

Joie de vivre and love of death

From the Arab Spring to the Gaza war

Statement to the rally “Hamburg for Israel. Stop Hamas terror!”, 26
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by Matthias Küntzel

I would like to recall the picture of the burnt-out bus in Tel Aviv, destroyed last week in a bomb attack carried out by radical Palestinians. While the passengers were fighting for their lives, Hamas activists were handing out sweets to the children of Gaza City, teaching them the lesson that a massacre of Jews is a reason to celebrate.

The intention to kill any Israeli who might be riding any bus illustrates the essence of the antisemitic war: it is a matter of indifference whether the Qassam rockets, bus bombs or suicide attacks kill a baby or an old person; it is a matter of indifference whether the victim is a supporter or opponent of Netanyahu, just as long as it is only a Jew who dies. “The Day of Judgement will not come about until Muslims fight the Jews (killing the Jews), when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say O Muslims, O Abdulla, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him,” proclaims the Charter of Hamas.

The Jihad sweets distributed by Hamas in celebration of the Tel Aviv attack in order to poison the souls of children and destroy their capacity for sympathy show how antisemitism devours its own protagonists too. Whether it is Jews, or Hamas’ so-called martyrs, who are blown to bits, both events yield the same pitiless satisfaction. And both culminate in a slogan so bizarre that it seems beyond the invention of even an Orwell, Agatha Christie or Alfred Hitchcock: “They love life, we love death”.

What could be further removed from the initial mood of the Arab Spring than the Islamists’ longing for death? Since Hamas came to power in Gaza, it has combined its longing for death with a struggle against *joie de vivre*. According to the Hamas Charter: “All this is utterly serious and no jest, for those who are

fighters do not jest". Anyone who allows music to be played or dances or sings at a wedding faces death or draconian punishment.

And this brings me on to what makes the latest "8-Day War" an especially sad event. I am referring to the fact that the new Arab leaders propelled into power by the Arab Spring have betrayed this awakening through their kowtowing to Hamas.

In the past few days, not only the Emir of Qatar, but also the Egyptian President, the Turkish Foreign Minister and his Tunisian counterpart in the company of further Arab League colleagues have made the pilgrimage to Hamas to show their solidarity with those who wish to wipe out Israel. I consider it a world-political disaster that for the first time not only the Arab leaders but also the government of a NATO member state, Turkey, have prostrated themselves before the lunatics of Hamas. How antisemitic is it permissible for NATO members to be?

The dispiriting impression is only increased when we see even the USA - the leading power in the West – not only currying favour with the Muslim Brother Mohammad Mursi, but also hailing him as the supposed honest broker of the ceasefire. How can a man who refuses even to say the word "Israel" or shake the hand of an Israeli and who, only a month ago, in response to a preacher's appeal to "Drive out the Jews, Oh Allah, and tear them into pieces", nodded his head and murmured "Amen", possibly be an honest broker between Israel and Hamas?

The fact that Israel is putting a brave face on the situation is related, in my opinion, to the fact that, in every decision he makes, Netanyahu cannot allow himself to lose sight of the still looming confrontation with Iran, of which the "8-Day War" may have been a preliminary skirmish.

Netanyahu's government has been able to eliminate a part of the missile potential that Tehran had been moving to the Gaza Strip with a view to the future. It has been able to carry out *in situ* testing of the strengths and weaknesses of the new missile defence system. It succeeded in avoiding a ground offensive that might have tied up Israel's forces for months. And finally, during the short war, the divisions between Tehran and the Arab world were

sharpened, while Jerusalem succeeded in maintaining Western sympathy and support.

While Israel has to take many factors into account, we are able openly to say what must be said. I shall end with three points.

It remains, of course, important to defend Israel's actions against its Islamist opponents. "I must be strong against those who wish to destroy me". This is how Fanny England, a Holocaust survivor living in Israel, summarizes her life experience. However, it is now no longer enough just to defend Israel. We must also attack – i.e. identify and bombard with arguments – those who, in order not to have to break off their alliance with the radical right-wing Hamas movement, avert their eyes from the abandonment of every standard of civilization taking place in Gaza. This group includes the numerous "Middle East experts" who are all over the media whenever Israel defends itself – Michael Lüders, Jochen Hippler, René Wildangel and many others.

It would, secondly, be wrong to write off the Arab Spring yet. "A people that frees itself from its tyrant, but does not free itself from their propaganda, is still a submissive people", declares the Algerian writer, Boualem Sansal. We must develop a new dimension of solidarity with those who are today struggling against the Muslim Brotherhood and its antisemitic propaganda in the Arab countries.

Thirdly, I consider it more necessary than ever to rescue the understanding of Middle Eastern history from its decades-long domination by one-sided historical falsifications. The fact is that, right back in 1948, a part of the Palestinians set themselves the goal of establishing a state not alongside Israel, but in place of it. If this faction had not started a war, there would today be no Palestinian refugees. If the international community wants to prevent every piece of land from which Israel withdraws from filling up with people who want to destroy that country, it must also take this fact on board.