

Comment

Israel is the fall guy over sanctions on Putin

US attacks Bennett as soft on Russia but is happy for Moscow to broker the Iran nuclear deal

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With the western world transfixed by the horrors in Ukraine, Israel finds itself singled out for criticism and misunderstanding in equal measure. Its prime minister, Naftali Bennett, has been acting as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine. An observant Jew, he even broke the strict rules of the sabbath by flying to Moscow to try to broker a ceasefire. Yet Israel, where I now spend most of my time, is being attacked for the very thing that makes Bennett a suitable intermediary — the careful line his government is treading between supporting Ukraine and not criticising Russia.

Ukraine's president Volodymyr Zelensky, who has said Israel is uniquely placed to mediate and who wants talks to be held in Jerusalem, nevertheless criticised Israel in an address to the Knesset on Sunday for not sending weapons or taking "strong sanctions" against Russia.

He likened the Russian invasion to the Nazi genocide of the Jews. This caused outrage in Israel and a sharp rebuke from the Holocaust museum, Yad Vashem, which called it a "trivialisation and distortion of the historical facts of the Holocaust". It was a singularly maladroit pitch by Zelensky to a Jewish world that

remembers Ukrainians as particularly vicious collaborators with the Nazi attempt to wipe out the Jewish people — though some helped save them and more Ukrainians died at the Nazis' hands than did the citizens of any other country.

Israel has provided an entire field hospital in Ukraine. But while many other countries have also been criticised for not providing the weaponry that can defeat the Russian forces, none is in Israel's uniquely difficult position. For it's caught between Ukraine and Russia. This is because it depends on Russia's president, Vladimir Putin — the patron of the Iranian regime — turning a blind eye to the frequent

The suggestion the West has learnt its lesson is premature

Israeli sorties into Syria to destroy Iranian weaponry being transported there to attack Israel. Despite this, the Biden administration has made a point of pressurising Israel to adopt western sanctions against Russia. The US under-secretary of state for political affairs, Victoria Nuland, publicly warned Israel against becoming "the last haven for dirty money that's fuelling Putin's wars".

Israel's careful path means it has implemented some Russian sanctions but not all. While it hasn't officially joined the sanctions campaign, nor passed any regulations that would prevent Israeli companies doing business with Russia, it is ensuring that its

financial institutions won't provide a sanctions bypass. So Israeli banks have severed relations with sanctioned Russian banks.

Some Russian oligarchs with Israeli citizenship, including Roman Abramovich, have been targeted by Israeli sanctions and restrictions. Abramovich flew to Israel on his private jet last week, but he left the next day for Turkey because of new government regulations that private jets and yachts belonging to sanctioned individuals can remain in Israel for only 48 hours.

Abramovich had intended to donate tens of millions of dollars to Yad Vashem and the International Institute for Holocaust Research. Although Yad Vashem originally appealed for the oligarch to be excluded from sanctions, criticism forced it to change its position and suspend its partnership with him.

But America is being staggeringly two-faced. For while pressuring Israel and other nations to impose sanctions, it is using Russia to broker the nuclear deal with Tehran (which refuses to negotiate directly with the US). Under the reported terms of this deal, the Biden administration will make Putin the effective gatekeeper for Iran's nuclear programme. Worse still, the US proposes to enable Russia to set up a sanctions evasion hub in Iran. This is because Russia's state-controlled energy company, Rosatom, is set to cash in on its \$10 billion contract to expand Tehran's Bushehr nuclear plant.

A State Department official recently confirmed that America won't impose sanctions on Russian participation in nuclear projects that

are part of this deal. Israel is therefore trapped not just between Russia and Ukraine but in the cynical web spun between Russia and America.

Reports suggest that the deal means Iran will be able to develop nuclear weapons in a short space of time. So Israel fears it is being set up by the Biden administration as both the potential victim of a genocidal nuclear regime and as a scapegoat for the failure of the US and Europe to stop the slaughter in Ukraine.

For although Bennett has been criticised in Israel for not providing enough assistance to Ukraine, the attacks on Israel's "neutrality" by western commentators have been disproportionate and extreme.

There are some sobering conclusions from this. Ukraine's fate demonstrates that, when a despotic power has nuclear weapons, the world's ability to stop its atrocities is all but paralysed. Despite this fact, the Biden administration is set upon a course that will enable terrorist Iran to become a nuclear power.

Furthermore, it's hard to imagine that, were missiles to start raining down on Haifa or Tel Aviv from Lebanon or Tehran, there would be an outpouring of support from the West equivalent to the emotion being expressed over Ukraine.

This is what Israel's predicament tells us above all. The suggestion that the West has learnt its lesson from Ukraine, that aggressive tyrants should not be appeased or used as cash cows but must be resisted because they mean what they say, is distinctly premature.

Alex Massie is away



Scotland led fight against TB, but the battle isn't over yet

Chris Holme

A revolution in medicine started in Edinburgh 70 years ago but its achievements are now at risk of being undone. Tuberculosis, a scourge of humanity for millennia, was rising fast in Scotland, particularly among the young. Half of all those diagnosed would die in five years. The NHS in Edinburgh was a shambles.

In December 1951, the Kirk's Edinburgh Presbytery set up a committee which found the city had only 360 beds for 700 new TB cases a year. The presbytery called it an emergency, exhorting the authorities to "spare neither money nor material to wipe out this disease from our city's life". Help was on its way. That same month John Crofton, who was born in Dublin, was appointed to the chair of tuberculosis at Edinburgh University and changed everything.

He brought in new consultants and, critically, brought knowledge of drug resistance, having worked in London on the Medical Research Council's trial of streptomycin, the first effective drug against TB. It worked for some but others developed resistance. Two new drugs became available but no one knew how to use them to best effect. Crofton's group looked at where treatment was failing, monitoring each patient's progress with bacteriological testing. Instead of giving one drug then another, they gave all three from the outset and discovered to their astonishment that they were curing everyone.

Rising TB notifications in Edinburgh were halved between 1954 and 1957 — a feat not achieved anywhere before or since. The Edinburgh group thought they might control TB in 20 years — they managed it within six. Residual TB in Edinburgh was rooted out with an x-ray screening programme in Princes Street Gardens in 1958. One of the first international trials, organised via the Pasteur Institute in Paris, established the Edinburgh method as the gold standard for treating TB in affluent countries.

A huge TB challenge remained for the rest of the world but, over time, drug resistance grew through poor prescribing and patients not completing their treatment. Control measures achieved some success but then came Covid, which has curtailed much TB treatment worldwide. Experts meeting at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE) next month fear the work of Crofton's group in developing the first 100 per cent cure, and progress since, are threatened. The danger now is of a global resurgence of TB and an outlook as bleak as that Edinburgh and Scotland faced 70 years ago.

Chris Holme is a speaker at the RCPE Changing times for tuberculosis symposium taking place on April 8

Giles Coren Notebook

I have been 'othered' and I want an apology

My agent forwarded me an email from Bloomsbury Publishing on Friday, which included a covering letter that began, "I wondered if it would be possible for you to share the following email and attachment with Giles Coren. We hope they will find it useful and of interest."

"They?" I repeated aloud. Because it sounded weird. The attachment was addressed only to my name, nobody else's. Who were they hoping might also be involved in providing a cover blurb for the manuscript they had sent? My family? My cats? My intern staff of thumb-sucking undergraduate ninnies? Or did they, perhaps, think that there was more than one of me? Because there isn't. There is only one Giles Coren, sadly, and he alone decides what he is interested in. Surely, they meant, "we hope he will find it useful and of interest".

Oh, wait. Hang on. They did only

mean me, didn't they? But they called me "they", just on the off chance that it was my preferred form of address. That was their default assumption. Not that I was a man, but that I was something else. That I'd be sitting there with my nose in the *Collins Book of Pronouns* when their letter arrived, trolling JK Rowling online and eyeing up the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham for a crack at the women's javelin, ready to scream for social justice if they called me "he". Which suggests they don't know who I am (I'm the bloke who struggles to follow cricket reports on the BBC because the word "batter", when applied to anything apart from fried fish or domestic abuse, makes him come out in hives). Which, in turn, makes me wonder why they thought I would want to support this book of theirs?

And that lack of basic consideration on their part makes me feel "othered", I don't mind telling you. It makes me feel marginalised and oppressed and silenced. I have been either misgendered here or, worse, misnumbered. I demand an apology,



reparations, the firing of the whole marketing department, and an immediate change in the law. In the meantime, we plan to march on your offices and raise hell. Every last one of us.

Satanic salad

A former chaplain to the Queen has said that hot cross buns with novelty ingredients such as chocolate or cheese, which detract from the snack's fundamental message about Christ's suffering, could be evidence of "the Devil at work". I see where he is going with this hypothesis, but he is wrong. It is quite plainly celery that is the Devil's work. Also, walnuts. And sliced apple. In short, it is the existence of the Waldorf salad that provides us, for the first time since the Temptation of Christ, with our only firm evidence that the angel Satan was cast out of Heaven for conspiring against his maker and has been plotting ever since to undermine His Creation. The fact that people then toss those already diabolical ingredients in mayonnaise is, many Milton scholars aver, the subject of

the missing thirteenth book of *Paradise Lost*.

Called to the bar

According to government figures, more homes for Ukrainian refugees have been offered in Cornwall under the Homes for Ukraine scheme than in any other UK council, which is funny when you think how unfriendly the Cornish are to everyone else. But it does offer a glimpse of how to get served at the bar on your surfing holiday in Rock next summer: simply smile when the pub goes quiet and some gnarly old fisherman, fixing you with his one good eye, says, "you be down from that there London, be you?" and reply, "Nah, mate, Dnipro."

Let's all do a Beckham

In a wonderful gesture yesterday, David Beckham turned over his Instagram account, with its 71 million followers, to the head of the regional perinatal centre in Kharkiv, to promote her work and generate donations to Unicef. This meant that, for one day only, Beckham's feed was not full of his fancy tropical holidays, ski pics, gorgeous family, gym workouts and sorry-not-sorry "flashback" photos of himself looking hot. It would be nice if everyone on Instagram made the same gesture. Literally everyone. Every day. For ever.