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 E-MAIL TO A FRIEND

America's Rottweiler

By Uri Avnery

08/27/06 "Information Clearing House" -- -- IN HIS latest speech, which infuriated so many people, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad uttered a sentence that deserves attention: "Every new Arab generation hates Israel more than the previous one."

Of all that has been said about the Second Lebanon War, these are perhaps the most important words.

The main product of this war is hatred. The pictures of death and destruction in Lebanon entered every Arab home, indeed every Muslim home, from Indonesia to Morocco, from Yemen to the Muslim ghettos in London and Berlin. Not for an hour, not for a day, but for 33 successive days - day after day, hour after hour. The mangled bodies of babies, the women weeping over the ruins of their homes, Israeli children writing "greetings" on shells about to be fired at villages, Ehud Olmert blabbering about "the most moral army in the world" while the screen showed a heap of bodies.

Israelis ignored these sights, indeed they were scarcely shown on our TV. Of course, we could see them on Aljazeera and some Western channels, but Israelis were much too busy with the damage wrought in our Northern towns. Feelings of pity and empathy for non-Jews have been blunted here a long time ago.

But it is a terrible mistake to ignore this result of the war. It is far more important than the stationing of a few thousand European troops along our border, with the kind consent of Hizbullah. It may still be bothering generations of Israelis, when the names Olmert and Halutz have long been forgotten, and when even Nasrallah no longer remember the name Amir Peretz.

IN ORDER for the significance of Assad's words to become clear, they have to be viewed in a historical context.

The whole Zionist enterprise has been compared to the transplantation of an organ into the body of a human being. The natural immunity system rises up against the foreign implant, the body mobilizes all its power to reject it. The doctors use a heavy dosage of medicines in order to overcome the rejection. That can go on for a long time, sometimes until the eventual death of the body itself, including the transplant.

(Of course, this analogy, like any other, should be treated cautiously. An analogy can help in understanding things, but no more than that.)

The Zionist movement has planted a foreign body in this country, which was then a part of the Arab-Muslim space. The inhabitants of the country, and the entire Arab region, rejected the Zionist entity. Meanwhile, the Jewish settlement has taken roots and become an authentic new nation rooted in the country. Its defensive power against the rejection has grown. This struggle has been going on for 125 years, becoming more violent from generation to generation. The last war was yet another episode.

WHAT IS our historic objective in this confrontation?

A fool will say: to stand up to the rejection with a growing dosage of medicaments, provided by America and World Jewry. The greatest fools will add: There is no solution. This situation will last forever. There is nothing to be done about it but to defend ourselves in war after war after war. And the next war is already knocking on the door.

The wise will say: our objective is to cause the body to accept the transplant as one of its organs, so that the immune system will no longer treat us as an enemy that must be removed at any price. And if this is the aim, it must become the main axis of our efforts. Meaning: each of our actions must be judged according to a simple criterion: does it serve this aim or obstruct it?

According to this criterion, the Second Lebanon War was a disaster.

FIFTY NINE years ago, two months before the outbreak of our War of Independence, I published a booklet entitled "War or Peace in the Semitic Region". Its opening words were:

"When our Zionist fathers decided to set up a 'safe haven' in Palestine, they had a choice between two ways:

"They could appear in West Asia as a European conqueror, who sees himself as a

bridge-head of the 'white' race and a master of the 'natives', like the Spanish Conquistadores and the Anglo-Saxon colonists in America. That is what the Crusaders did in Palestine.

"The second way was to consider themselves as an Asian nation returning to its home - a nation that sees itself as an heir to the political and cultural heritage of the Semitic race, and which is prepared to join the peoples of the Semitic region in their war of liberation from European exploitation."

As is well known, the State of Israel, which was established a few months later, chose the first way. It gave its hand to colonial France, tried to help Britain to return to the Suez Canal and, since 1967, has become the little sister of the United States.

That was not inevitable. On the contrary, in the course of years there have been a growing number of indications that the immune system of the Arab-Muslim body is starting to incorporate the transplant - as a human body accepts the organ of a close relative - and is ready to accept us. Such an indication was the visit of Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem. Such was the peace treaty signed with us by King Hussein, a descendent of the Prophet. And, most importantly, the historic decision of Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestinian people, to make peace with Israel.

But after every huge step forward, there came an Israeli step backward. It is as if the transplant rejects the body's acceptance of it. As if it has become so accustomed to being rejected, that it does all it can to induce the body to reject it even more.

It is against this background that one should weigh the words spoken by Assad Jr., a member of the new Arab generation, at the end of the recent war.

AFTER EVERY single one of the war aims put forward by our government had evaporated, one after the other, another reason was brought up: this war was a part of the "clash of civilizations", the great campaign of the Western world and its lofty values against the barbarian darkness of the Islamic world.

That reminds one, of course, of the words written 110 years ago by the father of modern Zionism, Theodor Herzl, in the founding document of the Zionist movement: "In Palestine...we shall constitute for Europe a part of the wall against Asia, and serve as the vanguard of civilization against barbarism." Without knowing, Olmert almost repeated this formula in his justification of his war, in order to please President Bush.

It happens from time to time in the United States that somebody invents an empty but easily digested slogan, which then dominates the public discourse for some

time. It seems that the more stupid the slogan is, the better its chances of becoming the guiding light for academia and the media - until another slogan appears and supersedes it. The latest example is the slogan "Clash of Civilizations", coined by Samuel P. Huntington in 1993 (taking over from the "End of History").

What clash of ideas is there between Muslim Indonesia and Christian Chile? What eternal struggle between Poland and Morocco? What is it that unifies Malaysia and Kosovo, two Muslim nations? Or two Christian nations like Sweden and Ethiopia?

In what way are the ideas of the West more sublime than those of the East? The Jews that fled the flames of the auto-da-fe of the Christian Inquisition in Spain were received with open arms by the Muslim Ottoman Empire. The most cultured of European nations democratically elected Adolf Hitler as its leader and perpetrated the Holocaust, without the Pope raising his voice in protest.

In what way are the spiritual values of the United States, today's Empire of the West, superior to those of India and China, the rising stars of the East? Huntington himself was compelled to admit: "The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion, but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact, non-Westerners never do." In the West, too, women won the vote only in the 20th century, and slavery was abolished there only in the second half of the 19th. And in the leading nation of the West, fundamentalism is now also raising its head.

What interest, for goodness sake, have we in volunteering to be a political and military vanguard of the West in this imagined clash?

THE TRUTH is, of course, that this entire story of the clash of civilizations is nothing but an ideological cover for something that has no connection with ideas and values: the determination of the United States to dominate the world's resources, and especially oil.

The Second Lebanon War is considered by many as a "War by Proxy". That's to say: Hizbullah is the Dobermann of Iran, we are the Rottweiler of America. Hizbullah gets money, rockets and support from the Islamic Republic, we get money, cluster bombs and support from the United States of America.

That is certainly exaggerated. Hizbullah is an authentic Lebanese movement, deeply rooted in the Shiite community. The Israeli government has its own interests (the occupied territories) that do not depend on America. But there is no doubt that there is much truth in the argument that this was also a war by substitutes.

The US is fighting against Iran, because Iran has a key role in the region where the most important oil reserves in the world are located. Not only does Iran itself sit on

huge oil deposits, but through its revolutionary Islamic ideology it also menaces American control over the near-by oil countries. The declining resource oil becomes more and more essential in the modern economy. He who controls the oil controls the world.

The US would viciously attack Iran even it were peopled with pigmies devoted to the religion of the Dalai Lama. There is a shocking similarity between George W. Bush and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, The one has personal conversations with Jesus, the other has a line to Allah. But the name of the game is domination.

What interest do we have to get involved in this struggle? What interest do we have in being regarded - accurately - as the servants of the greatest enemy of the Muslim world in general and the Arab world in particular?

We want to live here in 100 years, in 500 years. Our most basic national interests demand that we extend our hands to the Arab nations that accept us, and act together with them for the rehabilitation of this region. That was true 59 years ago, and that will be true 59 years hence.

Little politicians like Olmert, Peretz and Halutz are unable to think in these terms. They can hardly see as far as the end of their noses. But where are the intellectuals, who should be more far-sighted?

Bashar al-Assad may not be one of the world's Great Thinkers. But his remark should certainly give us pause for thought.

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