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Here Is the Truth About What's Happening in Gaza



By Yossi Kuperwasser

The hostile activities carried out by Hamas and other Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip should be interpreted on three levels. Unfortunately, many conflate and obfuscate the complexity surrounding the issue by combining them.

First, the “March of Return” should be seen for its real purpose: It is a declaration by the Palestinians that they are not ready to change the goals of their struggle — namely the annihilation of Israel and its replacement with a Palestinian state.

After all, that is the meaning of the word “return” in this context. The fact that many Palestinians in Gaza view this as their *raison d'être* can be seen by their ongoing attempts to strike Israel and infiltrate its borders, even after Israel entirely withdrew from Gaza in 2005. The opportunity to turn Gaza into a Singapore — as some naïve people were expecting — never materialized, because most Palestinians were more interested in the battle against Israel than having better living standards for themselves.

The first response to the March must be a reality check for the Palestinian people. They do not have the right to “return” and destroy Israel, and they *will not* be permitted to return and destroy Israel.

It is amazing to see how *The New York Times* gave space in its op-ed pages to Fadi Abu Shammalah, who declared that he is participating in the march to return and annihilate Israel.

It is also difficult to explain the logic behind *The Forward's* Peter Beinart, who wrote in his column “American Jews Have Abandoned Gaza—and the Truth”:

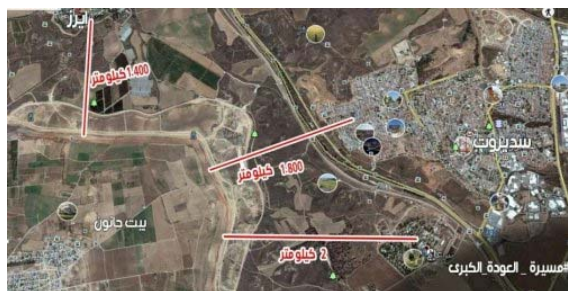
Israeli and American Jews find it frightening that the Gaza protesters have labeled their demonstration “The Great March of Return.” But surely Jews, who prayed for 2,000 years to return to the land from which we were exiled, can understand why Palestinians in Gaza might yearn for lands from which they were exiled a mere 70 years ago.

But we should remind ourselves that those people who claim they want to “return” are not refugees. They are Palestinians living in Palestinian territory under a Palestinian government that denies them the ability to have a better life and better housing because of its commitment to the struggle against Zionism. Their grandparents left their homes 70 years ago in the context of a war in which Arab armies expected to destroy the nascent Jewish state and bring the residents back to reap the spoils left behind by the Jews.

A second view from the fence

The second way to analyze the campaign is to focus on what is actually happening along the fence. The false claims about “peaceful demonstrators” brutally targeted by ruthless Israeli soldiers are detached from reality.

The real story is that under the smokescreen of a civilian crowd, terror activists from Hamas guided and motivated by the Hamas leadership and other terror groups are seeking to destroy the security fence by mobilizing brainwashed youth and using women and children as human shields. They knowingly ignore the security agreements between Israel and the Palestinian authorities that prohibit approaching the fence.



Map distributed to Gaza rioters via Facebook directing them to breach the fence and infiltrate nearby Israeli communities. Photo: IDF Spokesperson, May 13, 2018.

This tactic dispatches terrorists and hate-filled mobs to infiltrate border areas and harm Israeli citizens living nearby. This is accompanied by attempts to harm Israeli soldiers (mainly by planting bombs along the fence) and citizens by using kites (sometimes painted with swastikas) that are carrying incendiary devices aimed at setting ripe Israeli wheat fields ablaze.

Forgotten in the media narratives is the fact that the Gazan protestors are standing just meters above the Hamas diggers excavating attack tunnels into Israel. The motives of the above-ground and below-ground attackers are identical.

The Palestinians are fully aware of the Israeli soldiers' mission to defend the security barrier and protect civilians and themselves. They know there are going to be casualties, and they embrace them because it helps build a victimhood narrative and fits their radical Islamist beliefs.

The March planners also know that the number of casualties will not be overly high, because they can count on Israeli soldiers to exercise maximum caution and work to minimize the damage. That determination reflects the nature of the Israeli soldiers and the IDF's commitment to international law. Palestinian leaders demand that international legal standards be applied to Israel, which they contend only apply to Israelis but not to the Palestinians. For Palestinian leaders, terrorism is legitimate.

This riot/terror option, presented as "peaceful demonstrations," is chosen because all other violent ways of promoting Palestinian goals have proven ineffective. The price of initiating a wide-scale terror campaign is considered too high and Israeli technological advances have blunted the subterranean option.

It is difficult to comprehend why so-called "progressive" Americans and Europeans identify with

the Palestinian side seeking to eliminate Israel. Even the more pragmatic Palestinian leadership in Ramallah criticizes Hamas for deliberately sending Palestinian youngsters to be wounded and lose their lives in vain.

A third view of Gaza

The third view looks at the economic conditions and standards of living in the Gaza Strip. There is no connection between the hardships of the Gazans and the riots. The Palestinians in Gaza suffer from poor infrastructure, high unemployment, and restricted mobility into and out of Gaza. They have severe shortages of fresh water and electricity. But these sufferings are mainly the result of Hamas corruption, such as misappropriation of supplies and the punitive denial of funds by the Ramallah-based Palestinian Authority.

But Gazans do not lack essential products of any kind. Israel makes sure that all the needs of Gaza, except for military or dual-use equipment, enter the strip.

The severe damage that rioters caused to the Kerem Shalom border crossing — through which truckloads of supplies and gas pipelines pass — will further worsen the situation for Gazans, as it forced Israel to shut the crossing temporarily.

Yet many pundits and politicians tend to present the violent riots as if they are motivated by the poor economic conditions created by Israel. If this was the reason, Palestinians would not have destroyed the crossing and chosen "Nakba Day" for their riots. It is hard to understand what lies behind their myopia. Maybe it helps to justify the riots and maybe it makes it easier to blame Israel.

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Algemeiner

The moral challenge of Gaza

By **Donniel Hartman**



Late last night, as the death toll in Gaza neared 60 human beings, my daughter called me with one simple question. “Abba, what are you writing about Gaza?”

Before her call, I hadn’t intended to write. Gaza paralyzes me into silence.

When I read reports or hear discourse about Israeli Army use of lethal force against demonstrators, I cringe. To call what is happening at the Gaza border a demonstration, is a perversion of reality as I know it.

The inhabitants of Gaza have every right and reason to demonstrate against the tragedy which is their life. Not only do they live under unforgiveable and deplorable conditions, no one is taking responsibility either for their predicament or for the path to rectify it.

What is happening on the Gaza border is not a protest against the reality of life in Gaza, but an attack against the sovereignty of Israel and its right to exist. Palestinians have every right to view and experience the formation of Israel as their Nakba (catastrophe). They have every right to view the Six Day War and Israel’s reunification of Jerusalem as a deepening of this Nakba. When tens of thousands of people, civilians interspersed with thousands of Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists, march on our border with the intent to destroy it, and penetrate into Israel, and allow the terrorists to murder Israelis, it is not only *not* a peace demonstration, it is not a demonstration at all. It is a battlefield, where anyone who approaches the fence is a combatant.

While Palestinians have every right to their narrative of Nakba, my people have every right to celebrate our independence and our victory in 1967, and to express joy at being home in our country, whose capital is Jerusalem. And we have every right to defend our rights.

The challenge is that when it comes to Gaza, for Israelis our moral conscience is by and large, silent. We argue that our unilateral withdrawal from Gaza,

including its setting of the precedent of dismantling Jewish settlements, should have inspired Gazans to embrace or at the very least explore, the possibility of peace, instead of the path of war. It should have inspired the trade of goods and the fostering of economic ties, and instead it led to missile fire and the resulting partial blockade.

We hold the Gaza population personally responsible for the choices they have made. We hold the leadership that they have chosen, a leadership that regularly declares its desire for my destruction and acts on it, as responsible both for the tragedy of Gaza and its rectification. And as a result, most Israelis believe that from this moment henceforth, our moral responsibilities are limited to our efforts at self-defense. The plight of Gazans is taken out of the equation of our moral discourse.

Gaza paralyzes me into silence, for I am like most Israelis. I am not only saddened by the choices they have made and by the paths that they have chosen not to take, I am angry. I am a devout two-statist, who believes in the right of the Palestinian people to sovereignty in their own state, living side-by-side with Israel in peace and security for both of us. I am angry, because I believe that the hatred and violence spewing out of Gaza has possibly buried Israelis’ belief in the viability of the two-state solution in our lifetime. Any discourse about a Palestinian state in Judea and Samaria is immediately rejected under the counter-argument: “It will just become another Gaza.” And this Gaza will be able to shut down all of Israel with mere mortar fire.

But as my daughter’s phone call reminded me, we cannot allow ourselves to be paralyzed, and to create a moral black hole in our society. I do not believe that Israel is principally responsible for the reality which is Gaza, but it does bear some responsibility. I do not believe that our soldiers on the border of Gaza are firing on demonstrators, but are engaged in a war. I do not believe that the Hamas-inspired action on the border poses an existential threat to the State of Israel. It does, however, pose a life-and-death danger for many Israelis. At the same time, 60 human beings were killed and thousands were injured in one day.

While 60 human beings lost their lives, and Israeli soldiers were engaged in the horrific challenge of protecting our border, tens of thousands of Israelis converged on Rabin Square in Tel Aviv to sing and rejoice with Netta Barzilai on her and our victory in the Eurovision contest.

When the Egyptians – a greater power and enemy than the Palestinians – were drowning in the Red Sea, our tradition recounts that the angels in heaven began to sing a song of praise to God. God silenced them

with the words, “My creation is drowning in the sea, and you want to sing a song of praise?”

The *Book of Esther* recounts a particularly chilling moment. After Ahasuerus and Haman sent forth the pronouncement decreeing the murder and destruction of all Jews throughout the kingdom in one day, it states, “And the King and Haman sat down to drink and the city of Shushan was in chaos.”

We do not need to take moral responsibility for the reality which is Gaza, but at the same time we cannot allow our humanity and moral conscience to be so inert as to sit down and drink, not to speak of dancing in our city squares, when we are causing, justifiably or not, death and chaos.

We can believe that the events in Gaza are a war against Israel, support our soldiers, and still desire a public debate over the means necessary to win this war. I don’t value Monday morning moral philosophers, nor expressions of “concern” for loss of life. I do value serious moral reflection on how to ensure that we live up to our military moral code, which demands that even when force is used in self-defense, we only use the amount of force necessary and in proportion to the danger that we face, and that we do everything in our power to avoid civilian casualties. I do desire an Israeli society which welcomes and engages in this discourse.

I do not believe that our soldiers are violating international law, yet I am interested in a public discourse about what our soldiers on the front lines in Gaza are experiencing. I am interested in defending our soldiers from being placed in situations where their orders are not clear, and thus placing our soldiers in morally compromised situations.

Gaza paralyzes me, because human beings are dying at my hands, and I do not know how to prevent it. Gaza frightens me, because it is so easy to forget it and sing, regardless of what is happening there. Gaza challenges us, for it is in Gaza that our commitment to the value of human life is and will be tested.

We may not be principally responsible for the reality which is Gaza, but like all moral human beings, we must constantly ask ourselves whether and how we can be part of the solution. As Jews, we are commanded to walk in the way of God, a God who declares, “My creation is drowning, and what are you doing about it?”

The Times of Israel

My Favorite Anti-Semite: Gregor von Rezzori

Twenty years after his death, why the German-language writer and memoirist yearned for an era he never knew

By Wesley Yang

My Favorite Anti-Semite: an occasional series of tributes to writers, artists, philosophers, and others who hate us and to why we still find value in their work. This article originally published on January 30, 2009, and is reprinted here on the 20th anniversary of Gregor von Rezzori’s death.

Gregor von Rezzori, the only son of a loveless marriage, entered the world at an unpropitious time—1914—and in an inauspicious place—the city formerly known as Czernowitz, capital of the region known as Bukovina, in the final days of the Hapsburg empire. He was a refugee before his first birthday and would never find a way back home. That “lost, bygone world, golden and miraculous,” as Rezzori calls it in his recently reissued 1989 memoir, *The Snows of Yesteryear*, had been destroyed in the cruelest war the world had ever seen. By the time he was old enough to speak, he was already nostalgic “for something forever lost, something I had already lost the moment I was born.”

Rezzori would devote his writing life to this curious nostalgia for a world he had never really experienced, and whose protracted death throes it had been his misfortune to experience—in the unhappy role of “flotsam of the European class struggle.” In contrast to his elder sister, born four years earlier, “before the general proletarianization of the postwar era, in a world that still believed itself to be whole,” Rezzori had been, as he put it, “a true son of the era of universal disintegration.” His writings concern the fate of people like himself, belonging to “a dying and largely superannuated caste,” and forced to live amid the ruins. He made it through the two world wars intact and found a comfortable place for himself in the new world, which he occupied with the great ambivalence of an exile from a place to which there can be no return. He wrote radio scripts and screenplays, acted in films, married an Italian countess, and wrote a series of German-language novels whose reputation has steadily waxed with the passage of the years. He died in 1998, having outlasted “the short 20th century,” as the historian Eric Hobsbawm called it, referring to the great class struggle that divided Europe until 1989. He has found in NYRB Classics, which reissued *The Snows of Yesteryear* and published his 1979 novel *Memoirs of*

an *Anti-Semite* in 2007, a devoted steward of his legacy.

Part of what lent that lost world its golden aura was the deference it gave to German-speaking servants of the emperor, such as Rezzori's family. Amid the wild palimpsest of peoples deposited by centuries of conquest and migration in Eastern Europe—Romanians, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Armenians, Bulgarians, Germans, Poles, Greeks, Turks, and Jews—the Austrians assumed the role of “cultural compost,” the self-deprecating term that Gregor's father used to name the virtual monopoly on political, cultural, and economic power held by a city-dwelling German minority in the east. The city to which the Rezzoris returned in 1919 was now part of the new state of Romania, in which the Rezzoris found they were “taken over by another class to which we deemed ourselves superior but which, in fact, treated us as second-rate citizens.”

On the one hand, losing their place at the top of the racialized caste system that had permitted the many nations of Eastern Europe to live together in peace was, “for the class to which my parents belonged,” he wrote, “a fall into chaos, into impotence and deprivation, hopelessness and squalor.” Then again, “humiliation merely aggrandized, as humiliation suffered by the kinds of people who considered ourselves members of a class of masters,” will often do, the family's threadbare pretensions to greatness: We felt excluded, but on the other hand, our isolation made us feel out of the ordinary and even that we belonged to a chosen elite. The myth of lost wealth rankled in us but also made us arrogant. All our efforts were directed at not being deemed declass .

This disappointed upbringing, spent in “cannibalistic solitude” among hostile strangers (a short distance from the Dniester River, the border across which the bloody birth pangs of a new proletarian utopia were taking place), made Rezzori an acute witness to the psychological condition of the Germans between the wars. Something new and dire had been unleashed into the world by the carnage of the Great War. “A species of men arose from that ghostly landscape of bomb craters and trenches whose bestiality was unconstrained,” Rezzori wrote. “A free field was given to the Hitlers and Stalins to come.”

Whereas the Rezzoris fled the loss of their privileges into self-devouring neurotic obsession (the exhaustive exposition of which makes up the bulk of *The Snows of Yesteryear*), other Germans responded more actively. Aggrieved at the loss of their position, morally adrift in a world in which the old traditions and hierarchies had been destroyed, thirsting for a return to greatness, inured to mechanized violence, fearful of the Bolshevik menace from the East, and even more fearful of morally subversive elements within, certain elements of the German people went

on a search for scapegoats. They readily found them in the Jews.

Memoirs of an Anti-Semite is in many ways the fictional counterpart to *The Snows of Yesteryear*, sharing with it a social, geographical, and cultural setting, and many individual anecdotes. A loose collection of five long thematically linked short stories, the book follows its protagonist, Arnulf, through a series of episodes in which he finds himself engaged with Jews as friends, rivals, employers, business partners, persecutors, and above all, lovers—first a middle-aged Jewish shopkeeper, then the orphaned daughter of a Viennese professor, and lastly, in a short-lived second marriage, a Jewish woman who was nonetheless, as he puts it, “truly the most goyish shikseh he had ever encountered.” Arnulf is emphatically not a Hitlerite monster, or a Nazi street brawler, but, like Rezzori, a well-bred Austrian from a civil service family in the former Bukovina. He exhibits, without apology, the social snobbery of his class, but none of the racial resentment of the Nazis. He is a believer in settled hierarchies, fixed institutions, and people who know their place in the world: The specifically Jewish quality in Jews had never repelled me so much as the attempt—doomed from the start—to hush it up, to cover it over, to deny it. The yiddling of Jews, their jittery gesticulation, their disharmony, the incessant alternation of obsequiousness and presumptuousness, were inescapable and inalienable attributes of their Jewishness. If they acted as one expected them to act, so that one could recognize them at first, one was rather pleasantly touched. They were true to themselves—that was estimable.

The 19-year-old Arnulf's contempt for those who refuse to know their place is transparently a compensation for a man who has lost his own place. He moves to Bucharest after the war and finds himself working as a window dresser for a cosmetics company—“a hod carrier, an out and out menial, for mostly Jewish shopkeepers.” He finds himself woefully unprepared for the job. Stuck amid the ups and downs of the commercial cycle, Arnulf learns empathy for the Jews. “Their hereditary milieu was the world of open possibilities, in which a man could just as easily become a Midas as get stuck in the lowliest form of donkey work,” he says. “I now understood their restlessness, their anxieties, their messianic expectations, the abrupt change from immeasurable arrogance to shamefaced self-debasement.”

Rezzori has a remarkable lyric gift that he uses to describe the wide expanses of Bukovina. In a series of beautiful set pieces, he evokes the vanishing world of Germanic chivalry, already in its last stages of degeneration into the debased kitsch that the Nazis would exploit, the emerging commercial melee of

post-war Bucharest with its Armenian and Jewish shopkeepers and its red light district; and shabby-genteel Vienna, where he socializes almost exclusively with Jewish artists and musicians. He is a great hit at their parties, telling Yiddish stories and jokes he has learned on the streets of Bucharest, Czernowitz, and Lvov. Later he accidentally finds himself caught up in the surging crowds celebrating the Anschluss that brought the rump state of German Austria into the Third Reich. He is on his way to meet his girlfriend, whom he plans to marry. "The morbid, rhythmic stamping of their feet hung like a gigantic swinging cord in the silence that had fallen on Vienna," he writes:

What the hell are we marching for? I asked the man beside me.

"Anschluss," he barked.

Well, that literally meant "connection," and that was exactly what I was looking for.

Should a book about the deadliest hatred of the 20th century, particularly one by a German, be so mordantly funny, so cheerfully alive? But this, of course, is how people live history. They are inattentive and self-absorbed; they worry about their next sexual conquest while the conquest of the world is being planned in distant chancelleries. *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* is a horror story precisely because it so resolutely refuses to feel like one. The story it tells is of a passive, attenuated complicity, which is all the more harrowing for its passivity—for without this passivity which encompassed all but a heroic, and mostly destroyed, few, none of the worst crimes of the Nazi regime would have been possible.

Both *The Snows of Yesteryear* and *Memoirs of an Anti-Semite* close with a similar note of ambivalence. Though each in its own way ruthlessly exposes the complicity of imperial German nostalgia with history's greatest crime, both books retain a connection to that lost world, and much distaste for the new one that took its place. In the epilogue to *The Snows of Yesteryear* Rezzori returns to the city of his youth, now known by its Ukrainian name of Chernivtsi, in 1989. It is a place whose racial ferment was settled once and for all in 1945, with a massive ethnic cleansing (the Jews were the first to go, to unmarked mass graves, or to extermination camps, during the war itself) that left a racially homogenous Ukrainian city behind. He finds the buildings all meticulously preserved, but the spirit of the place—"its restlessly vicious, cynically bold and melancholically skeptical spirit"—expunged. The post-war settlement had imposed decades of continuous peace on the continent. But at what cost? At no cost that can easily be quantified, but one that is nonetheless real, and which it is the job of our artists to recall.

Tablet Magazine

Dušan

A rare spiritual nobleman Properties of a quality critic

By Bogdan A. Popović

The creative work of Dušan Puvačić took place from the late 50s and early 60s of the last century to the first ten years of this century – in two stages. The second stage, which took place at universities in England where he taught Serbo-Croatian language and Yugoslav literature and made guest appearances at European and overseas Slavic conventions, was almost four times longer than the first, Belgrade, stage. If we judge, however, by the quantity and diversity of his bibliography, the advantage of the length of the second stage over the first might be questionable... Of course, from this weighing and comparison it would be much more useful to determine the extent to which Puvačić's diverse work – as a critical-essayist, translator and lecturer - is complementary to each other. Because it is quite certain that the experience that stemmed from the translation of major works and texts of English and American theoreticians of literature had an influence on his own critical-essayist work. And equally, that his critical-essayist work was extremely influential in shaping his university lectures. And when, in passing, I mention Puvačić's translation work, I recall that he mostly translated theoretical essays of English and American critics. The obligatory reading of the younger critics of this time are his translations of the key works of Ivor Armstrong Richards (together with Nikola Koljević) and Cecil Morris Bowra, essays by John Crowe Ransom, William Empson, Terry Eagleton, and others. In addition, Puvačić translated, from the English, novels by James Baldwin and Richard Mason, and poetry collections by John Donne, Norman McCaig and others. A special place in his translation bibliography is undoubtedly the impressive "History of Modern Art" by Arnason.

Although I wish in no way to diminish the impact of his essayist work - the impacts which can be seen in his books "Tragom teksta" ("On the trail of the text") (1989) and "Balkan Themes" published in English, I belong to those who believe that Dušan Puvačić achieved the most in literary criticism. In the style that, for more or less good reasons, is called a practical, daily, newspaper criticism and which

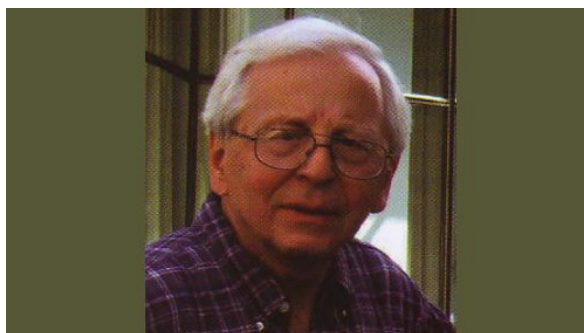
several of the most important Serbian critics used before himPuvačić wrote critical texts for several literary publications, but his "manuscript" was most noticeable in "Književne novine" in which, in the second half of the 60's, he was regularly published. The properties of a quality critic were noticed by the editor of the cultural section of NIN, Žika Bogdanović, who invited him to be a regular contributor to this reputable and influential weekly. For almost five years, from 1970-1975, in each weekly edition of NIN, which had by then assumed the format of "Time Magazine", Puvačić's criticisms appeared. After many years some of these would be collected in his book "Ugovor s Đavolom" ("Pact with the Devil").

Puvačić wrote about the new books by the writers of the time, mostly Serbian, but also of those who were then part of Yugoslav literature, as well as translated books of famous world authors. He wrote about works of poetry and critical essays, but most often I would say, his writing about narrative and romantic works contained the most progressive interpretations and judgements. He wrote using the analytical method, which in Anglo-American criticism is called "close reading" (a focused reading or interpretation of the text). In about sixty lines of NIN – which was the space allocated to his column – the reader found out the maximum amount of information about that which gave the work its uniqueness and value. The uniqueness and value in relation to the author's other works, as much as in relation to the works of other authors. The judgments that came out of his analytical procedure (which were often adverse) were declared clearly and meaningfully, without rhetorical parades and verbal pirouettes ... In this context I conclude with the words of Predrag Palavestra, who played an important, if not crucial role in our lives. "In the ten years during which he wrote his daily book review," Palavestra said in his History of Serbian Literary Criticism, "Dušan Puvačić left a key source of evidence about the evolution of Serbian prose in the process of its liberation from dogmatism. He clearly marked the literary co-ordinates of the new poetry which undermined the existing aesthetic norms and gave character to the Serbian prose of that time".

After many years of absence – although I am not losing sight of the fact that during that time, among other things, he edited several English translations of our writers and, together with Predrag Palavestra, prepared the collected works of Branko Lazarević - Puvačić returned to the domestic literary scene, in the publication "Književnost" (Literature) in 2007.

It seemed as if his texts in the section "Letters and comments", a title of his own choosing, were intended to bring his writing path back to where it started. The

inspiration for these extensive notes was drawn from meetings with many world writers during his guest lectures and various symposiums, from his correspondence with domestic and foreign authors, and when representing the Serbian PEN Centre. The genre of the texts was difficult to determine, representing a kind of fusion of memoir, travelogue, documentary, literary, historical, and all sorts of other hallmarks. In any case, they were extraordinary, and I can testify that they were the most read articles in the newspaper... Unfortunately, Dušan did not submit his eighth article to the editor, the illness stopped him. Everything on which he had worked on so successfully all his life, in a moment became unreachable.



Remembering Dušan Puvačić

By Gojko Đogo

In later years, one often looks back and flips through their address book. One finds increasingly fewer friends and acquaintances at the old addresses. Last summer Dušan Puvačić also moved to eternity. Among my memories, in a privileged place, there will be a particularly impressive recollection of our time spent together in London, in February 1989 and October 1991.

On the first occasion, I was invited by the South Bank Centre in London to a festival of East European poetry, "Child of Europe", and on the second I was a guest at a large gathering of European poets in Cheltenham, not far from London. From the moment of my arrival at the airport to my departure, Duško simply adopted me, as if I was a close relative, even though we were only acquaintances until then. We knew each other since the mid-sixties while he was the editor of "The Literary Newspaper" (Književne novine) and "The Contemporary" (Savremenik) and was just beginning to publish my first poems. In truth, we had both studied world literature, and even though

at that time the graduates formed a special “Takovsko fraternity”, he was slightly older so we didn’t spend time together. In the early seventies (1973) Dušan went to work as a lecturer at Lancaster University for a year, which eventually extended to thirteen years. He retired as a professor at the School of South Slav and East European Studies (SSEES) in London. He was also a visiting lecturer at Cambridge University, as well as in America, France and Germany.

During those fifteen London days Duško held me under my arm, he was my host, translator, guide, manager, and he and his wife Tilda hosted me in their home, even though I had a hotel reservation. He escorted me through London, to its museums, galleries, universities and the grave of Dimitrije Mitrinović, scheduled interviews, introduced me to English and other foreign writers, and managed to get some of my poems into The Times Literary Supplement, the most famous literary publication... During the year in between my two visits, Dušan translated some one hundred of my poems with the American poet Michael March. Michael even arranged the publication of a book by Penguin. Unfortunately, in the wake of subsequent events, the outbreak of war and the demonization of Serbia, the book was never published.

I have recounted these distant "memories" only to testify with how much heart, good will, dedication and joy Duško welcomed his guests, because I was not the exception. There was almost no writer or cultural figure who visited London in those years to whom Puvačić did not extend his hand. That was true for all guests from Yugoslavia. Even a famous Bulgarian poet, Ljubomir Nikolov, who did not want to return home, spent several weeks with the Puvačić’s until he managed to pull his family out of Bulgaria. In the time leading up to our wars, when I was there, the Puvačić house was a true reception of guests, refugees and fugitives. In that home with doors open wide, all of them found some kind of shelter.

Duško’s home was a kind of cultural club to which our countrymen and numerous English writers were very glad to come to. Those were intellectual soirees, where there was much discussion, thinking and dreaming. And there was always nice food and drink.

Everything he did, Duško accomplished with some special ease. With an irresistible charm and a slightly cheeky smile, in which there was always a hint of a joke or comedy, he opened the most difficult doors, and as a result, the Serbo-Croatian Department was for a long time very attractive to foreign students. Duško was the good spirit of the Department, and managed to convert his professional diligence into some kind of fun. His students loved him and his colleagues respected him.

The aforementioned social and patriotic obligations pretty much filled up both his work and social time, and he could no longer dedicate himself to his main literary work. He postponed everything for the future. And then a serious, long-lasting illness forever distanced him from everything, including his literary work. But three of his published books of very thorough studies and views will ensure he retains a prominent place in the history of our critical literature.

Puvačić’s translation work is also very important, from Bowra’s “The Heritage of Symbolism” and Arnason’s “History of Modern Art”, to numerous English poets, from John Donne to Seamus Heaney. He also translated five books from Serbian into English and published a Serbian-language textbook for the Linguaphone Institute in London.

Duško Puvačić was a rare spiritual nobleman and a great ambassador of Serbian literature and culture in the English speaking regions. His loss will not be healed for a long time.

Dušan, the way I saw him

By Predrag Protić

One day in the 1950s, according to Predrag Palavestra, a young man came into the editorial offices of Književne novine (The Literary Newspaper) and brought his first article. Palavestra received the article, exchanged a few words with the young man, leaving the text aside to look at when the young man had gone. To his considerable and pleasant surprise, it was not a text on either Joyce or Faulkner, Virginia Woolf or Kafka, all of whom were endlessly discussed in literary circles, but on the English, or rather Scottish, eighteenth century poet, Robert Burns. In that first published article was a hint of something that would become a characteristic of Dušan Puvačić as a literary critic, essayist and translator. He chose books and writers to speak about, poets and critics to translate according to his personal affinities, determinations and interests, and not according to the current fashion and what is was polite to talk about.

As was the case with books, so it was with the literary criticism. Our time, one could say, is a time of the dizzying replacement of one analytical method and theoretical system with another. Many, if not the majority, of critics have adapted and are adapting to these changes, with more or less success. Dušan Puvačić followed all these changes out of personal curiosity and he knew all these procedures, but he did not make use of them. He did not want to be the slave of any of them. He adapted the method to the subject

matter, not the subject matter to the method. This is best seen in his book "Balkan Themes", published in the English language. The papers published in this book were created for a variety of occasions and were intended, in a large number of cases, for an audience with unequal levels of awareness of the problems discussed. The methods applied ranged from the traditional literary-historical to the psychological, from the biographical to textual analysis, to mention only some. The method of analysis depended on the topic in question, and when it came to purely literary analysis, all of it was most often solved via the process which Dušan Puvačić preferred to use: the method of Anglo-Saxon new criticism.

The thing that characterized Puvačić's writing about literature, was that it was clear. He wrote simply, without assumptions, and his conclusions were unequivocally determined, having been preceded by a convincing argument. He always started from the view that clear writing was a result of a clear opinion and that even the most complex problem can be clearly expounded, without simplifying it. That was not only his attitude towards his writing process; it was something he asked for or, more precisely, expected, from others. He had that nice, somewhat old-fashioned, conviction, that the critic, among other things, should make the public and the lovers of literature interested in the writer and the work in question; and that any hermetic text can be made less hermetic. He started from one obvious, but in our time quite obscure, truth that there exists a reader, and that the criticism is primarily a dialogue with the reader, and everything else comes after. I recall that on one occasion we did not agree on one of his, largely negative, reviews of a book by a young experimental writer. He listened to my argument, apparently agreed with it, and then, with the obligatory "yes, but", he asked me if it was understandable. To which I would add, that his was not a resistance to literary experimentation, but a fine feeling for the difference between authentic experimentation and literary mystification.

From the older Serbian literary critics, the closest to Dušan Puvačić was, as an intellectual, Branko Lazarević. In some ways they were kindred spirits. He was attracted to Lazarević by his relativism. Himself a skeptic, in Lazarević Puvačić found his intellectual fellow. For the Institute of Literature and Art's collection on "Serbian Literary Criticism", he made a selection of his works, wrote an introductory essay and arranged the accompanying material. Along with the promotional text written by Slobodan Jovanović in the thirties, this is the best that has, to date, been written about this critic. He also prepared three textbooks of Lazarević's works and Lazarević's diary from the war and immediate post-war years, "The

Diary of a Nobody", certainly one of the most meaningful documents about that time. Especially about the early post-war years. It was not an easy job. It was necessary first of all to deal with Lazarević's almost illegible handwriting, which in itself was a significant achievement, then to give comments, to present the history of the manuscript, to identify many forgotten, or lesser-known persons. All these efforts culminated in an exemplary edition of an important historical document.

Puvačić closely followed the events in the Anglo-Saxon literary world and wrote about them, mainly in the Literary Newspaper, but later, on Radio Belgrade and Radio Sarajevo. These were, predominantly, informative texts, but they also had a personal perspective. When, in the Literary Newspaper, he was editor of the column "Untranslated books", two principles guided him: the extent to which the book characterised literary trends and the level of interest they would present to our readers. This could also be said of his translations. Certainly his most important work was the translation of Arnason's monumental "History of Modern Art". In addition to translating a series of essays published by various literary newspapers and magazines, he also translated the "The Heritage of Symbolism" by Cecil Morris Bowra. His translation of Baldwyn's novel "Another Country" experienced a strange fate. Some self-proclaimed moralist in Sarajevo edited out certain erotic scenes that insulted his sensibilities: another fact reflecting the time in which we lived.

Although he was rarely controversial, as far as I know maybe two or three times, Dušan Puvačić was a good controversial figure. He simply ignored the plagiarism of Tomislav Sabljak, and the authority and arrogance of Svetozar Petrović did not prevent him from responding to Petrović's arrogant tone in the same measure. In this controversy his refined sense of humour appeared, which he also showed in many daily criticisms.

Puvačić had several personal literary sympathies, even loves, about which he rarely wrote, if at all, but he liked to talk about them. This was Scandinavian literature. As far as I know, he wrote only about "The Dwarf" by Par Lagerkvist, and among the Scandinavians, Selma Lagerlef was his favourite. His University graduation thesis, on ancient Indian poetry became, at one point, a lecture on old Indian poets. He also showed a lot of interest in Japanese literature. In his youth, his favourite novel was "Life of Klim Samgin" by Maxim Gorky. Another book he never wrote about. As if he believed that there were special books that were part of only his spiritual world, which should not be shared with others.

There was something else for which Dušan Puvačić was quite exceptional within our midst. In general, people prefer to talk rather than listen. But he was able to listen silently to the speaker for a long time, without any visible reaction, so that the speaker, if he did not know him well, might sometimes wonder if he was listening at all, or was instead lost in his own thoughts. Later when he rejoined the conversation and gave his opinion precisely, it was clear that he had listened carefully. In short, he was equally interested in both people and ideas.

A cruel illness struck him and interrupted his creative life as he was working at the computer. There followed a long period of disability, which he tolerated stoically, staying intellectually alive, even though was only able to gesture his approval or disapproval. And then the inevitable end.

Written in Serbian, translated into English by Dina McDonald (Duško Puvačić's daughter)

Srpski književni list

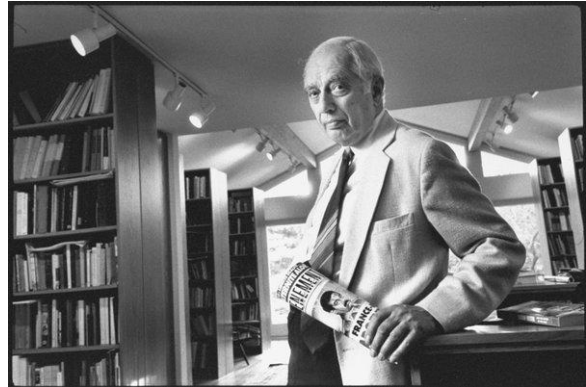


1975.

Puvačić's translation work is also very important, from Bowra's "The Heritage of Symbolism" and Arnason's "History of Modern Art", to numerous English poets, from John Donne to Seamus Heaney.

Bernard Lewis, Influential Scholar of Islam, Is Dead at 101

By Douglas Martin



Bernard Lewis in his study holding a French newspaper with a picture of Saddam Hussein. Few outsiders and no academics had more influence with the Bush administration on Middle Eastern affairs than Mr. Lewis. Credit Marianne Barcellona/The LIFE Images Collection, via Getty Images

Bernard Lewis, an eminent historian of Islam who traced the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, to a declining Islamic civilization, a controversial view that influenced world opinion and helped shape American foreign policy under President George W. Bush, died on Saturday in Voorhees Township, N.J. He was 101.

His longtime partner, Buntzie Churchill, confirmed the death, at a retirement facility.

Few outsiders and no academics had more influence with the Bush administration on Middle Eastern affairs than Mr. Lewis. The president carried a marked-up copy of one of his articles in his briefing papers and met with him before and after the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Mr. Lewis gave briefings at the White House, the residence of Vice President Dick Cheney and the Pentagon under Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

His essential argument about Islam was that Islamic civilization had been decaying for centuries, leaving extremists like Osama bin Laden in a position to exploit Muslims' long-festered frustration by sponsoring terrorism on an international scale. After Arab terrorists hijacked commercial airliners and

crashed them into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon in a coordinated operation sanctioned by bin Laden, Mr. Lewis was immediately sought out by American policymakers.

He provided critical intellectual linkage between the religious fundamentalism of bin Laden, which he said was a response to oppressive Arab regimes, and the secular despotism of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Democracy, he said, was the solution for both. "Either we bring them freedom, or they destroy us," Mr. Lewis wrote.

Though he later said he would have preferred that the United States had fomented rebellion in northern Iraq rather than invading the country, he was widely perceived to have beaten the drum for war. In an essay in *The Wall Street Journal* in 2002, he predicted that Iraqis would "rejoice" over an American invasion, a flawed forecast echoed by Mr. Cheney and others in the White House.

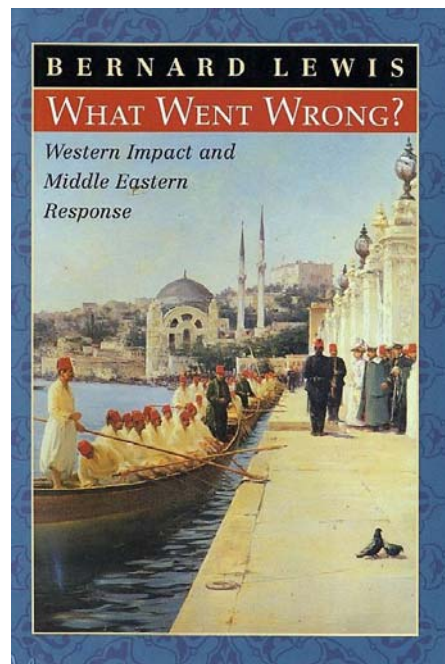
People spoke of a "Lewis doctrine" of imposing democracy on despotic regimes. His book "What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East" (2002) became a handbook for understanding what had happened on Sept. 11. (The book was at the printer when the attacks occurred.) Articles he wrote in *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic* and *The Wall Street Journal* were widely discussed.

On the war's eve, Mr. Cheney mentioned Mr. Lewis on the NBC News program "Meet the Press" as someone who shared his belief that "a strong, firm U.S. response to terror and to threats to the United States would go a long way, frankly, to calming things down in that part of the world."

In 2004, Mr. Lewis said in a PBS interview with Charlie Rose that pursuing Al Qaeda's forces in Afghanistan was insufficient. "One had to get to the heart of the matter in the Middle East," he said.

'Clash of Civilizations'

Mr. Lewis long propounded his diagnosis of a sick Arab society. In a cover article in *The Atlantic* in 1990, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," he used the phrase "clash of civilizations" to describe what he saw as inevitable friction between the Islamic world and the West. (The political scientist Samuel P. Huntington borrowed the phrase in an influential article of his own in 1993, crediting Mr. Lewis.)



The book cover of "What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response," by Bernard Lewis.

In his article, Mr. Lewis wrote: "Islam has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. It has taught people of different races to live in brotherhood and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable tolerance. It inspired a great civilization in which others besides Muslims lived creative and useful lives and which, by its achievement, enriched the whole world.

"But Islam," he continued, "like other religions, has also known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. It is our misfortune that part, though by no means all or even most, of the Muslim world is now going through such a period, and that much, though again not all, of that hatred is directed against us."

In his view Islamic fundamentalism was at war with both secularism and modernism, as embodied by the West. Fundamentalists, he wrote, had "given an aim and a form to the otherwise aimless and formless resentment and anger of the Muslim masses at the forces that have devalued their traditional values and loyalties and, in the final analysis, robbed them of their beliefs, their aspirations, their dignity, and to an increasing extent even their livelihood."

Mr. Cheney once noted that in the 1970s, before the Iranian revolution, Mr. Lewis had "studied the writings of an obscure cleric named Khomeini and saw the seeds of a movement that would deliver

theocratic despotism.” Supporters of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ousted Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi in 1979.

Critics of Mr. Lewis said he treated Western imperialism, American interventions and Israeli displacement of Palestinians as consequences of the region’s political failures and social backwardness rather than as contributors to them. The political scientist Alan Wolfe called Mr. Lewis’s positions on Islam “belligerent.” The Islamic historian Richard Bulliet suggested that Mr. Lewis looked down on modern Arabs.

“He doesn’t respect them,” Mr. Bulliet said in an interview with Washington Monthly. “He considers them to be good and worthy only to the degree they follow a Western path.”

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Mr. Lewis’s most prominent opponent, the Palestinian American scholar Edward W. Said, called Mr. Lewis a propagandist for Eurocentric views who distorted the truth and hid his politics under the veneer of scholarship. Writing in *The Nation*, Mr. Said said Mr. Lewis, along with Mr. Huntington, reasoned “as if hugely complicated matters like identity and culture existed in a cartoonlike world where Popeye and Bluto bash each other mercilessly.”

Mr. Lewis had an answer for his critics: “If Westerners cannot legitimately study the history of Africa or the Middle East, then only fish can study marine biology.”

Mr. Lewis did not seem to mind antagonizing Arabs. Several times he defended the crusades as necessary to limit the power of Islamic civilization. He called Arab nations “a string of shabby tyrannies.” He said asking the Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat to give up terrorism was like asking Tiger Woods to give up golf. Discussing the power of Saudi fundamentalists, he drew a hypothetical comparison to the Ku Klux Klan’s controlling Texas oil revenues.

“As a specialist on Islam, I find myself disturbed by the nonsense being talked, by both Muslims and non-Muslims,” he said. “On the one hand, you have people who would have you believe that Islam is a bloodthirsty religion bent on world destruction. On the other hand, you have people telling us that Islam is a religion of love and peace — rather like the Quakers, but less aggressive.”

“The truth,” he concluded, “is in its usual place.”



Bernard Lewis, left, talks with Henry Kissinger at the American Friends of Tel Aviv University dinner in 2012. Credit Tim Boxer/Getty Images

A Scholar of Languages

Bernard Lewis was born in London on May 31, 1916, as World War I raged. His father, Harry, was a real estate broker; his mother, Jenny, was a homemaker. At 12, as he prepared for his bar mitzvah, he realized that Hebrew was actually a language with grammar, not an “encipherment of prayers and rituals,” he wrote in “From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East” (2004).

By the time he entered the School of Oriental Studies at the University of London (now the School of Oriental and African Studies), he had read widely and deeply in Hebrew and begun a lifelong study of languages, including Aramaic, classical and modern Arabic, Latin, Greek, Persian and Turkish.

Advertisement History was another passion, and it, too, harked back to his bar mitzvah. One gift he received that day was an outline of Jewish history, about which he knew little. It led him to read about Cordoba, Spain, under the Moors; Baghdad under the Caliphs; and Istanbul under Ottoman rule. At the university, he became a star student of Hamilton Gibb, a great scholar of Islam, and graduated with honors in history in 1936 with special reference to the Middle East.

One day, as he recalled, Mr. Gibb asked him: “You have now been studying the Middle East for four years. Don’t you think it’s time you saw the place?”

Mr. Lewis embarked on a traveling fellowship to Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey, and attended classes at Cairo University. His encounters with the people of those lands underpinned his later observations about them.

“There is something in the religious culture of Islam,” he wrote in one instance, “which inspired, in even the

humblest peasant or peddler, a dignity and a courtesy toward others never exceeded and rarely equaled in other civilizations.”

In 1938 he was named an assistant lecturer at the University of London, where he earned his Ph.D. the next year. In 1940 he was drafted into the British armed forces and assigned to the Army tank corps. He was soon transferred to intelligence.

After the war, Mr. Lewis wanted to study in Arab countries, but as a Jew in the late 1940s and early '50s, he would have been denied a visa after Israel's independence. Refusing to lie about being a Jew, as others did, he switched his focus to Turkey and Iran during the Ottoman period.

He happened to be in Istanbul in 1950 when the Turkish government opened the Imperial Ottoman Archives; he was the first Western scholar granted access to them. He also witnessed Turkey's first free election, leading to his acclaimed 1961 book, "The Emergence of Modern Turkey.”

Some academics believe that Mr. Lewis mistakenly applied the lessons of secular, democratic modern Turkey to Arab countries with a far different history. Armenians contended that his attachment to Turkey had led him to deny that the Turkish slaughter of Armenians in 1915, which he acknowledged and condemned, was genocide. He defined genocide as government-sponsored premeditated mass murder.

In the 1990s, a French court fined him one franc for neglecting to cite objective evidence that might have refuted his opinion on the Armenian killings in an article for the newspaper *Le Monde*.

Mr. Lewis married Ruth Helene Oppenheim, from Denmark, in 1947, and they divorced in 1974.

Besides Ms. Churchill, he is survived by a son, Michael; a daughter, Melanie Dunn; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandsons.

In 1974, he accepted joint appointments at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J., and Princeton University, partly to gain more time for research. He also taught at Cornell from 1984 to 1990, among other teaching jobs. He became an American citizen in 1982.

His influence grew in the 1970s, as he advised Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, and other foreign policy hard-liners who were later identified as neoconservative. Mr. Lewis accepted the neoconservative label for himself. In the mid-1970s, Prime Minister Golda Meir of Israel required her cabinet to read his article arguing that Palestinians had no claim to a state.

Mr. Lewis, who wrote or edited more than two dozen books and hundreds of articles, was regarded as perhaps the leading expert on interactions between the Christian and Islamic worlds. He said that Jews had been treated better in Islamic countries than in Christian ones for much of history. He said he often chose to see events from the Muslim side.

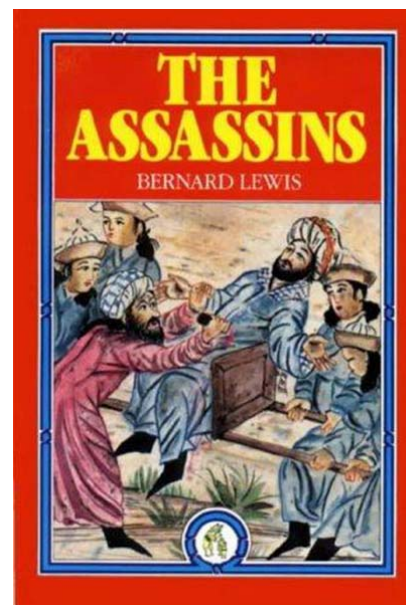
“At Vienna, I'm at the Turkish lines, not with the defenders,” he said, referring to the 1683 European victory over the Ottoman attempt to conquer the Hapsburg Empire.

In “From Babel to Dragomans,” Mr. Lewis discussed how an earlier work of his had been translated and published in Hebrew by the Israeli Ministry of Defense and in Arabic by the Muslim Brotherhood, a fundamentalist group.

“The translator of the Arabic version, in his introductory remarks, observed that the author of this book was one of two things: a candid friend or an honorable enemy, and in either case, one who does not distort or evade the truth,” Mr. Lewis wrote.

“I am content to abide by that judgment.”

A version of this article appears in print on May 22, 2018, on Page A25 of the New York edition with the headline: Bernard Lewis, Scholar of Islam Who Advised Bush After 9/11, Dies at 101.



God and America and Philip Roth

On the late writer's evolution from secular psychological realist to seeker of the nation's holy heart

By Paul Berman

Of the three titans of American literature in the late 20th century, Updike, Bellow, and Philip Roth, Roth was the most insistently secular. Updike conjured a world that lives in the shadow of another world, with two sentences out of three hinting of a vividness that comes from the light of God or the transcendental, and the story-lines hinting of a struggle between God and the Satanic. Updike was in those respects a son of Hawthorne, who could not decide between Emerson and the Calvinists. Updike was great because the excitement of the more-than-worldly electrifies the prose.

Bellow, by contrast, wished he could live in a world like Updike's, which is to say, a world like Hawthorne's or Emerson's. He yearned for it, and the yearning is his theme. And sometimes he did think he glimpsed something more-than-worldly. There is a preposterous passage in Bellow's non-fiction *To Jerusalem and Back* where he convinces himself that he has heard the voice of God, not that he is able to discern what God has said. But Bellow could not take seriously the possibility of doing any such thing. The heroes of his novels, one after another of them, are professors who would very much like to hear or see the alternative universe, but are not really capable of doing so, and are rendered ridiculous by the gap between their transcendental aspirations and their worldly incapacities. Bellow is shrewder than Updike, in that respect, less ebullient, but more modern.

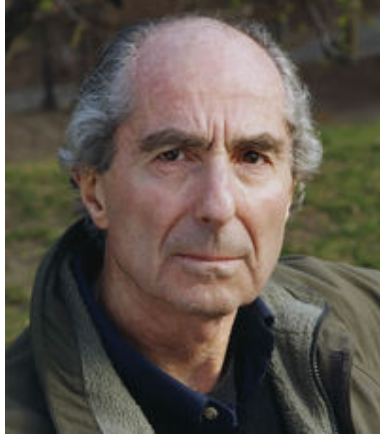
And Roth, for most of his career, showed no interest at all in these questions. He was not a metaphysician, and not a poet. He was a psychological realist. If the sun rises in a Roth novel, it is not because God has chosen to put in a word. When a Roth character is interested in a woman, it is not because he is interested in more than a woman. Roth's novels are, in this respect, less interesting than Updike's and Bellow's, and more moving.

And yet, in his later years, Roth sprouted, as it were, an extra eyeball. *American Pastoral* may have been the first sign of it. The story is one more variation of a family saga gone awry, with Swede's daughter diving into the lunatic violence of the New Left, and the family all upset. But there is a physical landscape in the novel, more than in previous novels—a leafy New Jersey countryside, which Roth presents under the label of “America.” And America, in *American Pastoral*, becomes a symbol of a more-than-conventional universe, the way that America becomes a symbol in Whitman's poetry, or in Thomas Wolfe. *The Human Stain*, too, conjures a symbol. The very title is a symbol, as if out of Hawthorne—the kind of symbol that Updike, for all his overt Hawthorneanism, was never able to invent. I think *Sabbath's Theater* is meant to conjure a symbol, as well, which is the puppet theatre of the title—though, in that instance, the power of the symbol seems to me a little thin (even if the novel is marvelous). *The Plot Against America*, though, conjures a haunting symbol, which is a postage stamp, evocative of reality, and of something more than reality. *The Plot* conjures still other symbols, too, as in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., one symbol after another—and the various symbols transform the novel from a mere fable into something more mysterious (even if Roth was never able to figure out how to conclude the plot of his *Plot*).

In his middle years, he had looked for something more than psychological realism by inquiring into the complexities of storytelling—the complexities that led him to speculate about the meaning of a narrator, and the possibilities of counter-narration, and the self-awareness of the fictional imagination. These are the complexities that he explores in *Operation Shylock* and the various novels in which he plays with the possible alternatives to his own byline. None of that seems to me especially wonderful, though. It is a flexing of the storyteller's self-consciousness that manages not to hint at something more than a storyteller's self-consciousness. His later-career turn toward symbols, though—the evocation of the American leafiness, the postage stamp, the human stain—is entirely moving, and that is precisely because he himself does not understand what he is doing.

It is striking that Bellow, once he had gotten through his very earliest novels and had arrived at the Bellowian approach to literature, never seemed to undergo further evolutions, philosophically speaking. Updike, too, did not seem to evolve, from a philosophical standpoint. But Roth, the secularist, turned out to be a seeker. Eventually the biographers will sink their teeth into Philip Roth, and they will

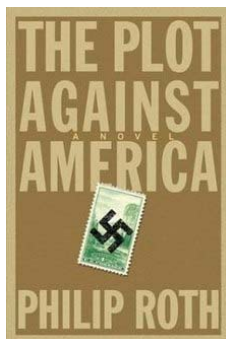
reveal who their author slept with, and which person in real life corresponds to which character in the novels; and this will be appalling. Nothing is more disgusting than literary biography, in its salacious modern version. And yet, in Roth's case, there is, in fact, a biographical story to tell, which is his search for something more than realism.



Philip Roth died at age 85.



Paul Berman writes about politics and literature for various magazines. He is the author of A Tale of Two Utopias, Terror and Liberalism, Power and the Idealists, and The Flight of the Intellectuals.



2004.

The Making of Kubrick's Masterpiece, '2001: A Space Odyssey'

Fifty years after the release of the film that changed the world, two new books look back at its transcendent genius creator

By David Mikics

In Haight Ashbury it was the Summer of Love, and the new Adams and Eves, barefoot and bedraggled, were spawning cosmic peace. But during the summer of 1967 at Borehamwood Studios, England, Stanley Kubrick's man apes ran screaming, jabbering and fiercely exulting in prehistory's first act of bloodshed. Kubrick was filming the Dawn of Man, the opening section of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which astonished the world when it was released fifty years ago on April 2, 1968.

A few minutes into *2001*, a mysterious, matte-black monolith touches down among the apes. This object hums and buzzes with the agitated spiritual strains of György Ligeti's music. Ready for lift-off: now the apes, on the cusp of humanness, start to kill animals for meat. They kill each other, too. One ape flings his bone into the air and (here comes the most famous jump cut in cinema history!) it morphs into a spaceship. So crude prehistoric violence rockets forward into the space age, subtly infecting its supermodern, clean, computer-driven rationality. With the Dawn of Man Kubrick echoed the writer Robert Ardrey, who argued that lethal violence first made us human. The "territorial imperative" meant capturing a place and fending off rivals with a rock to the head or, as in *2001*, a dead tapir's bone.

Was the monolith a Mosaic tablet designed by Mies van der Rohe, as one critic suggested? Or a Golden Calf, with the apes dancing and chattering around it? Nathan Abrams, in his pathbreaking new book, *Stanley Kubrick: New York Jewish Intellectual*, says that the Dawn of Man resembles Genesis: a faceless alien God jolts the apes into new knowledge. Make of the monolith what you will—for *MAD* magazine's bewildered cartoon apes it was a prehistoric handball court. The Dawn of Man's monolith was only the first of the film's many puzzles. The wide open quality of *2001*, the way it wanted viewers to speculate rather

than simply being absorbed by what they saw on screen, was something new in Hollywood movies.

2001 was one of a kind, and it still looks shockingly new five decades later. After the apes we find ourselves beamed into space, where everything turns, slowly and magnificently, to the tune of a Strauss waltz. At the end, two hours later, we are left to wander with the astronaut Dave Bowman, everyman and blank slate, through a Louis XVI bedroom, until the Star Child turns his gaze on us—no more innocently, perhaps, than the rapist and murderer Alex does in the first shot of Kubrick’s next movie, *A Clockwork Orange*, which like Altamont sounded the death knell to a decade’s hopes for peace and love. Still there is the clarion music of Richard Strauss, a Nietzschean dare for us to brave metamorphosis, and the sublime overload of the avant-garde Stargate sequence, where Bowman sees and feels new thresholds, new anatomies (Hart Crane), and during which one early audience member—who was tripping of course, like most everyone in the theater—ran through the screen shouting “I see God!”

“Not even heroin or the supernatural ever went this far,” said the critic David Thomson about what cinema does to us, its super-real spell-casting power. No movie has ever gone as far as *2001*, soaring before and beyond the human, showing us the silence of infinite space. More than any of his other movies, this one fits Martin Scorsese’s comment: “Watching a Kubrick film is like gazing up at a mountaintop. You look up and wonder, How could anyone have climbed up that high?”

Michael Benson’s new book *Space Odyssey: Stanley Kubrick, Arthur C. Clarke, and the Making of a Masterpiece* climbs the mountain, showing us in fascinating detail how Kubrick got there. Benson did scores of interviews with the men and women who helped Kubrick achieve the marvel that is *2001*, and his book offers much news about what was probably the most technically daunting movie ever made. Kubrick and his crew were patient problem-solvers, and Benson, a superb storyteller, makes their work sound thrilling—which it was.

Kubrick treated every movie as a “grand investigation,” Benson writes. This one began in 1964, when Kubrick first heard about Arthur C. Clarke. In Spring 1964 Kubrick was in New York, basking in the growing success of his *Dr. Strangelove*, which had opened in January. He lived with his third wife Christiane and their three daughters in a penthouse at Lexington Avenue and 84th Street, where his friends included the novelist Terry Southern, who had written some of *Strangelove*, the jazz musician Artie Shaw, and their wives. Shaw, who

hadn’t played clarinet for years, was trying his hand at writing fiction and distributing films. Shaw was a champion marksman, and like Kubrick he had a big gun collection. He and Kubrick bonded over their shared love of jazz, weaponry, and movies. Shaw knew that Kubrick wanted to make a science fiction film and was looking for a co-screenwriter, and so he told him to look into a novel titled *Childhood’s End*, by Arthur C. Clarke. Clarke, who was also a science writer and amateur astronomer, lived in Ceylon, and he was chronically short of money, mostly as a result of funding the projects of his filmmaker boyfriend.

Kubrick got Clarke’s novel and read it eagerly with Christiane by the bedside of their four-year-old daughter Vivian, who had a dangerous case of the croup, an inflammation of the throat. Listening anxiously to Vivian’s breathing, Kubrick tore the paperback into chunks, handing the pages to Christiane when he had finished them. “Arthur, we thought, was the ultimate,” Christiane remembered. Kubrick’s publicist Roger Caras sent a telex to Ceylon, and Clarke cabled back “FRIGHTFULLY INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH ENFANT TERRIBLE.”

Kubrick was no enfant terrible, though years later someone described him as a cross between Rasputin and Santa Claus. Those pitch black, sleep-deprived eyes bored right into you. Kubrick did not tolerate fuckups, and he inspired real fear. But he was also “congenial, accessible, bemused, sardonic,” said the young Jay Cocks (later a screenwriter for Scorsese), and he could be a pal on the set, too. Kubrick, who never went to college, knew and talked eagerly about a lot of things, from Wittgenstein to pro football, but most of all he knew about making movies. *2001*’s director of photography, Geoffrey Unsworth, confessed that he learned more from Kubrick in six months than he had in 25 years as a top British cinematographer. “He is an absolute genius,” Unsworth marveled. “He knows more about the mechanics of optics and the chemistry of photography than anyone who’s ever lived.”

Kubrick hit the big time in the early 1960s. In 1959 Kirk Douglas, who had produced and starred in Kubrick’s *Paths of Glory*, fired Anthony Mann from *Spartacus* after two weeks of shooting and called in the 30-year-old Kubrick to direct the film. (“Get that little Jewboy from the Bronx off my crane,” grumbled veteran cinematographer Russell Metty, whom Kubrick promptly put in his place.) The sword and sandal epic became a bona fide Hollywood blockbuster, and Kubrick’s future was assured. Then came *Dr. Strangelove*, a wild and unprecedented

satire about nuclear war, adolescent but razor edged in its humor, like a hybrid of Swift and *MAD* magazine.

“He had a night person pallor,” Clarke remembered about Kubrick when the two first met in New York over dinner at Trader Vic’s. In the mid-1960s Kubrick was clean shaven and he had, the journalist Jeremy Bernstein remarked, “the somewhat bohemian look of a riverboat gambler or a Romanian poet.” Before long Clarke was ensconced in the Chelsea Hotel, where he ate a lot of liver paté on crackers, pursued a love affair with an Irish merchant seaman who lived down the hall, and rubbed elbows with fellow Chelsea residents William Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg. Clarke was writing several thousand words a day of the script, and he met with Kubrick constantly to hash out the details of what would become the most innovative science fiction movie ever. “Science-fiction films have always meant monsters and sex,” Clarke said later, but his and Kubrick’s would be different, a serious glimpse into the destiny of the human.

It’s possible that Napoleon’s march to Moscow involved more technical challenges than the making of *2001*. Then again, maybe not. Live action production for most of *2001*, with the exception of its prehistoric prelude, occurred in the eight months between December 1965 and July 1966. Then came nearly two years of post-production. Kubrick was a fiend about asking for one more take, and the crew slowly got used to his mantra “do it again.” The movie required over two hundred process shots: the original negative was stored as a “held take,” and then foreground and background elements were painstakingly added, for example the stars or the earth through a spaceship window. After many months of trial and error, the outer space scenes started to look right.

Christiane said that Kubrick, who loved chess, was “very much a chess player” when he made movies: “He said, ‘Don’t relax too soon. That’s when you make mistakes.’” Kubrick once commented that “chess teaches you ... to control the initial excitement you feel when you see something that looks good,” and to “think just as objectively when you’re in trouble.” Dave in *2001*, confronted with the murderous computer HAL, is a chess player. Worry, fear, and anger ripple across Keir Dullea’s usually impassive face when HAL refuses to open the pod bay doors, but the man, brave and ingenious, beats the computer.

2001, that halcyon and disquieting film, has at its center the strangely human pathos of its computer. The movie’s point of view shots are all from HAL’s perspective. And in *2001*’s most famous scene, Dave

kills HAL. The computer’s mind slowly falls apart and, discombobulated, it sings “Daisy.”

During early work on the script Clarke noted in his diary, “Stanley has invented the wild idea of slightly fag robots.” Kubrick eventually chose the Canadian actor Douglas Rain to play HAL because, he said, Rain’s voice had an “asexual and patronizing” quality. HAL is both strangely soothing and malevolent, a blend that seems right for today’s technological inroads into your life. You can now even order an *Alexa terminal that looks like HAL*, the most relatable AI presence ever to appear on screen.

Benson is excellent on *2001*’s many design triumphs. In space Kubrick’s humans inhabit a white, gleaming world where style and function are mated. When Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood) jogs and shadowboxes on his wheel-like path past the coffin-style hibernacula of his fellow astronauts, Kubrick brilliantly gives viewers the feel of a zero gravity environment, a “Möbius strip ... WTF quality,” Benson notes. Then there was the revolutionary slit screen technique used for the trippy Stargate sequence, devised by Doug Trumbull: Benson gives the details of the process for the first time. The sleek space helmet, based on men’s Ascot riding hats, was invented by Harry Lange, a German scientist who had followed Wernher von Braun to NASA’s base in Huntsville, Alabama. Lange had a confederate flag and a model of a V-2 rocket in his office, until the British crew threatened a walk-out and Kubrick made Lange remove the flag and the rocket.

Kubrick hired Dan Richter, a professional mime, for the production’s climactic adventure, figuring out how to play the humanoid apes. One of Richter’s big hits was the Pinball Machine, in which, scuttling and rolling around with his knees up to his chest, he played four balls with distinct personalities. Richter and his girlfriend were drug addicts under legal supervision in Britain, and the doctor who gave them heroin, Richter recalled, was “an aristocratic lady in tweed suits and a gold lorgnette.”

Like Kubrick himself, Richter was a fanatic about getting things right. He spent many weeks studying primates at the zoo before he figured out how to become Moonwatcher, the ape who propels his cohort into murder and meat-eating. Stuart Freeborn, who devised the ape costumes, was as tireless as Richter. Making the apes look real required letting them bare their teeth, snarling and grimacing through a rubber mask. After long trial and error, Freeborn found the answer: seven tiny, tilted field magnets behind the actors’ teeth, along with powerful elastic bands.

The future of MGM was balanced on the fortunes of *2001* since the studio was still hurting from a series of big-budget flops in the early 1960s. When Kubrick unveiled his masterpiece, studio executives, bored to tears by the movie, were sure they were doomed. Drove of MGM suits walked out during the first New York screening. A disheartened Kubrick retreated with his wife to a hotel room, where, she remembered, he “couldn’t sleep and couldn’t speak and couldn’t do anything.” She told him that the movie would find its audience, even though the middle-aged Hollywood brigade didn’t get it.

Christiane was right. By the next afternoon reports started to stream in: audiences under 30 were flocking to *2001*. Word of mouth spread like a fever, and soon an advertising team devised a new slogan for the film: “the ultimate trip.” People were watching *2001* over and over, and always, it seemed, in an altered state. Before long, John Lennon remarked, “*2001*, I see it every week.”

With *2001* Kubrick became a prophet for 1960s youth culture, though a rather wary and skeptical one. Nathan Abrams’s book explains the wariness by casting Kubrick as a Jewish intellectual. Yes, it’s true that his movies nearly always avoid any mention of Jewishness, but so do Kafka’s novels and stories (which Kubrick loved to read). Abrams remarks that Kubrick “had a fondness for ideological speculation, he was Jewish by birth, and he strived self-consciously to be brilliant,” all common traits of the New York Intellectuals. His high school grades were too low for him to attend college in the GI Bill years, but he sat in on Lionel Trilling’s and Mark Van Doren’s classes at Columbia, and in the Village during the 1950s he knew Diane Arbus, Weegee, James Agee, and Dwight Macdonald. “I spent an interesting three hours with Stanley Kubrick, most talented of the younger directors,” Macdonald wrote in 1959, “discussing Whitehead, Kafka, Potemkin, Zen Buddhism, the decline of Western culture, and whether life is worth living anywhere except at the extremes—religious faith or the life of the senses; it was a typical New York conversation.”

Kubrick was a Jewish director, though he himself would never have said so. He obsessively read about the Holocaust, and came close to making a movie about it based on Louis Begley’s novel *Wartime Lies*. “In a sense Kubrick even married into the Holocaust,” Abrams writes. Christiane, who lived with Kubrick for the last 35 years of his life, was the niece of Nazi filmmaker Veit Harlan, director of the anti-Semitic propaganda movie *Jud Süß*. Before Kubrick met Harlan in 1957, he drank a big glass of vodka, and he told Christiane, “I’m standing here like Woody Allen looking like ten Jews.” Among fellow directors he felt

closest to Allen and Steven Spielberg, who completed Kubrick’s project *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* after his death. The smart-alecky black humor of *Dr. Strangelove* aligns him with Lenny Bruce, Joseph Heller, and the sacred-cow-bashers at *MAD*. As a Bronx Jew on his country estate in Hertfordshire, England, Kubrick must sometimes have felt just as out of place as that Irish upstart Barry Lyndon.

Stanley Kubrick’s “mythological documentary,” as he called *2001*, will probably live on as long as movies are made and watched. It’s one of those achievements that Ardrey talks about in Kubrick’s favorite passage of *African Genesis*:

We were born of risen apes, not fallen angels, and the apes were armed killers besides. And so what shall we wonder at? Our murders and massacres and missiles and irreconcilable regiments? Or our treaties, whatever they may be worth; our symphonies, however seldom they may be played; our peaceful acres, however frequently they may be converted into battlefields; our dreams, however rarely they may be accomplished. The miracle of man is not how far he has sunk but how magnificently he has risen.

2001: A Space Odyssey is evidence of that brief transcendent elevation.

David Mikics is the author, most recently, of *Bellow’s People: How Saul Bellow Made Life Into Art*. He lives in Brooklyn and Houston.



2001: A Space Odyssey

Chelsea owner Abramovich immigrates to Israel, becomes country's richest citizen

Interior Ministry confirms Russian billionaire who has had UK visa issues landed at Ben Gurion Airport, received ID card; will live in Tel Aviv mansion he bought from Gal Gadot

By Michael Bachner and Toi staff



The owner of England's Chelsea Football Club, Russian tycoon Roman Abramovich, as he leaves court in London, on October 4, 2011. (AP/File)

Russian-Jewish billionaire Roman Abramovich, owner of London's Chelsea soccer club, has immigrated to Israel, the Interior Ministry confirmed on Monday.

Abramovich, 51, landed in Ben Gurion International Airport earlier in the day, the ministry said, and received an Israeli identity card under the Law of Return, which allows Jews to become citizens of Israel.

The move to Israel comes after Abramovich was unable to extend his visa in the UK amid a diplomatic spat between London and Moscow.

The Nativ Liaison Bureau, which facilitates immigration from Russian-speaking countries, said Abramovich applied for citizenship from abroad last week.

"Roman Abramovich arrived at the Israeli embassy in Moscow like any other person. He filed a request to receive an immigration permit, his documents were checked according to the Law of Return, and he was indeed found eligible," a spokesperson told Channel 10 news.



Gal Gadot at the Oscars on March 4, 2018, at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. (Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP)

Abramovich, worth \$12.5 billion according to the British press, instantly became the richest person in Israel Monday.

He will live in a mansion in Tel Aviv's neighborhood of Neve Tzedek, a former hotel he purchased from Israeli Hollywood actress Gal Gadot, Ynet reported. As a new citizen, Abramovich is exempt from taxes in Israel on income earned abroad for 10 years, and need not declare the sources of that income for the same period.

Abramovich's British visa expired last month. His previous visa was granted before more rigorous regulations were instituted in April 2015. Even before moving to Israel, Abramovich was a frequent visitor to the country.

He formally has residency in Jersey in the Channel Islands, a tax haven, but has never taken it up. Abramovich would have to explain the source of his wealth to receive a new British visa, according to reports. There is no evidence that Abramovich has done anything wrong, but the United Kingdom has scrutinized Russian businesspeople and diplomats more carefully since the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury, England, in March. Several Russian diplomats were expelled following the incident.

Abramovich missed Chelsea's Football Association Cup final victory over Manchester United at Wembley Stadium in London this month. He has owned the team since 2003 and has been present at nearly every game, until his visa problems began.

Hamas: Fight to the last Gazan

Hamas has betrayed the residents of Gaza. Instead of an Islamic regime, it has built one based on fear. Instead of hope, it has brought despair.

By Mordechai Kedar



Mordechai Kedar (Eliran Aharon)

Dr. Mordechai Kedar is a senior lecturer in the Department of Arabic at Bar-Ilan University. He served in IDF Military Intelligence for 25 years, specializing in Arab political discourse, Arab mass media, Islamic groups and the Syrian domestic arena. Thoroughly familiar with Arab media in real time, he is frequently interviewed on the various news programs in Israel.

About a year ago I took part in a long and searching discussion of Arab-Jewish relations with several friends in an Arab city in Samaria. They were heads of leading hamulot (clans), traditionally the respected leaders of the local population. The meeting took place at the home of one of the city's dominant sheikhs, over a lavish platter of fruits and vegetables fit for a king.

At some point, my host ceased speaking, and after thinking for what seemed a very long time, said in ponderous literary Arabic, incisive and serious, weighing every word: "Doctor Kedar, do you know what a terrorist organization is?" The question surprised and intrigued me, and I answered "No," curious and awaiting his answer. "Mark my words, Doctor," he said, "a terrorist organization is not an organization fighting against its enemies. A terrorist organization is an organization that fights its own people, its own nation, fights the very people it claims to protect, the children for whom it is responsible."

My eyebrows raised in surprise, I asked "Kif – how is that?" and he answered, in a voice permeated with sadness: "Look at ISIS, who do they slaughter? The

Muslims in Iraq, Syria, the Sinai. Look at Hezbollah, who do they murder? The Syrian Muslims. Look at Hamas, who do they kill? The people of Gaza. An organization fighting enemies is a liberation organization, an organization fighting its own people is a terror organization." The words were totally unexpected, and all those present were shocked into silence. Not a sound could be heard in the room, because the import of that statement is a declaration of war, no less, on Hamas, made by a sheikh and his hamula. "Interesting," I finally was able to say, keeping my thoughts to myself, intending to mull upon his remarks later on.

During the past weeks, ever since the riots – definitely not protests – began near the fence separating life in Israel and death in Gaza, I keep thinking about the Sheikh's statement. In the years since the Hamas movement took over Gaza violently in June 2007, blowing up PA police stations, shooting at the heads and knees of security personnel and policemen, hurling PLO members from the roofs of buildings to their deaths on the street – ever since that debacle, life in the area has deteriorated to the level of the terrible conditions Gazans live under today.

Hamas has spent a large part of the funds it was given to purchase weapons, develop missiles, manufacture rockets, acquire explosives and dig tunnels. Hamas has not built a single hospital in the Strip, not one desalinization plant, nothing. Zero. Nada. Then Israel developed the "Iron Dome" and simply erased the threat of rockets and missiles. It soon found a solution for the tunnels as well. Hamas lacks tanks and artillery. So what's left? How are they to attack Israel? What can they use? The answer is to be found in the Sheikh's words: Hamas, after it succeeded in putting out every flicker of hope left in the hearts of Gaza residents, after it brought them to the depths of despair, has now turned them into live ammunition aimed at Israel.

People are the best weapon of all, low cost and self-activated for 50 shekels a head. That is the sum Hamas pays each rioter. For 50 shekels, Hamas gets a walking bomb, imbued with Hamas-produced anger, frustration and despair. That is the real story of what is happening at the border fence for the last few weeks, the reality that clearly exposes the reason Hamas is defined as a terror organization: the war it has declared on the residents of Gaza since the day it first took over their lives. Now it is sending them to their deaths, knowing full well that Israel will never, ever allow them to cross the fence to reach any kibbutz or moshav filled with men, women and children. The very thought of the horrific massacre that would ensue is terrifying.

Hamas is a terrorist organization not because of its war against Israel but because it has betrayed the residents of Gaza: Instead of an Islamic regime, it has instituted a regime based on fear. Instead of work, it has brought unemployment. Instead of hope, it has caused despair. Hamas rule has dragged the Gaza Strip into three rounds of violence with Israel: Cast Lead (2008-09), Pillar of Defense (2012) and Protective Edge (2014). There is as yet no name for today's events, except for the delusional one given them by Hamas - "the march of return," as if Israel was actually going to allow a single rioter to "return" to Israel's sovereign territory. All the Hamas mantras are old, tired slogans whose objective is to ignite the human explosives with foreign fire.

For weeks now, Israel has been warning them of what happens to anyone who touches the fence, this by means of warnings, flyers, telephone calls and media communications.

Every person killed is a public relations accomplishment for Hamas, every person wounded is a propaganda gain to mislead viewers in Europe and America who have no understanding of Hamas' satanic plans to use the people of Gaza as live ammunition against Israel, knowing that they will be killed as soon as they try to break through the fence.

For weeks now, Israel has been warning them of what happens to anyone who touches the fence, this by means of warnings, flyers, telephone calls and media communications. Everyone in Gaza, from Yihye Sinwar down to the last of the rioters, now knows exactly what happens to anyone who comes near the fence. That makes the rioters themselves and the Hamas organization which sends them fully responsible for the deaths of these live bullets

However, the foreign press is another responsible party of which the public must be made aware. Anyone who understands Hamas' plans knows full well that without media coverage all the riots near and at the fence would not have occurred. After all, why would Hamas waste human ammunition unless it could make an impression on world opinion?

This is where Israeli idiocy steps in, as Israel allows foreign media to reach the immediate surroundings of Gaza (where Hamas tunnels end, where it attempts to kill and kidnap men, women and children) to photograph - while standing behind them - IDF snipers protecting the residents of kibbutzim and moshavim with their own bodies. Most of the foreign correspondents do not tell their audience the truth about these IDF heroes who faithfully fulfill their mission to protect Israeli citizens. Instead, the media act as tools of the Hamas terrorists, useful idiots who spread Hamas propaganda without charge.

There are those who claim that the advent of internet and social media makes it impossible to prevent this. Still, one can limit the reports from the front line by temporarily shutting internet access in Gaza. For anyone who does not know it, Israel supplies internet services to Gaza. Do you get it? They get internet access from Israel (do they pay for it? Who knows?) and use that medium to spread propaganda lies about Israel. Is there anything more absurd?

What about the electricity with which Israel supplies Gaza and which allows the continued existence of the Hamas satellite television station broadcasting rabid incitement against Israel 24/7? Why does Israel continue to supply electricity to Gaza during these riots? During WWII would it have entered the head of any normal, loyal British or Russian citizen to supply electricity to the Nazi propaganda machine?

True, Israel is better off acting as if it is "business as usual" before the cameras, so that tourists do not flee and Israelis do not complain - but we are at war and in war as in war. If Hamas fires human ammunition at us, we are allowed to do anything reasonable to stop them - from taking out Hamas leaders, those personally responsible for the terrible state of the Gaza Strip and for the shots fired against the rioters threatening Israeli citizens' lives and welfare.

In contrast to the Arab world, Israel protects its citizens from the knives of Gaza rioters. Israel, however, must also protect the image of its citizens in the eyes of the world and act against those promoting European "media terror" and the "Jihad media" promulgated by Hamas and Arab satellites headed by *al Jazeera*. I am incapable of understanding how Israel continues to allow them to broadcast endless incitement from within its borders.

There is no question that Israel will defeat Hamas, because Israel is fighting a just war and Hamas is a terror organization whose reign of terror over Gaza turns its population into disposable ammunition with its own evil hands. The fate of Hamas is not in doubt: It will be dumped in the ash heap of history, along with the other Arab dictators who were overthrown in the "Arab Spring." Hamas, the despotic and tyrannical terror movement, is no different than they, because it, too, is prepared to sacrifice the Palestinian Arabs down to the last man on the altar of its own survival.

Written in Hebrew for Arutz Sheva, translated by Rochel Sylvetsky

Arutz Sheva

‘Zionism Is a Humanist Movement, Not a Colonial One’

Prominent French-Tunisian Movie Producer Said Ben Saïd Reflects on Arabs, Jews and Islam

Interview



By Ben Cohen

Movie producer Said Ben Saïd speaking to the American Sephardi Federation in New York in March 2018

Last November, the Tunisian-born French movie producer Said Ben Saïd briefly found himself thrust into the center of the Arab world’s conflict with Israel as a result of his work with Nadav Lapid, an Israeli film director.

In an op-ed for the French daily *Le Monde*, Ben Saïd revealed that an invitation to preside over the jury of the 28th Carthage Film Festival in Tunisia had been curtly rescinded because of his cooperation with Lapid, as well as his participation on the judges panel at the 2017 Jerusalem Film Festival in Israel. That decision provided an opportunity for Ben Saïd to articulate some home truths.

“[I]t must be admitted that the Arab world is, in its majority, antisemitic,” Ben Saïd wrote at the time. “This hatred of Jews has redoubled in intensity and depth not because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, but with the rise of a certain vision of Islam.”

Four months on, Ben Saïd, who was on a visit to New York, seemed unfazed that his critique of the widespread, socially acceptable antisemitism that has endured throughout the Arab world for more than a century had not become more commonplace.

“It’s a mistake to treat them as elections in the first place,” an Egypt expert told *The Algemeiner* regarding this...

“I’m talking as an Arab and as a Muslim, and that’s what I am,” Ben Saïd explained during an interview with *The Algemeiner* at his hotel in Manhattan’s Soho district. “But I am talking against a majority of people who do not think as I do. Those people who need to think completely differently about their relationship with Israel, they are the same people who are at present convinced that they are not antisemitic. They think they are merely anti-Zionists.”

Ben Saïd’s readiness to openly challenge antisemitism — particularly when it impacts artistic freedom in the form of the cultural boycott of Israel — was one key reason why he received the 2018 Pomegranate Award for Lifetime Achievement from the American Sephardi Federation (ASF) during his stay in New York. As a producer who has embraced engagement instead of the boycott campaign, Ben Saïd is in good company with previous Jewish and Muslim recipients of the same prize — among them André Azoulay, the senior councilor to Morocco’s King Mohammed VI, Enrico Macias, the Algerian-born and internationally renowned singer, and Ema Shah, the popular Kuwaiti performer and advocate of Muslim-Jewish dialogue.

“Said Ben Saïd’s words and deeds are a provocative example of how to effectively counter such antisemitic extremism, as well as the creative power of art to connect diverse peoples,” Jason Guberman — executive director of the ASF — said in advance of the March 6 award ceremony.

During his acceptance speech at this year’s NY Sephardic Jewish Film Festival, Ben Saïd quoted extensively from an exchange between Franz Kafka — the great mid-twentieth century writer (and Zionist) — and his fellow Czech intellectual, Gustav Janouch. “Jewish nationalism,” Kafka told Janouch, “is like a caravan which in the cold of a desert night is forced by outside pressures to form a powerful *lager* (encampment). The caravan doesn’t want to win a victory. It only wants to reach some secure and peaceful homeland of its own which will give the men and women of the caravan the possibility of a freely developing human existence.”

“I am really personally very touched by Franz Kafka’s definition of Zionism,” Ben Saïd remarked during our interview. As he expounded his views on the Arab-Israeli conflict, it was clear that Kafka’s notion of Zionism as a dignified attempt to secure Jewish survival in a hostile world was his point of departure.

What was also clear was Ben Saïd’s emphatic rejection of the orthodoxies of both sides of the conflict. “I don’t think these people are antisemitic at all,” he said, in an answer to an invitation to speculate

on the motives of Western artists who endorse the cultural boycott of Israel.

“I think we are talking about anti-Zionism and antisemitism, which are clearly two different ideologies, although over time, they tend to converge,” Ben Saïd continued. “I know many really sincere anti-Zionists. Most of them are Jews, either liberal or orthodox.”

In Ben Saïd’s view, the key intellectual challenge for the Arab world lies in its refusal to understand Zionism as a legitimate Jewish national awakening. “Today, people, especially in the Arab world, don’t know anything about Zionism’s history,” he said.

“They think that it’s a colonial movement, and it’s not,” he continued, going on to appraise Zionism as a “humanist movement,” as well as a “utopia” that emerged in France during the infamous Dreyfus trial at the close of the nineteenth century.

The BDS campaign, he said, was “not antisemitic in its motivations but became clearly antisemitic in its consequences.”

“Whatever we think of the Israeli government today, and the Israeli policy today, I think the Israeli people and the civil society in Israel are really doing their best to criticize that government,” Ben Saïd argued. “I don’t think that isolating Israel is the right thing to do politically. There are 22 Arab countries, 60 Islamic countries, and there is one Jewish country. Trying to isolate that country has had terrible consequences on the region — on Israel, because people are afraid, and when they are afraid they vote for extremists, and therefore on the whole Arab world.”

Highlighting what he believes is a grave absence of historical perspective among his fellow Arabs, Ben Saïd remarked, “If you see the history of the region since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon by Israel, you will think that Israel is responsible for everything.”

But, he went on, “maybe if you look at the history since 1900, you will see how much the Arabs were responsible. And if you see the history since the nineteenth century, the Europeans were very much responsible as well. So the responsibility is shared by all the parts; I don’t think that you can say that Israel is completely responsible and the Arabs are only victims.”

That historical analysis was weighted with a demographic one as well. “There are maybe 8 million Jews in Israel, 15 million in the world, and it’s funny, because when I’m in Tunisia or somewhere like that, people tell me, ‘Are you out of your mind? There are

maybe 200 million!’” Ben Saïd observed. “They believe that antisemitic image that the Jews are everywhere. So I thought, when you consider the number of antisemites in the world, there are certainly much more than 15 million — perhaps there are one hundred times more antisemites than there are Jews in the world. I always had sympathy because of that, because you have 8 million Jews surrounded by 400 million Arabs and 1.2 billion Muslims.”

Thus far, Ben Saïd has largely avoided the Middle East and its discontents during a career producing movies for leading directors like Brian De Palma, Paul Verhoeven and Valeria Bruni Tedeschi. One of his ambitions, he said, was to produce a movie set immediately after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, when the early followers of Islam were bitterly divided over his succession. “It would be a historical movie about the succession, the first civil war in the Arab community,” Ben Saïd explained. “I would like to show how violent and divided the community was, with false prophets arising.”

Ben Saïd said that while his childhood in Tunisia was “very religious,” he eventually became an atheist (“or an agnostic, depending on the day,” he noted) after moving to France at the age of 18. In his view, Islam is a first of all a civilization and a culture — and one to which Ben Saïd feels as intimately attached as he does to France. That, perhaps, explains why his long-term outlook is more optimistic than many of the other intellectuals and artists who have been targeted by anti-Zionist campaigns. While he does not play down the enormous political and cultural dilemmas posed by Europe’s growing Muslim population, drawn from all corners of the Islamic world, he firmly believes that Islam will one day be imbued with a “new vision” as a result of its sojourn in Europe.

“We are making a lot of discoveries about the Quran and how, historically, it came to be communicated from an oral to a written tradition,” Ben Saïd said.

“This process will take time, so for the future I am optimistic,” he concluded — before adding, with a wry smile, “but not in the near future.”

The Allgemeine



Meet Imré Kovács, a mild-mannered waiter at the Brasserie Lipp in Paris for 16 years and also a Hungarian Jew who just may have infiltrated the Waffen-SS to survive the Holocaust. He was a POW who endured a Soviet labor camp on a frozen steppe. And in Indochina, Algeria, and Mandatory Palestine, he may have abetted the Avengers, the vigilante group that chased and assassinated Nazis after the war. He was a father to at least 8, maybe more, in France, Israel, and Hungary, a ‘man who loved women,’ and, in his old age, a demented loner and secret memoirist. Hero or victim? Liar or storyteller? Fabulist or humble resistant? The Shoah did not know the difference.

“Is This Story Real?” is a Tablet special profile, reported in Hungary and France, of Kovács and his controversial epic memoir of wartime heroism. His manuscript, discovered in a closet in rural Hungary and published in France in the mid-2000s, roped scores of people into the mystery of his life, and the deeper unfathomable unknowns of the Jewish experience in WWII Europe.



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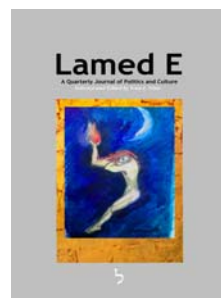
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