

Being There

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PERHAPS HE IS LYING all the time.
Perhaps he is lying about being a liar.
Perhaps he is cheating about being a cheat.
Perhaps he is just posing as an impostor.

Perhaps he has misled us all about his misleading.

Perhaps he is a very shrewd manipulator, who has led us all into believing that he is a megalomaniac simpleton.

Well, today is President Donald Trump's first day in office.

PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP—we must get used to these three words.

The only one thing that can be said with some certainty is that nothing is certain. That this man is totally unpredictable. That we are in for four years of uncertainty, waking up every morning wondering what he is up to today.

He will be the entertainer-president. As he was the entertainer-candidate. I confess that every morning, when I took into my hand the daily newspaper, the first thing I was looking for was the latest item about Trump. What did he do? What did he say? Whatever it was, it was always entertaining.

The question is: do we really want the most powerful man in the world to be an entertainer? Or an overblown egomaniac? Or a totally self-absorbed narcissist? A man who knows nothing and believes that he can solve everything?

This is a dangerous world. From today on, it will be a lot more dangerous.

LET'S THINK for a moment about the Red Button.

There are several Red Buttons around the world, and several fingers of leaders (including ours) hovering over them. Thinking about Trump's finger makes me nervous.

Some of the most terrible wars in history were started by nincompoops.

Think about World War I, with its many millions of dead, started by a nobody, a Serbian fanatic.

World War II, with its many tens of millions of dead, was started by Adolf Hitler, a quite primitive person. When he crossed the border into Poland, he did not dream of starting a world war. Until the very last moment he did not believe that Great Britain, an "Aryan" country he admired, would declare war on him.

President Trump seems to know nothing about history. Nor about much else, except real estate and making money. He also does not seem to really listen to others when making decisions. Wow.

Some 45 years ago I read a book by a Polish-American writer, Jerzy Kosinsky, called "Being There". It was about a mentally handicapped gardener whose rich boss died and left him alone. All his knowledge was confined to gardening and television.

By some accident he became involved in politics. His simple answers to all questions were conceived as profoundly wise. Things like: You have to water the roots if you want to have sweet fruit.

He climbed the political ladder to the top, become the advisor to the President. I don't remember if he actually became president. Trump did.

CURIOSLY ENOUGH, I remember a German movie I saw when I was nine years old. Not a very important or sophisticated one. Yet here I remember, 84 years later.

It's about a young man of very good family, who falls in love with the daughter of an ordinary carpenter. His family absolutely refuses to allow him to marry the daughter of such a lowly handyman.

One evening the old carpenter sits in his pub and discovers a fly in his beer. He hits his huge fist on the table and cries out: "This swinishness must end!"

For a moment there is silence. Then shouts of "Bravo!" come from all directions.

The suitor seizes the opportunity. He founds a party, makes deals, runs the old man for elections and in the end—that was still the Weimar republic—gets him elected as prime minister.

Now the young suitor's family is happy to have him marry the girl, but her father adamantly refuses. "Who are you to marry the daughter of the Prime Minister?" he asks.

Out for revenge, the suitor, who also writes the Prime Minister's speeches, changes the pages in the middle of one of the old man's speeches in the Reichstag. So the old man announces "I am a total failure, I am a complete idiot. . ."

I don't remember the end.

Who is the young man who directed Trump's campaign? His Jewish son-in-law, of course, Jared Kushner.

Kushner, like Trump, is a real estate dealer. Like Trump, he was born rich, and devoted his life to getting richer. Now he is Trump's main political advisor.

Kushner is also an ardent Zionist. That means that he wouldn't dream of coming and settling in Israel, but instead supports the most fanatical elements in this country.

It seems to be a rule that the further a Jew is removed from the past and future battlefields of Israel, the more fanatically Zionist he is. This Jared is very far removed.

One of his pieces of advice, it seems, was to appoint as US ambassador to Israel another rich Jew, David Friedman. This person is such a fanatical right-wing Zionist that he is financially involved in the settlement Beit El ("House of God"), one of the most right-wing colonies in the West Bank. Some would call it fascist.

A diplomatic curiosity: the Israeli ambassador to the US, Ron Dermer, and the US ambassador to Israel are both ultra-right US-born Jewish Zionists. If they changed places, no one would notice.

LET ME remind readers what these settlements are all about.

When the Israeli army conquered the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in 1967, they were as populated as the US Midwest. Much of the land belonged to private farmers or absentee landlords, and the rest was "government land".

During Ottoman times, the land reserves of the villages and towns were registered in the name of the Sultan, whose heir was the British High Commissioner, whose heir was

the Jordan monarch, whose heir is now the commander of the Israeli occupation army.

Now the Israeli settlers come and just take this land, private or "government" owned, and turn it into their homes. No payment to anyone. Sheer robbery.

Now Americans like Friedman, Kushner et al. come and encourage the settlers to steal even more, even offering money to help them along.

History tells us that such things don't last forever. Sooner or later such things end in a bloodbath. But on that day, Friedman, Kushner and Trump will be far, far away.

SO WHY am I now writing about Trump?

Well, first of all because it's a Historic Day. I don't like Historic Days. I remember such a day when young men with festive torches and arcane symbols on their arms were parading through Berlin.

But there is also another reason I don't want to write about Israel just now.

We are in the middle of the biggest scandal in Israel's history. The Prime Minister and the owner of our largest mass-circulation newspaper are being investigated for bribery, and so are foreign tycoons who have kept Binyamin Netanyahu supplied for years with the world's most expensive cigars and his wife with the world's most expensive pink champagne. (It's the "pink" that provides the added gossip value).

No, I am not going to write about this now. Sorry.