

The hate disease

A glimpse at what faces the next president of the United States can be gleaned from a speech by Dr. Attah Abu Al-Subh, culture minister of Hamas, which controls the legislative council of the Palestinian Authority. Speaking on Al-Aqsa TV on May 18, Dr. Al-Subh had the following to say about the current president, whom he styled “the master of killing, destruction, crime, violence, tyranny and injustice – little Bush”:

“I can see the blood of the children of Afghanistan between his fangs. Their blood drips onto his lips and chest. He is Dracula, a vampire ...

“Bush thirsts for blood day and night. He derives pleasure from killing. He has surpassed all types of crimes and all sadistic traits. That’s Bush for you. With all his audacity and insolence, Bush tears the Arab lands to shreds. He makes decision and has the audacity to call for the killing of life, and the killing of any person fighting for his right to live. That’s Bush for you.”

The clip of this screed is worth viewing: <https://memritv.org/clip/en/1774.htm>. Having not previously encountered Dr. Al-Subh’s contributions to international understanding – like his defense of the anti-Semitic forgery, “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,” or his poem in praise of anthrax (read on Hamas television after the post-9/11 anthrax attacks in New York and Washington) – I expected to click the link and find a bearded lunatic badly in need of a bath and a shave, draped in bandoliers of bullets and grenades and appropriately turbaned. On the contrary: the dapper Dr. Al-Subh denounced Dracula Bush while vested in a handsome grey suit with white shirt and natty grey tie. His is the refined face of Hamas. The message, however, is anything but refined – save for refined bile.

The next president of the United States should take a close look at Dr. Attah Abu Al-Subh; so should the people who will elect the 44th president. Dr. Al-Subh is not your random nutter. He is, by all appearances, a distinguished gentleman in late middle-age. Beneath the surface, however, boils a cauldron of hate: not simply for George W. Bush, but for the United States, for Israel, for Jews, for Christians who do not loathe Jews, for all those who impede the achievement of the political goals of Dr. Al-

Subh and his Hamas colleagues. Anyone who imagines that those goals include peace, freedom, and justice is either a fool, or Jimmy Carter.

Taking the full measure of the politics of hate that shapes the daily drama of the Middle East is not simply a geopolitical imperative, as foreign policy realists might argue; it is also, and above all, a moral obligation. Why? Because sound moral reasoning about the pursuit of peace, freedom, security, and justice must include a sober analysis of the obstacles to achieving those noble goals. Thus any morally serious person, conservative or liberal, must acknowledge that the hatred embodied in the likes of Dr. Attah Abu Al-Subh is a major obstacle to the building of peace, freedom, security, and justice in the Holy Land and the adjacent region – as is the related inability of Arab political culture to recognize that its own pathologies have created its current incapacities.

I remember a glorious evening in September 1990, a month after the Iraqi invasion and rape of Kuwait. The walls of the Old City of Jerusalem were glowing in the gloaming, and I found myself in conversation with Abba Eban, former foreign minister of Israel and a prominent figure on the dovish end of Israeli politics. Eban, a spellbinding orator, was an immensely civilized man; his heart told him that peace had to be possible. But he had seen the enthusiastic Palestinian support for Saddam Hussein's latest wickedness and he remarked, with sadness, "The poor Palestinians: they never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity." That is what the hate disease does to you.

That unhappy truth is no small part of what the American electorate, and the president we choose, must understand about the demons that beset the Holy Land.

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