

From Munich to Mushroom Clouds: Is It Really 1938 Again?

Many today look around at the rising threat of radical Islam and the weak Western response and wonder if we are repeating the costly mistakes of a bygone era.

There is no doubt we live in perilous times. The clever mass murderers of al-Qaida have now morphed into the sadistic executioners of Islamic State. Iran is exporting its own fierce brand of Islamic militancy, destabilizing and devouring nations across the Middle East, while building a renegade nuclear weapons program to further its expansionist agenda.

Each of these radical Islamist movements see themselves as the vanguard of that final jihadi surge, which will ultimately destroy Israel, spread throughout the world and subjugate humanity to a foretold 'golden age' of Islamic rule. Meanwhile, many Western leaders are pressuring the small democratic nation of Israel to sacrifice the heart of its ancient homeland to secure an illusory peace and pacify these ravenous beasts.

So, is it really 1938 again? Are we seeing an appeasement of great evil like Neville Chamberlain at Munich?

The comparison is not without its merits. In September 1938, the British prime minister was negotiating with Adolf Hitler in hopes of stemming the threat of Nazism and buying "Peace for Our Time!" The price was a strip of land along Germany's border with the small democratic Czech Republic.

In Prague, an emergency session of the Czech cabinet sat helplessly for hours awaiting word from Munich, with absolutely no say in their own nation's fate. In the end,

Hitler's appetite for conquest was whetted, not abated. And Chamberlain's diplomatic mission became an infamous symbol of failed statesmanship.

But lest we pan the British premier too much, we should recall that this was an entire era of failed statesmanship, as Western leaders made decision after decision which signaled the Nazis that the resistance against them was feeble.

Just two months before Munich, representatives from 32 nations gathered at the Evian conference to consider taking in more endangered Jews from Germany. Hitler openly mocked the gathering's "deep sympathy for these criminals." Yet the Dominican Republic stood alone as the only country present willing to accept a large number of Jewish refugees. Nazi observers at the conference reported back to Hitler: "You can do what you like with the Jews, nobody is interested in them."

The next summer saw the tragic voyage of the *St. Louis*, a ship packed with 900 German Jewish children who could see the lights of Miami off the bow before being turned away by the Roosevelt administration, only to be returned to the sinking continent of Europe.

That same year of 1939, Britain issued the shameful White Paper strictly limiting the number of Jewish refugees who could enter mandatory Palestine—a decision that consigned millions of Jews to the Nazi gas chambers.

Then there was that one dark night in November 1938, when the world stood by as the Nazis arrested over 30,000 Jews and burned more than 1,000 synagogues on *Kristallnacht*. By morning the Sudetenland—surrendered to Hitler at Munich just five weeks earlier—had become the first territory in the Nazi grasp to be made *judenrein*. The Holocaust had begun!

So it was an entire era of failed statesmanship, not just by one but by many world leaders, who misjudged character and misread intentions with catastrophic results. And the reason

this collective failure befell the community of nations is because it was an era of great seductions and deceptions on a global scale. Like a two-edged sword, men were fooled by others but they also fooled themselves.

The German people were seduced by a mesmerizing figure who promised to restore Germany's tattered fortunes, but instead brought the nation to ruin.

Chamberlain seduced himself into thinking Munich was about one small strip of border land, when in fact the whole expanse of Europe was at stake.

At Evian, an American president coolly calculated that 30,000 Jewish immigrants per year was enough, completely oblivious that 55 million souls of all races and creeds would soon perish in the ensuing deluge of war.

An entire world seduced itself into believing that Hitler was merely venting in *Mein Kampf*, when in fact he meant every word.

All these missteps helped trigger an unprecedented global conflict which ended seven years later with the unimaginable sight of mushroom clouds rising over incinerated Japanese cities.

So we have to be grateful for a leader of sober thinking and steel resolve like Winston Churchill, who rose up just in time to begin confronting the Nazi threat for what it truly was. Shudder the thought that Hitler had gotten to the Bomb first.

Such alert, tenacious statesmanship is sorely needed again today, as the seductions at operation in our time are even more sinister and deceptive. Indeed, the Bible clearly warns of seducing spirits in the last days, such as Paul's admonition: "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:1, 13).

And in a nuclear age, the margin of error for misjudging character and misreading intentions is mercilessly razor thin.

One powerful deception today sees Israel's surrender of the West Bank as a small sacrifice for the sake of peace in our time, when in fact it would only whet the appetite of global jihad.

Another reasons that mankind has not used atomic weapons against each other for the last 70 years now, enticing us into thinking it will not happen again. The black-and-white footage from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and all those nuclear tests on Bikini Atoll, are so old and grainy they pre-date the digital age. Likewise, the 'experts' lull us to sleep by explaining that Iran—as with North Korea—launched its nuclear program merely as a guarantee against regime change, when its true purpose is as a frightening instrument of Islamic conquest.

So the P5+1 nations are quibbling with Tehran over the inspection of centrifuges, when their real burden should be for preventing the incineration of cities.

And like before, world leaders insist the Ayatollahs are only venting when they cry, "Death to Israel! Death to America!" when in fact they mean every word!

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