

Nation of Refuge

Lately on Facebook there have been postings about the famous poem of Emma Lazarus, a portion of which can be found at the Statue of Liberty. Even more disturbing are the analogies made by some between Jewish people who were turned away from the shores of the United States and the rest of the civilized world while the Holocaust incinerated all of European Jewry. In the run-up to World War II, as many Jews tried to flee Europe, the gates of every safe haven were closed to them. Some Jews gained illegal immigration to the United States, as well as Central and South America, and some Jews made their way to the Holy Land; but the vast number of European Jews, like my mother's family, were incinerated in the gas ovens of the German war machine. Two members of my mother's family, Avraham and Joseph, escaped Auschwitz and fought for the Red Army. Stalin's reward to the Jews of Russia was to send them off to Siberia after the war. Somehow the two men made it to Israel, where they lived in a tent city in Hadera. There is now a large and prospering family in Israel. The world turned a blind eye to the Jewish people.

As to all those Irish, Italians, and others who we did not necessarily welcome to our shores but accepted to acquire cheap labor, we had the space and jobs to absorb that flow. Those immigrants shared, supported and worked to enhance the American dream. It was a different world then.

Does the analogy work today with respect to Syrians who want to come to the United States? Syrians, of course, have their own nation, their own national identity, and have chosen to keep a murderous regime in power. By the same token, most Arab nations have turned away the Syrian refugees and even made the situation worse by the civil war which they have promoted in Syria. Different Arab factions are fighting in Iraq and Syria for their own brand of hegemony. The Syrian refugee crisis has been created by Arabs, Syrians, and foreign forces. The Syrian refugees have not been aided by wealthy Arab regimes, and in fact the crisis has been encouraged by the intermeddling of those nations in the affairs of Syria.

There are refugees all over the world, and in fact we are probably living through one of the worst refugee crises on a worldwide basis that has been seen perhaps in human history. In Central Africa, Sudanese Muslims are virtually annihilating the Black population. Recent articles have appeared claiming that the savagery in Central Africa has even taken the form of requiring those who have been tortured and subjugated to eat the flesh of opponents. The United States certainly cannot be the world's policeman, nor can it be the world's safe haven for all of these refugees.

When Israel, in 1948, began to build its own military force, the first thing it did was take in refugees from around the world. Jewish refugees who were kicked out of every Arab country found a safe haven in Israel. In a number of operations, Black Jews from Ethiopia

were air-lifted en masse to Israel, where they live successfully today. Jews have been brought to Israel from Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan, and continuing from Ethiopia as well. Unfortunately, other nations do not take responsibility for their people but rather attempt to dump them on the wealthy nations of the world.

What is the proper role of the United States in Western civilization? Should the United States and Europe become the repository of Arab refugees, many of whom will contain embedded terrorists? The Jews who attempted to flee Europe from 1938-1945 never harmed a fly and represented some of the greatest thinkers the world had ever known, such as Sigmund Freud and Albert Einstein. Certainly, the Western world and United States ought to be willing to assist the refugee crisis in a limited and skillful way, taking refugees who will enhance the security and prosperity of the United States rather than damaging it. The real answer, however, lies in working with other developed nations of the world to tamp down the civil wars which create the refugee crisis in the first place.

It now appears that the Obama administration hands-off policy on Syria was a disaster, helping to create a crisis where 300,000+ people have died, and there are millions of refugees. It simply seems that the isolationist policies of this administration have resembled more pre-World War II Republican Presidents than anything we have seen in the time since that great worldwide conflict. The United States cannot simply stand by the sidelines, threaten red lines and then do nothing. The Russians have done the right thing, at least picking one regime to prop up in Syria. The United States should have been first to help keep in power the butcher of Damascus, as well as the butcher of Baghdad and the crazy man of Libya. Had we supported those dictators, there would be far fewer refugees and many less deaths than there are today. The concept of the second Bush administration and the two Obama administrations that we could force democracy on the rest of the world, especially those countries that have never known and will never know democracy, has been a disaster. My dad was right when he told Judge Muir, during the Tiananmen Square events in China, that the United States needs to support stable regimes and not try to impose our way of life on others, which will only create instability. Instability, disaster and war are what we have caused by not supporting regimes that were at least neutral to the United States, and using our influence to keep them out of trouble. When historians look at the last 10-15 years of presidential politics, they will see the problems that our do-gooder (Bush) and non-interventionist (Obama) administrations have caused.

None of these views can rank as liberal or conservative. It is not a domestic political inquiry as to whether we accept refugees into this country that we are not prepared to handle. We have a tremendous number of our own domestic problems: poverty, health care issues, and hunger. What we need to do is have a reasonable and rational foreign policy that is focused on what is best for the United States, rather than our trying to force what we think is best on other people in the world. George Washington and the other Founders of this country well understood that our first priority as a nation was to be neutral in the disputes of other countries, to support regimes that support the United States or at least do not hurt us, and to be at one with our allies. That sort of policy will get us out of trouble, will reduce the

refugee crisis in the world, and will maintain some degree of safety and sanity for the United States.

As far as the wall with Mexico? I still think it should be called “Trump’s Ultimate Tower”! Maybe he can impose gambling at the border, and pay for it that way.

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