

THE GOOD PEOPLE

by Ben Kinchlow

It has been said that perception is often more powerful than truth, and this is certainly the case in the war on terror. Israel and America have been cast as aggressor bullies by what some refer to as the "drive-by" media, while homicide bombers are continuously portrayed as valiant freedom fighters or brave insurgents attempting to throw off an oppressive yoke imposed by the great Satan "America" and the little Satan "Israel." Let there be no doubt, a war for world hegemony is raging, and absent a divine intervention of almost biblical proportions, or the sudden stiffening of the West's backbone, which may also require divine intervention, this clash of civilizations will almost certainly lead to a nuclear conflagration.

Is there a non-military, non-sanction solution that can be applied, reducing suffering on all sides, with no additional loss of human life? I believe there is. Many have heard of, perhaps spoken of, political, military, economic, and even media strategies as resolutions. I believe there's another element - a more powerful element - the human element.

Edmund Burke, 18th century political philosopher, said: "*All that is necessary for evil to triumph is that good men do nothing.*" To paraphrase Mr. Burke... the failure of good people to vigorously oppose evil ultimately allows evil to triumph.

It is dangerous to make blanket assertions, and this is not intended as such; however, though all Muslims are not terrorists, it is true that all Middle Eastern terrorists are Muslim; which begs the question... *How do you tell them apart?*

Growing up in the American South, I quickly learned of an organization called The Ku Klux Klan, a terrorist organization that influenced political and public policy with violence against Blacks and white Republicans. The KKK lynched more than 1,200 white Republicans in the 1880s, proving that then, as now, it can be dangerous to be a Republican.

It became clear to me that not all white people were members of the Klan. It was, however, equally evident that all members of the KKK were white.

For Blacks, the dilemma was, as is modern day Israel's... absent the robe and hood, how did we tell them apart? You could tell the good Whites from the Klansmen by their actions, what they did or said publicly.

One and a half million Arab citizens live, work, and shop side by side with five million Jews in Israel. In America, that would be the equivalent of every White wondering which Black was a member of an extremist group intending to detonate a bomb inside a crowded theater, mall, or restaurant. How secure would white Americans feel around Blacks?

Let me briefly address the aforementioned "human element."

In pre-WWII Germany, all Germans were not Nazis. The Nazis began as a relatively small political party, founded by an ex-con, Adolph Hitler. Estimates are that at his peak, no more than 40% voted for him. The majority of people in Germany were hard working and industrious, the backbone of German society - "the good people."

In pre-WWII Japan, all Japanese were not imperialists or Kamikazes. Many did not hold the idea that it was Japan's ultimate destiny to rule the world. They were "the good people."

In Italy, under Mussolini, all Italians were not fascists; they were merchants, farmers, and housewives. They did not feel their only purpose was to uphold the state. They were "the good people."

Many Americans opposed Hitler's designs on the world, but believed the U.S. shouldn't interfere in European affairs. They weren't traitors; they were doctors, teachers, ministers, rabbis - "the good people."

At the march on Washington in Aug 1963, just prior to the "I have a dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr., then president of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Joachim Prinz, expelled from Germany at the onset of Jewish persecution, made this powerful statement;

"When I was the rabbi of the Jewish community in Berlin under the Hitler Regime, I learned many things. The most important thing that I learned under those tragic circumstances was that bigotry and hatred are not the most urgent problem. The most urgent, the most disgraceful, the most shameful, and the most tragic problem--- is silence. A great people which had created a great civilization had become a nation of silent onlookers. They remained silent in the face of hate, in the face of brutality, and in the face of mass murder."

Silence, we are reminded, is golden; but silence is also consent.

The Klan could not have operated openly in the South, nor could Emperor Hirohito of Japan, Il Duce Mussolini, or Der Fuhrer have ravaged the world without an extremely important element... silence... the tacit approval of "the good people." Hitler could not have killed six million Jews without the silence, the collaboration, of the moderates – "the good people."

They protest, "We did not collaborate!" But did they speak up?

If you lived near a huge something or other where trainloads of people came in but none went out, and smokestacks belched black smoke from furnaces 24 hours a day, wouldn't you wonder what went on there? Did not these moderates, "the good people" of Germany, wonder what happened to their Jewish neighbors who suddenly disappeared? Did they ask?

During the slave era in America, every white American was not a racist or slave owner; in the Civil War, more than 360,000 Union soldiers died as testimony to that truth. Every white person did not participate in lynchings; every German citizen did not help gas Jews; every Russian did not participate in the pogroms, nor every Chinese in the communist purges of Chairman Mao; yet evil reigned supreme. Why?

The moderates, the pacifists, "the good people" may not have participated in this evil. They may have even had passionate discussions about it among themselves. In private, they may have been adamantly opposed to it, but

their failure to vigorously and publicly oppose it with words and actions ultimately allowed evil to triumph.

In the 1960s, black America, fueled by stories from returning veterans of equality overseas, Black Nationalism, and the fresh infusion of young college students, raised the cry "Enough is enough!"

We took to the streets in protest. Like Mahatma Gandhi of India, a young black minister named Martin Luther King Jr., emerged, the symbol of our non-violent protest. The white citizens councils and the KKK protested, held rallies, and abused the demonstrators. Governors called out the National Guard and screaming racists marched and protested in front of TV cameras; however, this time something was different. "The good people" spoke up; not in quiet debates or coffee klatches; not in passionate discourses in their comfortable living rooms. This time, singing aloud, "We shall overcome!" they marched arm in arm with the protestors; they wrote letters; they called their congressmen; they gave their money; and in some cases, they gave their lives. Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, two young Jewish men from New York, along with black Freedom Rider, James Chaney, were brutally murdered on a lonely road in Mississippi one dark night by Klansmen.

"The good people" were outraged. The Jewish community joined in. Moderate Whites spoke out. They marched; they sent lawyers; and finally, the American president sent troops. Not only did they protest; they protested out loud. "This is not representative of America," they said. No longer was hatred and murder freely taught to kindergarten children in private segregated schools, as they are in Palestinian schools today. Violence, now, was not merely disregarded with a turn of the head; it was criticized publicly and punished. It then ceased; this evil was vanquished.

In the recent Israeli/Hezbollah conflict, 20 people were accidentally killed by an Israeli air strike in Lebanon, in an area forewarned of an impending air

attack. Arab nations, the UN, and of course, "the Muslim street" was outraged. The Israelis apologized, but to no avail. "This is unforgivable!" Drive by media headlines screamed of Israeli brutality. However, between September 2000 and November 2002, suicide bombers murdered 640 Israelis, and almost 19,000 Muslims have been killed by other Muslims in Iraq alone in the past 18 months. Muslims are killing Muslims! Where is the worldwide condemnation of this carnage? Where are the resolutions of censure by the UN? Where is the outrage from the Arab community? Where is the anger and demonstrations on the Muslim street?

I am puzzled. Moderate Muslims have proclaimed, with apparent sadness, and with real or feigned anger, that extremists have hijacked the real Islam - a religion of peace. If the moderate Muslims - "the good people" - *truly* believed their religion of peace had been hijacked by extremist elements that do not represent the teachings of the prophet and of Islam, why do they not step forward and speak up?

We saw celebrations across the Muslim world when the twin towers fell; we saw people threatened with death over a cartoon; we see civilians specifically targeted by Muslim forces. Where is the Islamic condemnation of these activities? Why do we not hear impassioned speeches or see massive demonstrations in the Muslim street against the murders of Muslims by other Muslims?! Why did they not speak up when Saudi religious police locked 15 young girls inside a burning school in Mecca to burn to death because they didn't have on headscarves and black robes, while firefighters stood by and watched? Why don't they stop shielding terrorists and allowing payments, bounty if you will, to the families of homicide bombers? Why don't they shut off the funding, punish the perpetrators, and reveal their identities?

Why don't they?!

Ask yourself - when was the last time you saw a moderate Muslim nation or group, or even an individual Muslim, speak out vigorously and publicly, condemning these radical extremists' terrorist activities? If only 15-20% (or

less) of Muslims are radical extremists, then why don't the other 80-85% (or more) stand up and publicly condemn these rogue hi-jackers, or the nations or individuals that sponsor or commit terrorism? Why don't these moderates – "the good people" – officially and publicly recognize Israel's right to exist, then stand arm in arm with Israel and the West as proof positive that Islam is, in word and deed, a religion of peace?

Why don't they?

Silence may be golden, but Pastor Martin Niemöller, an early supporter of Hitler, who later came to oppose the Nazis and was imprisoned at Dachau, pointed out that silence can be deadly. This truth is powerfully illustrated in a poem written by him and inscribed at the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts:

They came first for the communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a communist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a protestant.

Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

All that is necessary to halt the hi-jacking of Islam and the murder of innocents by terrorists is for good Muslims to speak up.

