FAILING 'THE ISRAEL TEST'

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Robert Fulford, National Post, 4 June 2010

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The French Foreign Minister said "Nothing can justify the use of such violence," the Irish Foreign Minister said Israel's use of force was unacceptable and the Belgian foreign minister charged Israel with using disproportionate force against "a civilian humanitarian initiative." You could call that disproportionate use of rhetoric. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made a pathetically typical contribution. He claimed the Israeli action "shocked" him and must be investigated. He lives in a frequently shocking world but he rarely feels shocked enough to send in the UN sleuths. He doesn't seem notably shocked by how Hamas treats Israel, for instance, or for that matter by how Hamas deals with Palestinians who aren't adherents of Hamas. He must also be shocked by, to take an infamous example, China's treatment of the Uighurs in Xinjiang. When did he send in the team to clear up that one? Does he insist, as he does of Israel, that the Chinese leaders who are responsible "provide a full explanation"?

It was striking to hear that the Turkish Foreign Minister called the boarding of the Mavi Marmara "an act of barbarism." Turkey, having helped to instigate the flotilla, is a new voice in the self-righteous clamour against Israel. It still doesn't admit that it perpetrated genocide against the Armenians a century ago, it drags its distinguished authors into court for telling the truth about that atrocity and its attempt to contain the Kurdish independence movement has so far cost some 40,000 lives, mostly Kurds. Perhaps the new mood of anti-barbarism reflects Turkey's hope of EU membership. Maybe the Turks believe that striking a fashionable pose will prove their virtue to Europe. The politicians who quickly found Israel guilty had no idea what they were talking about. The flotilla that sailed toward Gaza was intent on humiliating Israel, not on delivering food and medicine, which can go in by land with much less trouble.

Clearly, the managers of the "humanitarian" flotilla willed the conflict. A video piece from Al Jazeera demonstrated that some of the crew and passengers were seeking martyrdom even before they left Turkey. And on Hamas television an Egyptian cleric lamented that he was not among the warriors who died in attempting to frustrate the blockade: "I salute those mujahadeen, who met their death in support of the Palestinian people. I wish I were among their martyrs today. We are a nation created by Allah for death, not for life. We are a nation that used to humiliate those , but today, we are the ones living in humiliation."

This week also brought fresh proof of the axiom that there are no tyrants so vile that they lack articulate supporters in the liberal democracies. Citizens of countries like Spain and France should in theory be opposed to Gaza, which is ruled by a faction vigorously opposed to freedom of any kind; instead, leftist Europeans have somehow decided that Hamas terrorists deserve support.

These addled peaceniks are today's "useful idiots," Lenin's contemptuous term for gullible supporters of communism in the West. In 2005 Anthony Browne of the London Times wrote that like-minded fools sympathized with Hitler in the 1930s. And, he noted, "Today the Islamists enjoy similar support; this time it is left-wing activists, The Guardian and sections of the BBC."

Libraries are filled with theories explaining anti-Semitism but why, in 2010, have so many turned against Israel? Last year George Gilder, an American philosopher of business, outlined one reason in The Israel Test (Richard Vigilante Books).

Without oil, beset by passionate enemies, Israel has nevertheless achieved astonishing, unprecedented success. It now stands second only to the United States in microchips, telecom, software, biotech, medical devices and renewable energy. Per capita, it's easily the most innovative country on the planet.

Gilder's "Israel test" asks how others respond to this achievement. Do we study, admire and emulate it? Or do we consider it a devilish trick and hope to see it destroyed? The verbal ugliness surrounding the flotilla provides uncomfortable answers to those questions.

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