

Donald Trump Disappoints the Anti-Semites

So, Donald Trump delivers a speech in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day, and the anti-Semites are up in arms. He is not the man they thought he was.

In reality, he never was that man, which was more a projection of their own ideology than a right assessment of his. As Sam Kestenbaum reported on the Jewish Forward, "Trump Gives A Holocaust Speech—And The 'Alt Right' Screams 'Betrayal'."

How, exactly, did Trump betray the "alt-right"?

In his speech, he said, "The State of Israel is an eternal monument to the undying strength of the Jewish people. The fervent dream that burned in the hearts of the oppressed is now filled with the breath of life, and the Star of David waves atop a great nation arisen from the desert."

This was certainly in keeping with his campaign speeches, in which he pledged to be a great friend of Israel and guaranteed that he would move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

Trump commended the late Elie Wiesel, perhaps the most famous Holocaust survivor, affirming his call that "we must bear witness." Trump spoke to the survivors who were there, people who witnessed "the Nazi genocide of the Jewish people."

And he denounced Holocaust denial, saying, "Denying the Holocaust is only one of many forms of dangerous anti-Semitism that continues all around the world. We've seen anti-Semitism on university campuses, in the public square, and in threats against Jewish citizens. Even worse, it's been on display in the most sinister manner when terrorists attack Jewish communities, or when aggressors threaten Israel with total and

complete destruction.”

He pledged to confront anti-Semitism, and said, “As president of the United States, I will always stand with the Jewish people—and I will always stand with our great friend and partner, the state of Israel.”

Then he closed with some moving, personal stories of courage and hope.

All in all, a fine and fitting speech, and one that I would have expected from President Trump, since at no point in his campaign did I think he was an anti-Semite (despite the many other reservations I had about him).

But words like these from Trump’s speech are fighting words for the anti-Semites of this world.

As Kestenbaum reported, “‘You can never appease the Jews,’ wrote Benjamin Garland at the neo-Nazi website the Daily Stormer. ‘Give them an inch and they want a mile. The only way to deal with them is to ignore them and/or tell them to shut their filthy mouths.’

“Garland bemoaned what he saw as a turnaround for Trump. Months ago he was ‘a man who knew how the Jews operate and as a man with enough self-respect to not be publicly humiliated by them by bowing to their every whim and demand.’

“But Jews ‘have their ratlike claws deep in him now,’ Garland wrote.”

What in the world he is talking about? The Trump who gave the Holocaust remembrance speech is the same man as the Trump whom Garland supported.

It’s the same Trump whose daughter Ivanka converted to Judaism. The same Trump who remains very close to his Jewish son-in-law Jared. The same Trump whose grandchildren through Ivanka are considered Jewish. The same Trump who has had many

Jewish colleagues and friends. The same Trump of whom Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "I've known the president and I've known his family and his team for a long time, and there is no greater supporter of the Jewish people and the Jewish state than President Donald Trump. I think we should put that to rest."

This is who Trump has been for many years. Why the shock from the alt-right now?

David Duke, a leading anti-Semitic, white supremacist (and former KKK leader), tweeted, "Why is the so-called Holocaust the only atrocity to receive its very own 'Remembrance Proclamation'? Jewish privilege."

Is Duke unaware that Trump also gave a speech in memory of the Armenian genocide this week (although he didn't use the word "genocide" in his speech)? For the record, it's officially called Armenian Remembrance Day, and it's recognized by the White House. Shall we call this "Armenian privilege?"

Getting back to Duke, he challenged Trump directly, asking, "Do you not have any power? Why are you surrounding yourself with the enemies of the American people?"

And who are these "enemies of the American people"? Obviously, the Jewish people and their allies, to whom Trump has now sold out.

The reality is that Trump is simply carrying out his campaign promises and being true to who he has been for many years: a friend of the Jewish people.

As my colleague Rabbi Shmuley Boteach wrote in February, "Trump as anti-Semite is not implausible, but it is absurd and libelous. It would also suggest that his strong support for Israel is inauthentic, when it's something he has worn on his sleeve for his entire adult life."

Shmuley even said this: “He has surrounded himself with Jews— they are his business colleagues, employees and friends. I know orthodox Jews who have long worked for Trump and say that his respect for the Jewish faith has been exemplary.”

Did you hear that, Mr. Duke? Are you listening, Mr. Garland? Trump “has surrounded himself with Jews” for decades, so it’s nothing new if he’s doing so today.

We can certainly debate whether Jared Kushner has too much influence or whether Kushner’s views represent those of Trump’s major supporters. But we can’t debate Trump’s historic relationship with Israel and the Jewish people. That’s not new at all.

What’s new is that he has also surrounded himself with conservative Christians in recent years. And what’s new is that his populist, pro-America message helped catapult him to the White House.

Apparently, these anti-Semites misunderstood Trump’s words and pledges, finding confirmation for their white-supremacist, Jew-hatred, thereby projecting their views on his.

It looks like they’re in for a rude awakening. {eoa}