are destroyed in the end. Their religion simply does not allow them to recognize the legitimacy of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Therefore there can never be a settlement between Jews and Muslims. There will always be a conflict.

AND THE SO-CALLED TWO STATE SOLUTION IS A JOKE. HOW CAN THERE BE TWO STATES WHEN ONE OF THE STATES (US) WILL NEVER EVER BE RECOGNIZED BY THE OTHER ONE?

As for the rest of the world, two factors come into play:

First, Europe is full of Muslims, who form the work force to run the machines and who are violent by nature and tradition (there's never been a democracy in the Middle East for them to have grown up in) and profoundly convinced they have the final revelation of truth. Which they are committed to spreading, by force if necessary. Europe is afraid of the violence because violence is bad for business, and will always side with the Muslims, just to keep them quiet.

Second, European Christianity has been persecuting and killing Jews for 2000 years. Anti-Semitism is in their blood. So supporting the Muslims and blasting the Jews comes naturally, and is an easy and useful public policy to boot.

Conclusion, the Europeans, and the UN, will always support the Muslims against the Jews, either for the first or the second reason, or both.

America is a little more complicated, because classical Christian anti-Semitism is not that deep generally, and the Jewish community is strong and influential. In addition, the evangelical Christian community, which is large and important, is—for a lot of reasons—very pro-Israel.

So AMERICA IS DIVIDED BETWEEN WHAT ITS PEOPLE WANT, WHICH IS GOOD FOR THE JEWS, AND WHAT ITS OFFICIAL FOREIGN POLICY—WRITTEN DURING AND AFTER WW II BY THE STATE DEPARTMENT (CLASSIC PROTESTANT; NOT PARTICULARLY PHILO-SEMITIC) WHICH IS NOT SO GOOD FOR THE JEWS. AMERICA WILL SUPPORT ISRAEL MATERIALLY, BECAUSE THAT WINS ELECTIONS, AND CONDEMN IT POLITICALLY, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT HAS A GOVERNMENT WHICH DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS (AND CERTAINLY NOT THE ARABS!) AND WHOSE REACTIONS TO SOLVING THEM ARE MODELED AFTER WHAT MAYBE WORKS IN INNER-CITY POLITICS.

¹ There are lies, damned lies, and statistics. Figure 2.5 million Arabs in the West Bank and 1.5 million in Gaza.

So the conflict will never end, Noel, and nothing we in Israel can do or say— except to commit suicide—will appease the Muslims and let Europe and America relax. Israel actually does a fair job of advertising its product and arguing its cause, but it is, *a priori*, a losing battle. It can't win. Israel thus plays a nerve-wracking game of doing what it needs and wants to do—why not; it won't make any difference to the Arabs, the conflict, and the world!—and not aggravating the people it needs for economic support: the EU and America. Bibi knows, as we know, that the propaganda war is lost in advance. But he is good at tricky games like that.

Keep the faith, Noel; as long as we've got Scarlett Johansson, who cares if Elvis Costello and Carlos Santana cancelled their visits here. It's nice to have beautiful actresses on your side, but doesn't matter!

Cheers, WALTER

p.s. SO NOW WHAT?

Easy to be a skeptic, Walter. Easy to pooh-pooh everything. Easy to be negative about everything and tell everybody the peace process was never a process and peace was never in the cards. But that's not enough; you have to offer a counter suggestion. **What do we do now?**

AXIOM (1): One word answer: nothing. That is a principle that has served me well for many years: when you don't know what to do, do nothing. Something will work out in time. It always does.

AXIOM (2): There is nothing we (or anybody else) can do with the Palestinians. We will therefore continue to build our lives, expand our cities and towns, strengthen our society. To do what we have to do for ourselves. At some stage, the Palestinians will understand that they are on a dead-end road, standing still (actually, going backwards) while we are sailing along on the super highway. They will change when that realization finally sinks in.

Meanwhile, like the oath of Hippocrates requires of the physicians, do no harm. Harm is what the world and its administrations, together with the ever-optimistic (though for no good reason) American and Israeli left wing have been trying to do for the past 20 years since Oslo.

Will there be violence? Indeed there will be some. But there has always been violence, and not only here. We will just have to live with it as best we can. Our children and grandchildren will still go to the army. Put the blame on God, who decided to put the Promised Land in the Middle East. Not in Canada; but I told you that Moses-stuttered joke already...