

## **A Concerned Press**

I had a marvelous meeting with Bob Rolley, Publisher, of the Williamsport Sun Gazette, Laura Janssen and Michael Maneval. What marvelous people they are! They believe that a small city newspaper can cover local, national and international news while serving the public in the digital age. We talked about Associated Press coverage and they urged me not to paint with too broad a brush. The fact that a news service as a bad reporter or a dishonest bureau chief does not mean that every reporter is bad and that every article is unreliable.

We had a lengthy discussion about Israel and I explained that there was no such thing as 1967 borders. Rather, there are 1948 armistice lines when Israel was essentially unarmed and almost driven into the sea by a phalanx of Arab nations that attacked Israel. Those nations had been supplied the Germans as well as the British. Israel bravely hung on to a strip of land along the Mediterranean while Jordan illegally occupied Judea and Samaria, which later became known as the West Bank. Nobody said a word during this occupation. Why was Jordan's occupation illegal to begin with? The entirety of the land, both east and west of the Jordan River, had been given to the Jewish people as their national homeland since the League of Nations. This was confirmed by the San Matteo Treaty and by the United Nations. The first chunk of land that was lopped off and given to the Hashemite rulers in return for oil rights is present-day Jordan. The Hashemite monarchs govern over the 90% Palestinian Arab population.

I explained that in 1967 Israel captured what Jordan had illegally seized. Thereafter the word "occupation" was invented. Bill Clinton negotiated the Oslo Accords with terrorist leader Yasser Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. The Palestinian Authority was given the right to rule over the Muslim Arabs on the West Bank of the Jordan River formerly occupied by Jordan and Jordan's ceded authority over that area. The Palestinian Authority created the de facto Palestine. This was not the Palestine of old which Romans called all of the Jewish land, but was rather the West Bank of the Jordan River illegally seized by Jordan in 1948.

The Palestinian Authority was also to govern over Gaza. Elections were held in both places. The terrorist organization Hamas seized control in Gaza. The West Bank is governed by the entity currently headed by Muhammad Abbas. Both the West Bank and Gaza are now totalitarian enclaves absent any democracy and with no respect for minority rights.

There is no "occupied territory" by Israelis. The Palestinian Authority and Hamas are occupying territory originally given to the Jewish people. To create another terrorist state on the West Bank of the Jordan River, as is advocated by Israel's enemies, is suicide and Israel should never do it.

For Israel to create a terrorist Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan River would be like the United States giving Alaska back to the Russians. Why would anybody in their right mind do that?

After discussing the geography of the Middle East and the reality, Bob Rolley mentioned that he did some research on the AP writer who has spent so much of his time trashing Israel. "He is the beat reporter for the Palestinian point of view" said Bob. "What does that mean," I asked. He certainly is not reporting the honest point of view of the Muslims living in Israel who have a freedom unequal to that of Muslims anywhere else in the world. He is not honestly or accurately reporting on the dictatorial rule of the Palestinian Authority or Hamas in the areas which they occupy. What he is doing is representing an extreme American left-wing point of view which does not recognize the legitimacy of the State of Israel or the nationalist aspirations of Jewish Israelis.

We also discussed the extent to which anti-Israel behavior and misrepresentations amount to anti-Semitism. I pointed out that both the Obama Administration and the Trump Administration, through the State Department, have issued lengthy proclamations concerning the equation between anti-Israel behavior and anti-Semitism. In fact, the Obama State Department position is probably stronger than that of Trump.

Not surprisingly, I was asked whether support for Trump by the Jewish community is based upon his attitude towards Israel. I have been asked that question many times and I resent it greatly. However, I now have a different point of view. What is wrong with supporting a politician who does the right thing, even if there are other things you do not like about that politician? I explained that I do not like the way Trump speaks about minorities. I believe Trump has stepped on his own foot many times in fighting with the press and his gruff attitude in general does not endear him to many. However, when you look at the results, he has done a terrific job. The American economy has never done better; minorities in this country have never succeeded more; we are not currently engaged in any wars and President Trump is trying to remake the awful international trade deals which have dragged down the American economy. So, what is wrong if Donald Trump supports the free, democratic beacon of light and hope in the Middle East; the State of Israel?

I was asked whether other Presidents had recognized the right of Jews to live in the "settlements." Settlements or "Yeshuv" in Hebrew merely means community of Jews who have every right to live anywhere in Israel or Palestinian Authority occupied land. No President has said that Jews do not have the right to live in the areas governed by the Palestinian Authority. Only the Palestinian Authority has demanded that its territory be "Jew-free." Imagine how ridiculous this is when one considers that 24% of the State of Israel is occupied by Muslim Arabs who have the benefit of one of the most robust economies in the world. 24% of the Israel Knesset is Muslim Arab.

When Bill Clinton negotiated the Oslo Accords with Rabin and Arafat, Areas A, B, and C were created on the West Bank. Area A is governed entirely by the Palestinian

Authority and that is where almost 95% of the Muslim Arabs live on the West Bank. This does not include the 24% within Israel Proper. Those who say that there is something illegal or improper about Jews living in Areas B or C on the West Bank of the Jordan River rely upon authorities and agencies controlled by Third World nations who in turn are dominated by the almost three dozen Arab nations.

International law is beyond the scope of this piece, but the concept that Jews should be forbidden from living in certain areas not governed exclusively by the Palestinian Authority and not within any recognized national borders is to reimpose the ghetto. If anyone has a right to live in present-day Jordan and anywhere on the West Bank of the Jordan River, it is the Jewish people who have been given that land by treaty, convention, the League of Nations and the United Nations.

As soon as left-wing European nations stop trying to impose their vision of a humbled Jew in Israel, the parties who live in that region have a good chance of negotiating a long-term peace. Reimposition of the ghetto mentality which was common throughout Europe for centuries is an idea which should be banished forever.

The three visitors from the Sun Gazette also explained the difficulty of working in the age of Trump where there seems to be an internal battle going on between the political world and the press. Some of the press is a strong supporter of President Trump and other press outlets hate Trump with a ferociousness unequaled in modern times. It is almost as though we are living through the Civil War era. Reconstructionism or at the time of the birth of the Republic when press institutions were owned by one side of a political spectrum or the other.

We agreed to keep the lines open of communication and to respect the difficult job of the press. The meeting was good and productive and we all left happy with a round of smiles and handshakes.

I said to my three visitors that my father worked one time for the old New York Daily Mirror. He always said that "the press is a bulwark which stands between democracy and totalitarianism." The times have shown how right my father was and it is something we all need to be conscious of in this time of international as well as national stress.

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