

The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

I pray to God that the fighting between Hezbollah and the Israeli Defence Force will stop, once and for all, and that Lebanon and Israel enter into a period of peaceful coexistence. But I fear it is not to be. As long as Syria is supplying Hezbollah with money and arms, and as long as Iran and Syria maintain their respective political positions, that Israel and its Jewish population should be expunged from this earth, then, there can be no peace in this part of the world. Just last week, while the United Nations was trying to put together a multinational force under a United Nations's flag in order to create a buffer between Lebanon and Israel, Syria issued a warning. Syria's President Bashar Assad stated publicly that the deployment of United Nations forces on the border with Syria was 'an infringement of Lebanese sovereignty and a hostile position ... No single state in the entire world would tolerate, deploying foreign troops on its border posts unless there is a state of war with the other state ... it signals a hostile stance towards Syria ...'. In fact, I cannot disagree with President Bashar Assad, but, considering his, and his country's, recent history, is this a case of the pot, calling the kettle black? Should Syria close its border with Lebanon, then Lebanon would be shut off from the rest of the world. Israel has, already, blockaded Lebanon from the sea and the air so that the Syrian border is the only land link, at this time. President Bashar Assad is, clearly, playing hardball. According to the State Department of the Government of the United States : 'Syria – along with Iran – gives the Lebanese militia, Hezbollah, substantial amounts of financial, training, weapons, explosives, political, diplomatic and organisational aid. Iranian arms, bound for Hezbollah, regularly pass through Syria ...'. According to The Council of Foreign Relations, a 1921-founded independent, national membership organisation of the United States of America, with headquarters in New York and with an office in Washington, D.C., Syria and Iran work together over issues, relating to Hezbollah. Syria, The Council of Foreign Relations maintains, has an arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Syria has ballistic missiles to deliver its deathly cocktails of chemical weapons. It has a cache of the deadly nerve agent, sarin. It, also, has biological weapons. In short, Syria is a real threat to Israel and/or any other country which is deemed to be its enemy. This was proved in the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah as Iranian-designed rockets, pounded Israel, those rockets, having been shunted through Damascus, the Capital City of Syria.

In last week's letter to you, My Dear Grandchild, I wrote to you about the fact that Hezbollah would be paying out, to the displaced Lebanese civilians of the 34-day fighting, somewhere between \$HK35 billion and \$HK70 billion in reparation payments. I raised the question, at the time, as to from where that money was coming. Now, I know – for certain. Although Syria claims to be a republic, in reality it is an authoritarian, military dominated regime where opposition to President Bashar Assad is not tolerated. Although the 20-million, human population of the country may vote for their President and members of his Parliament, they are not permitted to change the government. President Bashar Assad, actually, is not elected, but is confirmed ... by unopposed popular referenda. As for the President's Parliament, it may not initiate any new laws, its powers, being limited to the modification to existing laws, only – be express Presidential permission, of course. All decisions are made by the President in all spheres of activity, directly

or indirectly. No political opposition is permitted. This political stance is justified by the President, maintaining a permanent state of emergency – since 1963, in fact. Syria has declared that a state of war exists between it and Israel. Because a state of war exists between Syria and Israel, it is compulsory that all Syrian males, having attained the age of 18 years, must spend 30 months in military service. It is estimated that about 216,000 young males enter Syria's military service, annually, bringing up the number of Syrian soldiers, at any time, ready and able to do battle with Israel, up to about 2.70 million. It is a frightening thought, is it not?

All of the above are facts and all are well known to the United States and the United Nations. You may recall that the United Nations passed a Resolution in 2005, requiring Syria to cooperate fully with its investigation into the murder of the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Mr Rafik Hariri. The result of that investigation was that it was discovered that several top Syrian Government officials were involved in the murder. The United Nations took no action over this matter in spite of the fact that it was only too apparent that Syrian intelligence orchestrated the murder of Mr Rafik Hariri. One could suggest that, considering the political structure of Syria, President Bashar Assad had committed the perfect murder by proxy. How can there be peace, therefore, with such a country as Syria, on the proverbial doorstep of Israel. Strangely, both Muslim and Jew share very similar religious beliefs and it should follow, one would think, that they should be able to live together peacefully. But since the founding of the Jewish State in 1948, war has been a constant companion of the people of Israel. It has caused the people to be hard and, in many cases, intolerant and extremely biased in their opinions. The Jews of Israel, as were the population of Sparta in the 6th Century B.C., are tough and warlike, sadly, with every man and woman, being, potentially, a soldier, ready to defend the country – to the death. I have talked to quite a number of Jews from Israel and they, all, seem to have similar demeanors, exemplified by the fruit of the cactus: Prickly on the outside; and, only said to be soft in the middle. The Israeli Jew refers to himself/herself as a 'sabra', in fact. Life is so short that I cannot understand the reason that anybody would want to throw it away. Man never seems to learn how to live together in harmony with his fellow. From the beginning of history, homo sapiens has been a warlike species: The species seems to love to kill.

Talk to you next week.

Chief Lady

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