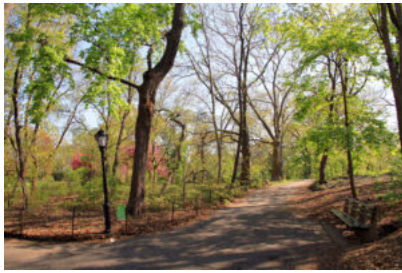


Moral Rot

written by Samuel Friedman | August 14, 2024



As I walk through this park

in a season when flowers bloom beauty
after a winter with sparkling stars
and twinkling stalactites of ice
hanging from every New Year's eave,
I meditate on the moral rot that blossoms
everywhere
in these centuries of capitalist rule.

I think of terminal managers
who demand mechanics skimp on maintenance
so truck brakes freeze
and freight drivers and commuters
scatter bloody
across a rush-hour road.

Politicians with honest intent,
who gain votes for construction jobs
by backing coal-fired factories
and bombs to slaughter children in Gaza.

Rabbis and college trustees

who demand students be canned
for the sin of saying "Ceasefire"
since the God of Powerful Donors
etched His Commandments at Sinai,
"Thou must kill Palestinians,"
so the search for a Final Solution
seems expedient
once again.

College textbooks and media editorials
that teach that greed is
good,
profits
holy,
and evictions and homelessness
a sacrament that blesses the poor.

Leftists whose "Marxism" praises
smart bombs
that "de-Nazify" children
in the parks of Mariupol and Kyiv.

Hunting for morality in a world of capitalist rot

And yet, I think of honest people I have known
and how they agonize
to stay moral
in a world of rot.

A stalwart Teamster steward asking me

“Are you a Pharisee or Saduccee?”

and my responding “huh?”

Another steward almost boasting about the lies he put over on the bosses

in saving an erring worker’s job,

then asking,

“Did I do right?”

The Teamster Local President who laughed

recalling the day his anger at injustice

gave a terminal manager a heart attack

and he yelled as the sick man lay there,

“Die, you bastard, die!”—and then reminisced

about the many who stood strong

in their ten week wildcat strike

and the old friends who proved weak

and scabbed the line.

The stalwart comrades in our fight against

endless war

who supported a march against abortion

while others said “Hands off our bodies”

or demonstrated against state-mandated motherhood,

My friends who chant “From Ukraine to Palestine,

occupation is a crime,”

or my own attempt to frame a simple truth:

Never Again for Jews!

Never Again for Palestinians.

Never Again for Ukrainians.

Never Again for anyone. Anywhere.

all . . . seeking morality

within a world of rot,

Rot, rot, rot

while tankies who deem themselves leftists

join MAGA-types at microphones

to support Russia’s imperialist crimes,

and Communists some years before I was born chanted

“Unite and Fight!

For a White South Africa.”