

Mr. Stephen S. Rosenfeld, Deputy Editor, Ed Page
The Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

11/23/91

Dear Mr. Rosenfeld,

I appreciate your taking time for response to my letter and for expansion of the views you and the Post expressed. When I received your letter I highlighted it to draw my attention to what I wanted to address. This included some of what you say on which we agree and some on which we are close. But I'm not physically up to that now, weaker and more tired from new physical therapy.

Perhaps I can focus my thinking and ask you to think about the oft-ignored words of the UN resolutions, for the State of Israel to live in peace within secure borders.

We would, of course, have to define what we mean by peace. I mean secure from terrorism, which is possible only because the Muslim states want to support it. I mean also with intended and assured peace with the entire Muslim world, not just those states nearest Israel. I mean also outside Israel's borders, for Israelis anywhere, officials or others.

This is a simplification and omits much but without it there is no peace for Israel, not meaningful peace, not what most other states and their people have.

It is in the sense of meaningful peace for Israel that I quote your sentence, "I guess it comes down to a question of whether one finds sufficient evidence, by word or deed, feel or ~~xxxx~~ what have you, that the Arabs can join the modern world."

With all Arabs (and for there to be meaningful peace for Israel Iran has to be included) so deeply divided, some so determinedly opposed to even recognition of the existence of the State of Israel, can there be any meaningful, any dependable word? (We have seen no deeds when an intent to achieve peace requires at the least such a gesture.)

Suppose that the Arab states closest to Israel were to agree to an acceptable peace agreement (and I think it is wishful thinking to believe that Syria will), does that mean real peace for it? With what Saddam has done and has been saying, with the Saudis looking for still more long-range means of devastating Israel? With Iran still clamoring for a holy war of extermination? With Saddams' record, past and present, even after his terrible defeat? With all the trained, equipped, financed and ~~deter~~ determined terrorist gangs?

These are, I believe, among the most basic considerations in determining whether a meaningful and secure peace is presently possible for Israel. I do not recall that the Post has addressed them for its readers, particularly those in positions of influence. There has been, to the best of my recollection, a virtually total Post avoidance of this.

Has the Bush administration, which has been forcing the issue, offered any assurances that meaningful peace is now possible? Has it even indicated what it would do to see to it that any agreement reached means security and peace for Israel? It cannot and it does not/

I think that in not addressing these most basic considerations the Post fails to meet

its obligations as the great power it is. I think also that the administration is well aware of the fact that no meaningful peace is now possible yet it persists for its own reasons in the pretense that it is and in a manner designed to make it appear that if there is no peace that will be Israel's fault.

This alone - and it is far from alone - assures that at the very least the Arabs will take full advantage of U.S. partisanship in its favor and again at the least will insist on conditions that mean there can and will be no real peace for Israel.

The Post should be the little boy telling the emperor he is naked but instead it praises the beauty of his raiment.

Going back to your sentence that I quote, "that Arabs can join the modern world," can there be any real peace for Israel until they do? I take it that you mean to include becoming democratic because surely you can see that while they remain among the world's most terrible dictatorships they won't change in any meaningful way and any "word" from them has no worth or dependability at all.

And until they do, how many of them do you really believe want a democratic state whose people enjoy real freedom and which, regardless of the party in power, demonstrates real concerns for the welfare of its people, to be an example for their own unfree people?

Again in simplification but I think appropriately, how does this Bush campaign differ in any meaningful way from Chamberlain's World War II record? Need I remind you of what happened to Czechoslovakia when it depended on its assistance treaty with France and the USSR? Or of so much in history's record that cries out that this cannot and will not work?

You refer to "sufficient evidence, by word," and I ask you why there has been none if the Arabs really do want to achieve peace? Why has not a single Arab state made the simple gesture of ending the technical state of war all have preserved and thus taken a step toward peace? Why has not the PLO changed its charter, which still calls for wiping Israel out, if it intends for Israel to be a state of people living in peace?

None would lose anything or give up anything if they did. But all know that they'd risk assassination, among other things. There is a clear record on this, too.

So, still again, how can there be meaningful peace and security for Israel now?

I did not mean that the Post alone could make another Holocaust possible. I meant that by what I regard as its abdications it is part of what can have this frightful consequence. The Post is now part of what amounts to a world-wide campaign against Israel, to force it into what it cannot survive. In this sense, I do see a still another of the many holocausts of Jewish history is again possible.

You referred to Israel's military power, and it is great for so small a country. But does it now begin to compare with that of the Muslim world so united against it and still at war with it? How much less than a Holocaust do you think there would be after an attack where the border is as little as nine miles from the sea, when so great a proportion of the

population is within easy artillery range? What do you think the result would be if portable CBW devices were infiltrated into Israel, not at all an impossibility, and then used?

Why else do Iraq and Iran call openly for a holy war to exterminate Israel, with so often a repetition by the mullahs elsewhere?

But even if the closest Arab states were to do what I regard as impossible, agree to the existence of Israel within secure borders and at peace, how can they give this any meaning for the large part of Israel only nine or a few miles wider?

The world also applies standards to Israel it applies nowhere else. Quite aside from what the Post never reports, that more than three-quarters of Palestine does exist as an Arab state and when it was created there was the understanding that the fraction that remained would be a Jewish state, is there any clamor for the return of East Prussia to Germany? Or for Russia to return what it took from Poland after World War II? These are only a few of the many illustrations.

But what country today does not demand that Israel give up the small territory that aside from being essential to its survival is also the land from which all Jews spring?

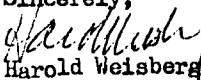
As throughout history has been true, what countries demand and have for themselves they deny Jews.

You conclude expressing the ~~is~~ hope that "the Israeli Government's policy... succeeds." I take it that you intended limiting this to its participation ⁱⁿ what Bush and Baker have dragged it into, the illusion of achievable peace now. I think you do not intend its broader policy. ^{With} ~~Without~~ out that, without control over what I also think of as Judea and Samaria, non-practising Jew that I am, I am absolutely convinced that any peace agreement coming from this present process is a sham and a delusion and that if by any chance Shamir is forced to accept it, the possibility of another Holocaust does exist. As does responsibility for it.

I repeat that I am not for either Shamir or his Likud. That on this one matter I agree with him, my belief long before he took power, ~~that~~ does not make me his partisan any more than my agreement that Nixon did a fine thing in his China opening means I was what I never was, a Nixonian.

Probably before you were born I went around with a JNF pishka and for kids won first prize for the State of Delaware, My interest in those Jews who want it having their own homeland goes that far back. Now, having lived through as much of the world's history as I have and remember ^{INC} as much of it as I do, I still want that - but as a reality, not an illusion contrived by others for their own purposes.

I wish your letter had given me some reason, no matter how slight, to believe that now this is only an illusion.

Sincerely,

 Harold Weisberg

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STEPHEN S. ROSENFELD
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November 15, 1991

Mr. Harold Weisberg
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Dear Mr. Weisberg,

I read your letter carefully. For some years I have been puzzling over how to respond to people - Americans and Israelis - who consult their fears - which are my fears - more than their hopes. I could say, after you deem me unrealistic and (implicitly) naive, that you are unrealistic and overwhelmed by history, but that answer does not satisfy me and I don't suppose it will satisfy you. The view that you attribute to me of (mindlessly) conveying administration "propaganda" is, as doubtless you know, the view of perhaps half the Israeli population. I would be equally justified in suggesting that you are talking Likud "propaganda" - an offensive word, Mr. Weisberg. But of course - and I try to consider this - you could be right.

We have very different ideas of who the Arabs are and whether they are capable of modernizing their views and, even more, their societies. These are differences which are the familiar stuff of debate in Israel but, unfortunately, not so familiar here. I guess it comes down to the question of whether one finds sufficient evidence, by word, deed, feel or what have you, that Arabs can join the modern world. I have long been impressed by the example of Egypt, previously thought to be beyond compromise and change. I talk to many Palestinians and other Arabs on a regular basis, and to many Israelis, and I observe the evolution of the thinking, in different degrees, of many of them, Israelis as well as Arabs.

I read again your suggestion that my and the newspaper's words might make another Holocaust possible - a very grave thing to charge. I do not doubt that this represents your considered view, but frankly, it puts your thinking utterly beyond my reach or reply. I fear that any reassurance I offered you would be received as evidence of my fundamental inability to cope with your allegation. It strikes me, however, that your concern about my views must be very small next to your concern about Shamir's, Likud's and Israel's, who - all of them - are proceeding on a path which I commend. Your objection is not so much to my position as to the Israeli government's policy, for all I have said is that I hope that policy succeeds.

Sincerely,

