



The Betty Letters

My Dear Grandchild,

The world has, always, had terrorists, in one form or another. Today, the most-hated terrorists, as far as the Western World is concerned, are the fundamentalistic Muslims who fight under the flag of al Qaeda whose leader is Osama bin Laden. The most-hated terrorists for the Eastern World are a toss-up between the United States of America and the Jews of Israel. For the Italians, the Jews have, just about, always the prime terrorists of history. One recalls the Roman X Fretensis Legion which, after destroying Jerusalem in 70 A.D., had to fight Eleaser el Yair, a relative of Menahem and Judas of Galilea, who, along with 966 Jews, fought off the X Fretensis Legion for years in the Judaeen Desert in a place called Masada, the name, meaning 'citadel'. It took the Romans about 4 years to rid the 'civilised world' in this period of history of the Jewish terrorists and to capture Masada. When the battle-hardened Roman soldiers eventually launched a successful invasion of Masada, it was discovered that the Jewish terrorists had committed mass suicide with the exception of one lady and some 5 children. The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, is credited with having written an account of the tragedy of Masada because the Jews, themselves, never, until quite recently, believed that Masada was part of the history of the Jews. The Jews have never condoned suicide so that the rabbis of the past were a little embarrassed about Masada and the fact that 960 Jews would perpetrate acts, proscribed by the Pentateuch. In addition, archeological digs have discovered the bones of pigs at Masada: The Jews are not supposed to eat pork, even to this day. That was, really, very naughty of them! The Roman Empire of this period of history had to have a decisive military success and Masada, with its 966 Jews in the middle of nowhere, was a convenient way to let the people of the Western World understand and appreciate the power of Rome. The Romans had, always, thought of the Jews as being rebels, first, then, terrorists, following their graduation from a rebellious group that would not buckle under the power of the Western World. It was determined by Rome that the defenders of Masada were people who had to be killed in order to reinforce an ancient imperialist superpower's reputation of invincibility. Sound familiar, My Dear Grandchild?

The other morning, I tuned in to a broadcaster on an American television channel, one of those so-called talk shows, and the presenter was saying that it was strange that Osama bin Laden was still breathing. With all of the military and economic might of the United States of America, The Land of The Free and The Home of The Brave, as it likes to be known, after so many years, it still is unable to hunt down in order to kill the leader of al Qaeda, the presenter parroted not less than 5 times in the course of 10 minutes. One can imagine that, in the Middle East, similar statements are being made by fundamentalistic Muslims who must, daily, parrot that it was strange, with more than 100 million Muslims in the West, not one of them has been able to kill the hated US President George W. Bush, The Butcher of Iraq, the Infidel, the enemy of True Believers. For me, I do not understand the reason that anybody could hate President George W. Bush because, by and large, he is quite an ignorant man who, only recently, learned that there is a country called South Africa, which is separate from the Continent of Africa, that the country of Austria is a little different from the country, known as Australia, and that APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) is not the same as OPEC (The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries).

The world will, always, have terrorists, people who will stop at nothing in order to achieve their stated political goals. A terrorist is defined as being a person who uses violence, or the threat of violence, in order to achieve a political purpose. During the French Revolution of 1789 to 1799, cataclysmic political and social upheaval were the results, inter alia, of a complex series of causes, which included the inability of the ruling classes of nobility, clergy, and bourgeoisie to come to grips with the problems of state, the indecisive nature of the monarch, extortionate taxation of the peasantry, impoverishment of the workers, the intellectual ferment of the Age of Enlightenment, and the example of the American War of Independence. The 'terrorism' of this age resulted in the overthrow of the Bourbon Monarchy of France and in the establishment of the First French Republic. In the French Revolution, the term, terrorist, was applied to an adherent or supporter of the Jacobins, who advocated and practised methods of partisan repression and bloodshed in the propagation of the principles of democracy and equality. 'Democracy and equality', sound familiar, My Dear Grandchild? Then, history records the violent struggles between the Catholics and the Protestants of Europe, during the 16th Century and the 17th Century. Tens of thousands of people on both sides of these 2, closely related Christian ideologies died during those terrible years of struggles, with gangs of both sides, running through the streets of European capitals, slashing with their swords at people who would not convert to their theory of the true Christian spirit. And, in Ireland, even to this day, Protestants and Catholics seem to take delight in killing one another. One should not exclude from the list of historical terrorists, of course, the Muslim hordes which, within 3 decades from 632 A.D. (which was the date of the death of Mohammed of Mecca) swept through the civilised world of those days, converting any and all infidels to the way of Allah. The 3 principles of conversion were (a) argumentation (b) prayer, and, if those paths failed to convince the unbeliever, then, (c) chop off his head so that at least his soul will go to Heaven. Today, Sunni and Shi'ite Muslims continue to kill each other, both believing in the one God, Allah, and that Mohammed is his apostle, a prophet, sent by God, himself.

So you see, My Dear Grandchild, terrorism of the level of that which Osama bin Laden and his followers employ is not new to this world of ours since the chronicles of history record that it is human nature to revolt and to kill, many times indiscriminately. It is a sad indictment of man that, after what is it, 5,000 years of civilisation? man still, cannot resolve differences of opinion with his fellows without resorting to violence, leading to murder. Is man, today, very different from man of centuries past? I think not. The major difference between man today and man of centuries past is his ability to kill more of his enemies in the shortest possible time. Mass killing is the subject of nearly every country of the Western World, today, with hundreds of billions of dollars, being spent on finding new and more extravagant weaponry, giving an edge to one country at the expense of another. Space will, definitely, be the next theatre of major battles where wars will be waged and, sooner or later, man's innate propensity to kill his own kind, out of the sheer love of killing, will lead to his eventual destruction ... at his own hand. I suppose, then, the cockroaches will inherit what is left of the Planet Earth.

Talk to you, next week.

Chief Lady

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