

A Word from London

Herbert London

Herbert London is our correspondent from New York. He is John M. Olin Professor of Humanities at NYU, and president of the Hudson Institute.

Peace in the Middle East?

It has been said that politics is war by other means. War presumably is the result of failed politics. But what then is terrorism? Yassir Arafat has provided an answer.

Recent events in Israel suggest that Palestinian inspired terror is a pressure tactic to achieve a negotiating advantage. It is neither war nor politics.

Arafat understands that rock-throwing youths and well-armed policemen firing at Israeli soldiers offer the most significant leverage in his negotiations with Prime Minister Barak and President Clinton.

Moreover, the wave of violence promoted by Arafat with the helpful assistance of Hezbollah has been orchestrated to force Israel into concessions that go beyond Barak's generous (foolhardy?) proposals.

In this context peace means stability to Israelis and a return to the map of 1947 for Palestinians, a time when Israel as a state didn't exist.

Since the rioting began, Arafat has not said a word condemning the violence, claiming that he, with authoritarian control of the police, cannot stop teenagers from throwing rocks at Israeli soldiers. In fact, he said: "The Palestinian people are inclined to continue the confrontation because it is beginning to bear fruit."

Alas, that may be true. Many Israelis believe that with just a few more concessions the violence will end and peace can be achieved. This view, of course, represents little more than the triumph of hope over reality.

The violence is turned off and on by Arafat as if it were a spigot. Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount was merely a pretext for riots. Months before intelligence reports indicated the Palestinians were preparing for violence. And why not? It is Arafat's trump card.

The cold-blooded lynching of two Israeli soldiers in Ramallah by a Palestinian mob, the abduction of four Israeli soldiers on the northern border with Lebanon, as well as the terrorist attack on the *U.S.S. Cole Arleigh Burke* in which seventeen American sailors were killed suggest a level of premeditation for the terror not acknowledged in most accounts of Middle East events.

That American officials do not understand or fully appreciate what is going on is remarkable. The scene in which Secretary of State Madeleine Albright runs after Arafat beseeching him to return to the negotiating table displays in all its symbolism how the State Department capitulates to terrorists.

Even now with the evidence pouring in, U.S. officials refuse to point an

accusatory finger at Arafat. That explains why the administration refused to reject a UN resolution condemning Israel as the instigator of violence. All President Clinton could muster was a mealy-mouthed abstention.

Peace is possible, but it is a peace on Arafat's terms. It is a peace born of defeat. If Israel does not exist as a Jewish state, there will be tranquility. Without that eventuality there can only be violence. American utopians would be wise to appreciate this proposition. But hope does spring eternal and, after all, Clinton doesn't live in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

If this claim seems exaggerated consider that Barak was willing to grant Arafat ninety-five percent of the West Bank and even share sovereignty over the Old City of Jerusalem—concessions no other Israeli leader has made or would make since these moves could jeopardize national security. Still this was not enough for Arafat.

Should Arafat reenter negotiations, these Israeli concessions will be the starting point, not the goal. President Clinton, eager for a peace of any kind as his historical legacy, will probably urge Barak to do even more than the dangerous proposals already on the table. But the Clinton view is sheer fantasy.

The United States has a strategic role in the Middle East because of Israel. If Israel is sacrificed the countervailing force of democracy against totalitarian influence will be lost.

At the moment a false moral equivalence between Israel and the PLO has been established by Albright's State Department. There's a seeming unwillingness to recognize the profound difference between a popularly elected government that exercises control through the consent of the governed and an Arafat-led government that relies on intimidation and authoritarian influence.

Perhaps in the end no agreement can be reached. As I see it that would not be tragic. While peace—a real peace—is an honorable objective, a genuine peace is not in the offing, not now in any case. Clinton insinuated himself into Israeli politics by supporting Barak, the candidate he wanted. Yet even Clinton's man, the one who makes all the concessions, cannot give away enough to satisfy Arafat.

Israel has placed itself in a no win situation. If it attacks the terrorists, it will be censured by the United Nations; if it does nothing, the terrorists will claim victory. If Israel agrees to negotiate, Arafat will demand more. If it does not come to the negotiating table, the world community will condemn its "intransigence."

It is time for Israel to reevaluate the meaning of peace. It is time as well to ask fundamental questions about Israel's relationship to the PLO and the Arab world. Soul searching may not provide an answer, but as is noted in a famous Yiddish joke, it can't hurt. I can think of many things that will hurt.

Suspending Due Process at Columbia

It was recently reported that Columbia University had approved a set of new procedures for sexual misconduct complaints. According to reports, a panel will be established to interview the accuser, the accused and witnesses separately and then make recommendations to the dean of the college.

What is remarkable about this decision is that it violates the most rudimentary understanding of due process. Norman Siegel, executive director of the New York

Civil Liberties Union, said,

It's a no-brainer. Sexual misconduct is a serious and substantial problem, and Columbia needs to take it seriously. But due process is equally important.

Columbia officials see it differently. They contend that the due process procedures guaranteed in the courts are "not necessary to ensure a fair and effective process for handling the violations of university policies."

However, the new policy denies the accused student the very rights that are the basis for our legal code. An accused party has the right to confront his accuser, to cross-examine witnesses and to have an impartial hearing.

As Alan Kors, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, notes

The privilege of attending Columbia should not require students to give up the expectation of receiving decent treatment and fundamental fairness from all of Columbia's programs . . .

There is ample empirical evidence that unfair charges are often made. A student may have second thoughts about a sexual encounter or be embarrassed by it or eager to embarrass a suitor. False charges can have the effect of ruining a reputation and a life.

This condition explains why due process was built into the legal code and why, in the hot-house of a university campus with hormones coruscating through youthful students, it is unwise to abandon its essential features.

The Columbia policy identifies sexual misconduct as physical contact in which the lack of consent can be inferred by "the victim's mental or physical incapacity or impairment of which the perpetrator was aware or should have been aware." The words "should have been aware" jump off the page.

Are youthful lovers in the heat of passion about to ask questions about physical or mental incapacity? Should you be aware by counting alcoholic beverage consumption? I can imagine the number of people swept into purgatory through the liberal use of that expression and the inability to cross-examine an accuser.

That this assault on due process can occur without the slightest remorse is a sign that due process can be devalued for a select category of entitled victims.

In supporting the new policy, student activists wore red tape to symbolize the policy overturned. But that "red tape" turned out to be the procedures that protect fair and impartial hearings instead of witch hunts.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education has called on President George Rupp of Columbia to reverse his decision. My suspicion, however, is that a traditional understanding of due process has been subordinated to the clarion call for designated victims' rights at Columbia and probably at other campuses as well.

Here is yet another egregious example of radical feminism at play. In the febrile mind of some feminists, the mere accusation of sexual impropriety is sufficient to justify guilt. This is the equivalent of the modern lynch mob.

What remains curious, however, is not the demands of feminists, but the concessions offered by a university administration that should know better. Unfortunately the university may be in thrall to the same sensibility as radical feminists.

In the end fair play has been sacrificed to satisfy the sponsors of this radical sensibility. Where this Columbia precedent will lead is clear: the mob can suspend the fundamental character of common law for a designated victim group which in this case is female students. So much for law, fair play, due process and rational discourse.

Moral Equivalence Then and Now

During the Cold War it was customary for some analysts, literary figures and even government officials to suggest that the Soviet Union and the United States were in most respects very much alike and even when differences existed, these would be rendered nugatory by the emerging “convergence.”

Book after book, treatise after treatise made this claim. In part it was predicated on a lack of confidence in the United States and in part on an exaggerated assessment of Soviet intentions and real assets. Nonetheless, for more than four decades this was the largely undisputed position in the intellectual world’s strategic arsenal.

Should one claim U.S. superiority or, heaven forbid, a victory in the Cold War, the ghost of McCarthy would be recalled as a chastening counter claim. Intellectual heavyweights contended it was foolish and dangerous to insult Soviet leaders with the assertion that our democratic republic was superior to their dictatorship.

When the Soviet Union collapsed under its own weight, the moral equalizers disappeared or attempted to cover their tracks. Few would admit their positions were wrong and even fewer would contend “hardliners” were right. The argument evanesced without so much as a public whimper.

While the Soviet Union no longer exists on the world map and victory in the Cold War was achieved, moral equivalence continues to raise its undistinguished head as a strategic view for another part of the globe.

It is not coincidental that President Clinton rationalized the U.S. abstention of the UN declaration condemning Israel for Middle East violence by noting, “we had to remain evenhanded” in order to have some leverage in future negotiations.

To suggest that Israel and the Palestinian Authority should be seen as similar or treated in a morally similar way speaks directly to the discredited idea of a moral equivalence. How can a nation seeking peace and giving up land secured with blood be seen as similar to an authority that has promoted violence routinely and operates on the basis of intimidation?

For a variety of ethnic and religious reasons, the Palestinian Authority will find Arab allies in the Middle East. But that does not explain the attitude of Europeans and the U.S. State Department. One doesn’t have to demonize the Palestinians in order to recognize the morally superior position of the Israelis.

An essential truth is shattered by the false contention that a nation that recognizes Arabs as citizens within its borders can be equated with an authority which cannot minimally recognize the existence of an Israeli state. Yet, and here is the rub, from the *Economist* editorials to ABC News, this is precisely the contention fostered by media leaders.

Moral equivalence is the political equivalent of post-modernist conceptions of truth. If truth is solely in the eye of the beholder, an entirely relativistic idea post-modernists promote, then Israel and the Palestinian Authority can be equated. Clearly context, objectivity and dispassionate analysis of the facts aren't put into the political calculus. What you feel is what counts.

Surely these feelings are manifest in the United Nations General Assembly where anti-Israeli sentiment is a surrogate for anti-American attitudes.

Moreover, if totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are equated with democratic republics, there isn't any credit to be derived from challenging dictators. Surely Palestinians would be better off than they are at the moment with a truly representative government. Yet, curiously, Arafat has been apotheosized as the only legitimate voice of the Palestinian people.

Surely one can make arguments in behalf of any government, even the most corrupt. But at some point there is a reality that cannot be denied. How can a nation that makes concessions be equated with a regime that offers nothing but empty promises? How can the initiators of violence be equated with those who react to violence?

History is not relativistic, even though many historians may be. There are consequences associated with deception. We may be in the cauldron of Orwellian doublethink, but at some point a price will be paid for this illogic, if the price isn't already being demanded.

Moral equivalence has the faint sound of the past. But if recent events in the Middle East are any guide, it is alive and well and doing damage to American foreign policy and those who yearn for liberty. The mask that conceals truth will one day be removed. That will be yet another day of reckoning.

The Blessings of Matrimony

Do you want to live a long and healthy life? Do you seek financial rewards greater than those you have at the moment? Do you crave a fulfilling sex life? Are you seeking contentment?

If the answer to these questions is "yes," a new and powerful book has the remedy: marriage. According to Linda Waite and Maggie Gallagher in their soon-to-be-released book, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier and Better Off Financially*, the empirical evidence suggests marriage has a myriad of often overlooked rewards.

The statistical case for marriage is impressive, since it indicates that married people are better adjusted, live healthier lives, have more resources and are happier than their non-married counterparts.

One can argue with numbers but common sense would suggest the statistics

merely affirm what casual observation attests. Why then have we seen a rise in the divorce rate over the last few decades and why does it appear as if marriage as an institution is under siege?

Although Waite and Gallagher do not answer these questions directly, I think they would join me in asserting that a shift from a marriage culture to a divorce culture has had a profound effect on the nation since the 1970s.

Americans do not have the high divorce rates of the Scandinavians, but they do have a rate that has escalated significantly in thirty years, albeit the rate has leveled off recently.

Certainly no-fault divorce has contributed to this condition, but that is largely a symptom rather than a cause of the problem.

The root cause, as I see it, is the overarching preoccupation with the self that emerged in the late sixties and early seventies. "Who am I?" was a question framed in narcissistic terms by a generation weaned on affluence and self-indulgence.

One psychological study after another during this period spoke of the joys accompanying self-fulfillment and the corollary constraints imposed by traditional institutions like marriage. A new age had emerged, claimed the gurus of individual freedom, in which the barriers to actualization had to be razed like the walls of oppression.

The responsibility of fatherhood and the duties of motherhood were subordinated to the sentiment of liberation. In the process, it was argued, everyone would benefit. Unhappy couples would not have to remain together against their will, children would not be obliged to live in a home filled with tension and presumably the neurosis that afflicts society would be mitigated by newly discovered freedom of action.

It was a scenario built on the sand of naïve optimism. The detritus of the experiment has washed up on the shoreline of suburban neighborhoods. Lonely souls walk through shopping malls dreaming of a life that never emerged. The children of divorce suffer from anxiety, insecurity and terror about their own relationships now that they are adults. And the society is attempting to cope with this pathology in schools, prisons and in the workplace.

Does this mean people should never divorce? Of course not horrible marriages must and will be severed. But the evidence does indicate that a cultural shift insufficiently thought through created an environment where the ease of divorce had deleterious consequences that were largely unanticipated.

Moreover, as the Waite-Gallagher book notes, the benefits of marriage were glossed over, alas are probably still glossed over. Hollywood and television fare treat marriage as if it is merely one of many equally acceptable relationships. The cohabiting couple or the divorced parent invariably lead lives in media fantasyland as normal and fulfilling as married couples.

The reality, of course, is different. It takes courage to say this in a culture that has legitimated divorce, but marriage is an institution that generally works more effectively than its detractors will admit and divorce has effects that are far more insidious than the obvious ones.

All marriages go through difficult periods when one or both mates want to leave. Yet the evidence suggests that if they stay together the likelihood is at some point the marriage will improve.

In a climate in which divorce is made easy and expectation for some form of perfection in marriage exists, the “difficult patch” can easily become a route to divorce court.

Waite and Gallagher contend those who exercise this option should also consider what they are giving up. There isn't a map available that takes you to nirvana. Certainly the self-actualization express ended up at despair station.

Those who fight to keep their marriages intact may learn there are unexpected blessings to matrimony. Marriage may not be a perfect institution—perhaps the search for perfection should be constrained by reality—but it is better than all the alternatives.



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