

Reflections of a Diaspora Jew on Zionism, Israel and America

Let me begin by saying how honored I am to be invited to this podium by the Zionist Organization of America and Mort Klein, its courageous leader. For decades Mort Klein and the ZOA have stood on the frontline defending the state of Israel and American Jews, and they are doing it now in what is certainly one of the darker periods for the Jewish people—darker all over the world—in our 5,000-year history. I applaud you for supporting Mort Klein and his team. I am touched by the recognition of an organization like this for the modest work I have done in behalf of Israel and the Jewish people.

Still, there is a paradox at the heart of this honor awarded me by the Zionist Organization of America, which will take me a moment to explain. It is true that I am widely attacked by anti-Semites and Jew-haters and the enemies of Israel as a Zionist—and an arch Zionist at that. I have been called variously a Zionist Jew, an “Israel Firster Zionist Jew,” “a rabid Zionist” (by Julian Assange no less), a “radical right-wing Zionist,” an “extreme Zionist,” an “extremist Zionist stalwart,” an “un-repentant Zionist,” an “ultra Zionist” and, inevitably, “a Nazi with a Zionist face.”

Today, anti-Zionism is the cause of Jew-haters and anti-Semites the world over, and for Jews embarrassed by the fact that they *are* Jews and that others fear and despise them for that reason. Even the rare Jewish magazine of the left that is actually a sup-

Speech given before the Zionist Organization of America, September 6, 2012

porter of Israel, is uncomfortable with the connotations of the Zionist label, and with what it means for Jews to defend themselves. In a recent unflattering profile, *Tablet* magazine described me as touring the country "making the case for a *muscular* Zionism."

I plead guilty to this charge. I plead guilty though I have never actually been a Zionist, or made a case for Zionism in the sense that Herzl and traditional Zionists understand it. Yes, I want muscular Jews and a muscular Israel. I want Jews proud of the extraordinary nation-state Jews created in 1948 out of the ruins of the Ottoman Empire. I want Jews who are armed, and Jews who will defend themselves with arms if necessary. Muscular in every way. Yes.

I want more than just *individual* Jews armed. I want a Jewish nation-state possessing in its arsenal the most advanced modern weapons available, a state that can be counted on to defend Jews from their global enemies, and particularly from their enemies in the Muslim world who are legion and who have sworn our destruction, and who are openly planning to complete the job that Hitler started. I want a Jewish state, armed to the teeth, because Islamic Nazis, who are the storm troopers of a second Holocaust, are already mobilized, and because—as we discovered during the first Holocaust—there are not enough non-Jews in the world who are willing and prepared to defend us.

I am glad that Israel exists. I am glad that there is a country that will preserve Jewish culture, and be a model to the world of what Jews can do when they are given the chance. Today Israel is per capita the world's leading scientific and technological innovator and contributor to human advancement. As a Jew I am proud of that.

I am also thrilled that in the creation of Israel Jews have regained their birthright. After 2,000 years of exile, the oldest surviving indigenous people in the world has won the right to some of its stolen homeland. I look forward to the day when Judea and Samaria, the historic centers of Judaism become part of the Jewish homeland as well.

That homeland is now occupied by Palestinian Arabs who are at war with Israel, who have proclaimed their Jew-hatred to the world, and who have forfeited any right to the territories by conducting five unprovoked, armed aggressions against the Jewish state. The official policy of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank is to make Jerusalem and the entire region of Palestine *Judenrein*. No other country in the world is expected to suffer such genocidal assaults without securing borders that are defensible, and Israel should not be expected to either.

Nonetheless, there is a paradox in this honor given to me, a Jew who has never been to Israel and who has never considered himself a Zionist in the sense that its founders intended. Theodore Herzl and his followers embraced the Zionist idea because they believed that the creation of a Jewish nation would provide a solution to the "Jewish Question"—the fact that Jews had been a homeless people for nearly two thousand years and were ghettoized and persecuted in the alien lands to which they were driven.

Herzl's Zionist idea was grounded in the belief that the establishment of a Jewish state on Jewish land would finally "normalize" the Jewish people and end their persecution. The Zionist idea was that by including Jews among the nations, Jews would become like other peoples—that their inclusion would finally "solve" the Jewish problem. That was the meaning of Zionism as Herzl understood it, and indeed as it was understood until the Holocaust and the actual creation of the Jewish state.

But Herzl's dream proved to be a fairy tale, as delusional in its way as the dreams of socialism, communism and progressivism, whose believers hoped would provide solutions to the conflicts and sufferings that blight our human state. All these isms took hold in the 19th century, and became forms of modern faith. The traditional religions they supplanted had trusted in a Divinity for such a solution, but were forced into retreat before the advance of Darwinian theory and modern scientific developments. All the messianic visions of the modern age were driven by the desire for an earthly redemption that would resolve our human dilemmas

and achieve what the heavenly redemption could no longer convincingly offer.¹

Among these fantasies of a better world than the one we inherited, Zionism was the most conservative, and the most practical. The quest for a socially just future is based on no human reality but on the expectation of a human miracle, a transformation of who we are and what we have been into something wonderfully different. Zionism by contrast was based on the experience of actual peoples who had already taken their place among the nations. It was a quest for normality. Not for a world transformation but for an integration into the existing world of others.

But even this modest hope of the Jews has proved an impossible dream. It is true that half of Herzl's goal has been realized, and in an astounding way. Yet its very realization has proved the hope that inspired it to be a folly. By all standards of civilization and modernity Israel should be admired and emulated by the rest of the world. Instead, the Jewish state is hated and is a pariah among the nations, just as Jews themselves are pariahs in most of the world outside America today.

Far from creating a refuge, Israel has become the focal point of all the genocidal intentions against the Jews, which have never been more overt or more global. Today Israel is the site of a Holocaust for which the Islamic world openly yearns, and which the rest of the world—with the possible exceptions of America and Canada—will not lift a finger to prevent. This sobering reality has changed the meaning of Zionism, and has made it a more comfortable fit for me. Call it the Zionism of Survival.

In the household I grew up in, I was not brought up to be a Zionist because my parents were Marxist progressives who looked to a socialist future to provide an earthly salvation, and an end to the persecution of the Jews. My parents and their comrades believed that mankind's conflicts would be resolved by a universal

¹This is the subject of my book, *A Point in Time: The Search for Redemption in This Life and the Next*, 2011.

class whose revolution would abolish all nations and unite all peoples, and thus remove the distinctions that made them Jews.

My realization that this was not going to happen occurred through my relationship with a Marxist mentor named Isaac Deutscher. Deutscher had written a book called *The Non-Jewish Jew*, by which he meant Marxists like us—Jews who were of Judaism but not in it. By the time I came under his influence in the 1960s, he had become a defender of Israel and had been one since the Second World War. Deutscher viewed Israel as a “raft-state”—a refuge that Jews could cling to after they had been shipwrecked in the storms that periodically engulfed them. The particular storm he was referring to was Hitler’s “Final Solution.”

During the interwar years, a debate had raged in Europe’s left-wing circles, which carried momentous consequences for those who participated in it. The debate was about how Jews should respond to the looming fascist threat. The Zionists were urging Jews to flee the continent and take refuge in the Palestine Mandate. Marxists like Deutscher argued that the Jews should stay in Europe and fight for the socialist revolution. But as Deutscher ruefully acknowledged later, the Jews who listened to the Zionists were still alive, while those who listened to Marxists like him were dead.

Under Deutscher’s influence, I became a quasi-Zionist, a believer in the raft state. Israel should exist and be defended until the socialist transformation abolished nation-states and solved the problem of the Jews once and for all.

Don’t think for a moment that this is some quaint Marxist delusion now consigned to the historical dustbin. The idea of a world without borders is alive and well in the international left and among liberals and progressives in America. It is the idea that animates the Democratic Party’s attacks on American sovereignty, and it is a vision whose intellectual leaders are Jews.

One of its canonical articles is called “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism”—for the latter and against the former. It was written by Harvard philosopher Martha Nussbaum. According to

Nussbaum, the cosmopolitan ideal which progressive people should aspire to is "the person whose primary allegiance is to the community of human beings in the entire world." This attitude—that we are not Jews or Americans but "citizens of the world"—explains why people on the left are so uncomfortable with—or simply hostile to—issues of national security and patriotism. It explains why progressive Jews can be indifferent to the survival of the Jewish state.

Even as I absorbed Deutscher's lesson about the raft state, my belief in the progressive fantasy was rapidly eroding. I had begun to doubt the possibility of a redeemed future, a future fundamentally different from those with which we were historically familiar. As these doubts grew, they were changing my view of the unredeemed present. By the middle of the next decade I no longer believed in a new world order. This had immediate and profound consequences for my attitude towards Israel and my identity as a Jew, and as an American as well.

There was not going to be a future in which there were no longer nations or peoples in conflict; there was not going to be a future in which Jews would cease to be the objects of envy and resentment, and virulent hatred. There was not going to be a future in which a refuge—a raft-state—was no longer useful.

Then came 9/11 and the Islamic attack on the World Trade Center. It was an event that made millions of people aware of the Islamist movement in the Muslim world and the fact that they were conducting a holy war against infidels in general, and Jews in particular. The incubator and leading force of this holy war is the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization founded by an admirer of Hitler and a godfather of the call to push the Jews of Palestine into the sea. Today, the spiritual leader of the Brotherhood is the Egyptian imam, Yusef al-Qaradawi, who has publicly prayed that the Muslim believers will finish the job that Hitler started.

Millions of Jews are in denial when it comes to the determination of Islamists to kill them. In part, this denial is psychological and familiar as when people face a prospect that is too terrible to contem-

plate. There are a billion-and-a-half Muslims in the world today who worship a prophet who has told them that "the day of redemption will only come when Muslims fight the Jews and kill them, when the Jews hide behind the rocks and the trees, and the rocks and the trees cry out, 'Oh Muslim, there is a Jew hiding behind me. Come and kill him.'" For a billion-and-a-half Muslims that is the word of God. Denial is one convenient way of dealing with this fact.

This particular death-warrant for the Jews can be found on the official website of the University of Southern California, where it was placed by the Muslim Students Union, which is a front for the Muslim Brotherhood. When I asked a leader at the Wiesenthal Center to demand that this genocidal incitement be removed, his initial response was, "But it's a religious statement." Well, yes, but it is also a summons to kill the Jews. Such is the force of denial.

One of the chief instruments of the Muslim Brotherhood is the Muslim Students Association, which sponsors "Israeli Apartheid Weeks" at universities across America and throughout the western world calling for Israel's destruction. Muslim Students Association members chant "Palestine will be free from the river to the sea"—that is from the eastern boundary of Israel to the western one. It is a call for the liquidation of the Jewish state *because* it is Jewish. Yet all across America, campus rabbis hold ecumenical dialogues with the Muslim Students Association, and defend it against its critics.

I have traveled to many universities to oppose these Jew-haters, and everywhere I go I am protested against and defamed by the Muslim Students Association and by their Jewish enablers. I have met with numerous campus rabbis and asked them to set conditions for their ecumenical outreach: first, that their Muslim counterparts desist from sponsoring Israeli Apartheid Weeks, and denounce those who conduct them; and second, that they only hold dialogues with people who publicly support the right of a Jewish state to exist in the Middle East.

For these efforts I have been attacked by Hillel rabbis at Yale, the University of North Carolina, the University of California

Santa Barbara, and the University of Florida, and by Hillel student leaders at the University of Pennsylvania and other schools. For voicing these concerns, I have been called a bigot, a racist and an "Islamophobe," which is a smear invented by the Muslim Brotherhood to silence its critics.

Last year I published a full-page ad in the *Yale Daily News* whose headline read: "The Palestinian Case Against Israel Is Based on a Genocidal Lie." The genocidal lie is the claim that all of Israel—or any of Israel—is occupied Arab land. It is a claim used to justify all of the murderous acts committed against the Jews of Israel. In fact, Israel was created out of the ruins of the Turkish Empire, as were Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. The Turks are not Arabs, and Israel does not occupy any Arab land.

The Middle East conflict is not about land or a Palestinian state. It is a 60-year war of aggression first by the Arab League and then by Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims to destroy the Jewish state and push the Jews into the sea. This war is now a religious war, an expression of Islamic Nazism.

To be perfectly clear, I am not referring to all Muslims as Nazis. I am referring to the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic forces now ascendant in Egypt and the Middle East who are actively promoting a second genocide of the Jews, along with their supporters in America and their secular allies on the political left.

When my ad about the Palestinian lie appeared in the Yale paper, the Slifka Center, the focus of Jewish life on campus, was outraged. They were *not* outraged by the Palestinian lie but by my ad, which told the truth. They were outraged because the truth offended the Muslim Students Association, with whom they wished to be friends. To counter my ad the Slifka Center published its own full-page statement. It affirmed the Slifka Center's "respect"—and I quote their words—"for the Muslim Students Association, which does not spread hateful lies about Israel."

The Slifka statement then attacked my ad as the purveyor of "hateful ideas," which it said would "lead to tragic rifts between the Jewish and Muslim communities," as though campuses across

the country were not already reverberating to the chants of "Palestine will be free from the river to the sea," or as though Muslim masses were not already chanting "death to Israel" at the call of Hizbollah and Hamas and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Having made its commitments clear, the Slifka ad then invited students to an evening with the Ground Zero Mosque imam, Feisal Abdul Rauf, hosted by Slifka Center director James Ponet, the celebrity rabbi who officiated at Chelsea Clinton's wedding.

The suicidal tendencies of the intended victims of Islamic supremacy are tragically familiar. They recall the sad delusions of members of the *Judenräte*—the Jewish Councils in the Nazi ghettos—who organized the Jews for Hitler's death camps, while pretending to themselves that the Germans were too civilized to kill them.

Delusions about Islamic Nazis are hardly confined to Jews, however. In the eyes of the Islamic fanatics, Israel may be the "Little Satan" but America is "The Great Satan," the arch demon that must be destroyed in the name of Allah. In his *fatwas* Osama bin Laden identified Islam's enemies as "Jews and Crusaders," America being Christian and therefore the "Crusader Nation." Every Islamist leader and organization from Ahmadinejad to Qaradawi, from the Muslim Brotherhood to Hizbollah and Hamas has promised death to Israel and America as the necessary means to their malignant ends.

Meanwhile, the Crusaders—like the Jews—are asleep. It is an old story. Just before the Second World War, Whittaker Chambers, a Communist defector, attempted to warn Roosevelt that a White House advisor named Alger Hiss was a Soviet agent and that his administration had been penetrated by Communist operatives. When Roosevelt was informed of Chambers' charges he laughed and dismissed them. Hiss then accompanied Roosevelt to Yalta where he helped conclude the deal that delivered Eastern Europe to the Soviet Empire and triggered the Cold War.

Here is a story that may prove worse than that of Alger Hiss. In a series of foreign-policy disasters the Obama Administration has

assisted the Muslim Brotherhood in transforming the Arab Spring in the Middle East into an Islamist winter, beginning with the toppling of an allied regime in Egypt and the accession to power of the Muslim Brotherhood, and its expansion throughout the region. In August, the new Egyptian president sacked his military commanders, abrogated the Constitution, and assumed dictatorial powers greater than those possessed by his predecessor, transforming Egypt into an Islamist state. Opponents of the dictatorship were crucified—literally nailed to crosses—in front of the government headquarters. It was the Brotherhood's way of dramatizing its intentions to turn Egypt into a medieval totalitarian state.

This was exactly what the American State Department had assured the world the Muslim Brotherhood would not do as it paved the way for the Brotherhood's accession to power. The intelligence chief of the Obama White House had officially described the Muslim Brotherhood as a "moderate" and "secular" organization, which had embraced democratic and constitutional government.

The betrayal of these promises, and the violation of every principle the American government claimed to be supporting in the Middle East's most important state, took place without a word of protest from the American government or the American Secretary of State.

As it happens the chief adviser on Muslim affairs to the American Secretary of State is Huma Abedin, one of whose mentors was the Nazi imam, Yusef Qaradawi. Abedin is an operative for the Muslim Brotherhood and a lifelong servant of its agendas. In the twelve years directly proceeding her hiring by the U.S. Government, where she became deputy chief of staff to Hillary Clinton, Abedin worked for Abdullah Omar Naseef, one of the principal financiers of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda, and a Muslim Brotherhood eminence. Huma Abedin's mother and brother are Muslim Brotherhood leaders, as was Huma's father.

In its work for the Brotherhood, the Abedin family was specifically tasked with running Abdullah Omar Naseef's *jihad* operation, the Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs. The title sounds

innocuous enough until you understand that the express goal of the Institute is to transform the Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries into Muslim majorities as part of the Islamic *jiḥād*, with the express intent of creating Islamic states—in short, to conquer those countries for totalitarian Islam. To accomplish this goal Muslim minorities must be prevented from assimilating into non-Muslim societies and also be indoctrinated in Islamic supremacist ideas. That was and is the mission of the Abedin family. In addition to the network of Saudi-funded mosques in target countries like the United States, the chief organizations for accomplishing this goal are the Muslim Students Association, on whose Executive Board Huma Abedin served, and its offshoot, the Islamic Society of North America, which is now the principal source of advice on Muslim affairs for the Obama administration.

In other words, at the right hand of the American Secretary of State and the center of American foreign policy, is a woman whose family-members are leaders of what the Muslim Brotherhood calls its “grand *jiḥād*”—its plan to infiltrate non-Muslim societies and “destroy the Western civilization from within”—in those exact words. And what people do these *jiḥādists* regard as the chief obstacle to their sinister designs? The Jews.

In the words of their own manifesto: “The greatest challenge that faces Muslims in America and Canada are the Jews, who take advantage of their material ability and their media to distort the image of Islam and Muslims thereby spreading lies in the minds of the people of these countries.” The Jews also “serve Zionist interests in the Arab regions.”

In the hands of the Islamists and their allies, Zionism has become the name of all the opponents of Islamist supremacy and its holy war against infidels, against Jews and Christians, Israel and the United States. Americans and Israelis, Jews and Christians have their backs to the same wall. One cannot be defended without defending the other. Supporters of freedom are all Zionists now. And that includes me. That is the way this war of the civilizations, or—as I prefer it—this war between Islamist barbarism

and civilization, will continue until it is finally concluded, and the next conflict begins.

I say this because, as a conservative, I understand that conflicts are endless and these battles are without end. To be a conservative is first to understand that there is no solution to the dilemmas of the human condition. Second, it is to understand that to escape these dilemmas, human beings will inevitably embark on desperate quests for redemptions in this life. These redemptions, in turn, will require holy wars to purge the world of demons—of those who do not share their faith, and who stand in their way. In this regard, totalitarian Islam is really no different in its heart from totalitarian socialism or progressivism, even though the latter are secular and the former is pursued in the name of a vengeful and malignant God. Both seek to cleanse mankind of its irreparable imperfections.

To remain free beings, we are continually forced to defend ourselves and our breathing space, against the efforts of the redeemers to perfect us—against the armies of the saints who are determined to make the world a better place than it can ever be. That is how I see the political wars we face, and why they will never end.

On a personal level, and to answer the question I raised at the beginning of this talk about my identity: I am comfortable being a Diaspora Jew, both in this present struggle with the enemies of America and Israel, and beyond. Diaspora is the name of our Jewish exile, but exile is also the name of our human condition. We are thrust into this life, and remain here for a while, and then we are gone. If there is a home for us that is truly permanent, it is not of this time or of this place.

My country, America, and the country of my people, Israel, share a common destiny. They are the gathering-places of exiles, of those who understand better than others that we have no permanent abode in this world. It is because of this that we cherish the freedoms and the homes we do have, and we are not afraid to fight for them.
