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Netanyahu in Congress: the Crime Boss Fulminates, While His Accomplices Cheer



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I returned home from Wednesday’s anti-Netanyahu demonstration on Capitol Hill in time to watch the Israeli prime minister address a joint session of the U.S. Congress. The vilest thing about the event was not the speech itself, which was predictably bloodthirsty and mendacious, but the reactions of the assembled Congresspeople. Almost all of them stood and cheered lengthily while their invited guest smeared those protesting his appearance in the streets outside the Capitol as pro-Hamas “idiots” who “stand with rapists and murderers,” and whose protests are “paid for by Iran.”

Understand that almost all those protesting, including me, were Americans — a group that the members of Congress claim to represent. But never mind that. Benjamin Netanyahu is an experienced con artist who knows very well when he has an audience of suckers who will buy any Brooklyn Bridge that he feels like selling. I arrived home in time to watch him

bedazzle the Congressional rubes by introducing wounded Israeli war veterans — who just happened to be people of color – in the visitors’ gallery. No one laughed or objected when he defamed the protestors, when he called the Israel Defense Forces the most scrupulously pro-civilian army in world history, or when he accused the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court of disseminating an antisemitic “blood libel.” But his best trick of all was using the Book of Genesis to justify Israeli claims to all of 21st century Palestine.

“They call Israel a colonialist state,” he ranted, pounding the lectern. “Don’t they know that the Land of Israel is where Abraham, Isaac and Jacob prayed, where Isaiah and Jeremiah preached and where David and Solomon ruled?”

That grotesque non-sequitur evoked the loudest cheers of all! Netanyahu understands perfectly well that what sustains the remaining American support for Israel is a combination of Zionist political and financial pressure, evangelical Christian hopes for a Middle East Armageddon, and U.S. imperialism. He baldly presented Israel as a U.S. agent in the region obviating the need for American “boots on the ground.” His peroration, cheered on passionately by the yokels, called for an Abrahamic Alliance to make war on Iran and Hezbollah.

About half of the Democrats in Congress had the decency to absent themselves from this bellicose farce. Kamela Harris refused to attend and preside; Rashida Tlaib attended but held up a small sign that read “War Criminal.” Other Democrats like Jerry Nadler of New York and Jamie Raskin of Maryland were in the hall but behaving weirdly – sitting on their hands for some of Bibi’s more obnoxious pronouncements but rising to cheer at other moments of jingoistic bombast. No point in offending AIPAC and its supporters in an election year!

Most Republicans, of course, were in ecstasy throughout, especially when Netanyahu praised their Dear Leader. As I write this, he is on the way to Mar-a-Lago to pay him homage. So much for Donald Trump the “peace candidate.” The one useful result of this globally embarrassing event was the revelation – if one were needed – that the MAGA Republicans are united in support of a U.S.-financed “forever war” in the Middle East.

Meanwhile, the world watches in disbelief as the clueless American Empire further isolates itself morally and politically from virtually all the world’s peoples. With friends like Netanyahu, as the old Jewish joke goes, who needs enemies?

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