

Uri Avnery: Peace Is Made With Enemies

by Dean Andromidas

Veteran Israeli peace activist and leader of the Gush Shalom peace movement, Uri Avnery, authored an important comment on the speech by Israeli poet and author David Grossman delivered at the Nov. 4 memorial rally commemorating the 11th anniversary of the death of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (see last week's *EIR*, "The Poet and the Slain Statesman"). Entitled "Grossman's Dilemma" and released on Nov. 18, Avnery's article praised the speech as "brilliant" and uplifting for all those present, but leveled some important criticism of Grossman's own refusal to talk to Hamas, but only to the "moderates" among the Palestinians.

Avnery made the crucial point that one makes peace with one's enemies. Gush Shalom, during the rally, distributed a sticker that said, "Peace is made with enemies—TALK TO HAMAS."

After praising Grossman's biting critique of Israel's "hollow" leadership, Avnery scored Grossman's call for Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to appeal to the "moderates" and go "over the head" of the Hamas government. The differentiation between "moderates" and "fanatics" is misleading, and contains a "measure of contempt for Arab society" that leads to a "dead end," he said. It is not whom you speak to that is the issue, but what to speak about; and that is, "the termination of the occupation, establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital, withdrawal to the pre-1967 border, solution of the refugee problem."

Pointing to the fact that the Hamas government was elected by the majority of the Palestinian people, Avnery wrote: "After all, it is clear that one has to make such a proposal to the elected Palestinian leadership, whatever its composition. The idea that we can talk with a part of the Palestinian people (now the minority) and boycott the other part (now the majority) is false and misleading. It is also imbued with the overbearing arrogance that is the hallmark of the occupation."

Avnery writes that although Grossman attempts to show empathy toward the Palestinians by saying that they are "a people no less tortured than we are," this is, in fact, "an effort to create a symmetry between occupier and occupied, which has become typical for some of the peaceniks too, [and it] testifies to a basic fault. That is true even if Grossman meant the untold suffering of the Jews throughout the ages—even that does not justify what we are doing to the Palestinians now."



Rachel Avnery

Uri Avnery (second from right), leader of Israel's Gush Shalom peace movement, maintains that the best strategy for the "peace camp" is to proclaim its message loudly and clearly, even if it goes against "popular opinion"—and that consensus will follow.

Avnery also criticized Grossman's vague proposal for peace with Syria, which would last "several years, only at the end of which, if he [Syrian President Bashar al-Assad] meets all the conditions, lives up to all the restrictions, will he get the Golan Heights. Force him into a process of ongoing dialogue." Avnery drily commented, "Bashar al-Assad certainly did not fall off his chair for sheer enthusiasm when he read this."

Avnery wrote that the problem is that Grossman reflects the views of the "Zionist peace camp," whose "strategic concept is that it is wrong to stray from what is called the 'national consensus.'" If they act otherwise, they fear they will not win over the public. Therefore, they tailor their message to what they think the public at large is able to absorb at any time. This position is best represented by Peace Now, and tends to be close to the Meretz Party and the left wing of the Labor Party.

But there is a second camp, wrote Avnery, "usually called the 'radical peace camp,' which carries out the opposite strategy: to spell out our message loudly and clearly, even when it is unpopular and far from the consensus (as it usually is). The assumption is that the consensus will follow us when our message proves right in the test of reality. This camp, to which Gush Shalom (in which I am active) belongs, together with dozens of other organizations, is engaged in strenuous daily work: from the fight against the Wall and all the other evil doings of the occupation, up to the boycott of the settlements and the support for soldiers who refuse to serve in the occupied territories.

"This camp differs from the other one also in its close contacts with the Palestinians, from the leadership down to

ordinary villagers who are fighting against the wall that robs them of their land. Recently, Gush Shalom started a dialogue with Hamas leaders. These contacts enable us to understand the Palestinian society in all its complexity, feelings, insights, demands and hopes.”

Their success is, that what Gush Shalom says today, Peace Now will say tomorrow, and a large part of the public on the day after. “This has been proven dozens of times in the past, and was proven again in the last few weeks during the Second Lebanon War. We called a demonstration against the war on its first day, when the overwhelming majority—including Amos Oz, David Grossman and others—supported it openly and wholeheartedly. But when the real motives and the fatal results started to become obvious, the consensus began to change. Our demonstrations swelled from 200 to 10,000 protesters. Even Peace Now, which had supported the war in the beginning, changed its stand, and near the end of the war called its own anti-war demonstration, in conjunction with Meretz. In the end, the entire national consensus moved.”

A Step Forward

“Grossman’s speech should be judged in this spirit. It was a moving speech, even a great speech. It did not contain all we would have wished for, but for Grossman, and the camp

he belongs to, it was really a big step in the right direction.”

Avnery’s comments underscore the fundamental dilemmas in achieving a Middle East peace, bridging not only the Israeli-Arab divide, but the internal divisions within both peoples. It is here that American statesman Lyndon H. LaRouche has identified the crucial and indispensable role that the United States must play. Peace between enemies must be defined in the terms laid out in the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, based on the principle of commitment to the happiness and well-being of the other, which established a peace that ended 30 years of religious war in central Europe.

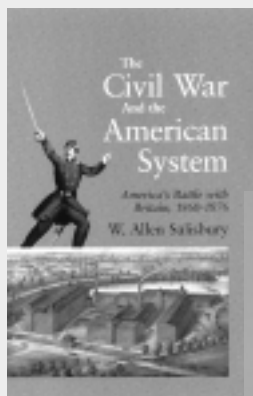
Today, this is only possible through cooperation in a regional economic development plan, as defined in LaRouche’s Oasis Plan for Middle East Peace. This plan lays out a series of regional economic infrastructure projects in the areas of transport, and increasing the region’s water resources and through development of nuclear energy for both water desalination and generation of electricity. Such a program will aid in healing the deep wounds of conflict, by raising the living standards of both peoples, and by providing for a positive future for both nations. Only the United States, under a very different leadership in Washington, has the power, and under capable leadership, the prestige and trust, to carry it out.

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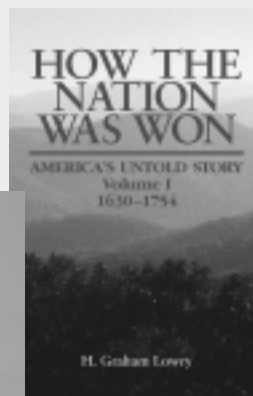
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