

Mr. Colman McCarthy
Washington Post
1150 15 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20071

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21701
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Dear Mr McCarthy,

The caption on your today's column, "Ideally, Israel Should Not Have Changed," states the reality entirely missing from your column, in which you intellectualize without any contact with the realities of Israel's situation today.

It is not easy for me to say that I see no real alternative for Israel because I was a pacifist during the Great Depression and opposed even compulsory ROTC, which cost me my degree, and because I dislike Shamir, his government and what he has stood for and much of what he has done.

You cite Michael Lerner's call, "negotiate now," and you say "to negotiate requires a spirit of introspection." Above all, negotiation requires a partner willing and able to keep his word and there is no partner and no combination of powers whose word can mean anything to Israel and to its security, if not its continued existence.

You say that "to 'drive Israel into the sea'" is no longer a "credible" Arab objective and you say this in the face of the fact that every one of the Islamic ~~most~~ countries except Egypt insists on remaining in a state of war with Israel and that, despite Arafat's false pretenses, it remains the objective stated in the PLO's charter.

If you read what Arafat was finally able to mumble about recognizing the State of Israel, he did no such thing, however much our State Department seized on his mumbles. He spoke only in terms of "peoples" and he did not pledge the security of the State of Israel.

Had he it would have meant nothing and to underscore this, from the best information available, to show that his word meant nothing, we had that passenger plane bombed in midair by those who oppose his leadership. Indeed, his own gangs violated his pledge of no assaults on Israel promptly and were caught at it.

But even if Arafat wanted to and was able to control those who oppose him, and of those groups one has been responsible for almost a thousand bloody acts of international

terrorism including the bombing of airports, piracy on the high seas, the burning of a Greek ferry and acts of religious terrorism, all having nothing to do with the State of Israel, how can he control the more than 20 Islamic powers that insist on being in a state of war with Israel?

How can he control Iraq, with its history and its manufacture and use, even against its own people, of chemical/bacteriological warfare *memo?*

Or Saudi Arabia, which now has ~~planned~~ warplanes with a range that puts even Greece within their striking capability?

Or Libya and its now established intent to engage in CBW and its well-established intent to wipe Israel off the face of the earth?

And so much more like this, the reality Israel faces today and will face for years.

Particularly, how can Arafat, if of good purpose, or Israel control Syria and its military capabilities and all the anti-Israel activity for which it is responsible, ranging ^{from} support of terrorism to wholesale inflammation of the Islamic world by such incitations as the Czarist forgeries, "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion?"

It is a fact that the really small country of Israel is surrounded on land ^{only} by countries at a state of war with it, ^{They} and ~~which~~ have permitted the use of their land for military operations and terrorism against Israel, ^{and have far-financed them.}

It is a fact that at some points Israel is not even ten miles wide. This puts ^{much of} it within range of today's hand-held artillery - to be fired ^{with immunity} from countries that have insisted on war and a state of war with it for its entire ~~life~~ life.

Would you want to live that way, under that threat?

And if these Islamic ^{powers do} powers ~~do~~ did not want to "drive Israel into the sea" why do they persist in refusing peace?

Of the original Palestine territory, more than 70 percent is and has been an Arab state. Going back as far as the British 1937 Peel Commission Jews were willing to sign an agreement to limit the State of Israel to only about 10 percent of what remained of Palestine after Trans-Jordan, an Arab state, was established. From then until now

each and every proposal to end the war and ~~established~~ ^{negotiate} an agreement in which Arabs ^{except Sadat} recognized a State of Israel was rejected by all of Islam. This includes the UN's plan and even Israel's offers of even more concessions of land.

Now there is the pretense of an ^{assurance} agreement that does not exist and would mean nothing if it did because there is no partner with whom Israel can negotiate and none who can hope to survive negotiating the existence of a State of Israel. Remember what happened to Abdullah when it was only suspected that he would negotiate and with Sadat, who did negotiate, who did recognize Israel, and who did get himself assassinated.

For years PLO elements have been assassinating those who even talk to Israelis in Europe and some of those gangs have even been assassinating their own defected members and those they only suspect of abandoning violence ^{and terrorism against Israel}.

Your caption is correct, "Ideally, Israel Shouldn't Have Changed," but ~~the~~ reality over which Israel had no control did force these changes neither of us likes ⁶ But ~~and~~ you ignore all the awful reality only a fraction of which I cite.

You think otherwise but I think the views you express look to another holocaust.

Have you any notion of how many of them Jews somehow have ^{lived through} ~~lived through~~ Including "ohammed's"?

You have an emotional attachment because trees were planted in your name. Much earlier than that I had my first emotional attachment when as a boy in the early 1920s I won first prize for the State of Delaware for collections for the Jewish National Fund, to buy the land in which your trees might be planted.

I have another emotional attachment: I am the first member of my family no matter how far back you go ever to be born into freedom. This is not the history of most Jews and for those who want to live where we all came from I want as close an approximation of what I was born with for them. They can't get it from Islam today. Islam today remains pledged to the opposite. Arafat neither intends it nor can he assure it if he so wanted.

You have not faced the ugly realities of survival for Israel. Instead you have theorized, intellectualize and engaged in bashing of ^{it} ~~so~~ (small) a nation to ^{whose existence} which so large a part of the entire world objects and wants to wipe out. ^{and has tried often enough.}

I was a pacifist at the time of the Oxford Pledge and was willing to pay that cost. I also was a soldier in World War II because Hitler ended the possibility of pacifism, because Hitler was a reality to be faced. I could not be a pacifist when we were at war with Hitler. And although ideally, Israel should not have changed, realities for which we all are responsible forced those changes and they are the cost of Israel's survival.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg
Harold Weisberg

~~P.S. I am not a practicing Jew.~~
practising

I do not practise the religion but I try to live a Jewish life, ~~by that~~ that of Jewish tradition.

I would dearly love the world to be different but it isn't.

W. Paul
2/26/28

COLMAN McCARTHY

Ideally, Israel Shouldn't Have Changed

Somewhere in Israel a few trees planted for me are growing. So are thousands more planted for other Americans. In 1979, a friend—a believing Jew active in his synagogue as a teacher of Hebrew history—sent a check in my name to Trees for Israel, a fund-raising program.

A decade ago that small link to Israel meant much to me. It still does. But the Israel of 1989 is far less the land of ideals, honor and hope than the Israel of 10 years ago.

Exactly how much less was revealed by the State Department annual report on human rights. In 1988, 366 Palestinians were killed and more than 20,000 injured or wounded by Israeli troops. In understated prose, the report says, "Soldiers frequently used gunfire in situations that did not present mortal danger to troops, causing many avoidable deaths and injuries."

The troops "used clubs to break limbs and beat Palestinians who were not directly involved in disturbances or resisting arrest . . . At least 13 Palestinians have been reported to have died from beatings." All of that, plus tear-gassings, demolishing homes

classically been called 'noncooperation.' The Israelis treat any kind of resistance as though it were an assault on national security, making little distinction between a youth throwing a stone and a merchant closing a shop for a boycott, or even civil rights workers or journalists trying to gather information. Any kind of resistance to Israeli rule is seen as hostile action justifying extreme forms of violent repression."

That the tactics of the current resistance are more aligned with Mahatma Gandhi than Yasser Arafat is one reason that support for the Israeli military is eroding among many American Jews. These are the liberals, progressives and intellectuals who are able to separate traditional Jewish values that are humane from current Israeli policies that are brutal, a distinction either ignored or deliberately repressed by many old-line U.S. Jewish groups.

The new-line ones are turning their backs or closing their wallets to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the American Jewish Committee and other graying cautionaries. They have moved away from Commentary