A PALESTINIAN woman waits to cross into Jerusalem at Kalandia checkpoint. In Mamet's view, Israelis want only 'to be left in peace within their borders' and Arabs want only to 'destroy the State of Israel.'

GLENN C. ALTSCHULER

It is helped the Israelis escape from Egypt, acclaimed playwright, screenwriter and director David Mamet suggests, the exodus of the Red Sea may also have been a message from God that human behavior is "divisible into good and evil; moral and immoral; sacred and profane; permitted and forbidden."

Recently, Mamet applied this absolutist, Manichean view to an analysis of American politics. A former liberal, he has converted to ultra-conservatism because he sees surrendering his hard-earned income to a government that has turned its back on freedom; he also loathes affirmative action and blames the hatred of Israel so prevalent among the "victim-loving" Left.

Aided by a crush of liberal and liberal economic philosophies, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman and Thomas Sowell, Mamet declares total war on liberals in "The Secret Knowledge.

As he did in "The Wicked Son" (2006), a medieval rant against assimilated Jews, Mamet forgoes evidence, nuance and reasoned argument in favor of ex cathedra judgment in this book. The New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt; he declares, "dismantled the free market" and "saddled" America with social programs. Global warming is a fiction; carbon emissions "offer no threat whatever to the planet." President Barack Obama's bailout of General Motors will "kill the remnants of the auto industry" by forcing manufacturers to produce cars that consumers do not want. Cutting taxes always creates jobs, "as anyone not blind by theory knows."

"The Secret Knowledge" is swashbuckled-from-reality, straw-man, slippery-slope, road-to-serfdom assertions. Americans, "the bulk of whose income is taxed, have less incentive toward monogamy." Mamet writes. A weakening of the institution of marriage will, in turn, "eventually destroy the ability of the family, any family, to transmit values and wisdom to their children. This function will be taken over by the State — to a large extent it has been."

Confusing liberals with socialists and Marxists, as is his wont, Mamet also seems convinced that, in the guise of fairness, the Left can hardly wait to make sure that the street sweeper is no longer paid less than the surgeon. Accepting this notion, he thunder, "ends in dictatorship.

Again and again, Mamet reproves the libertarian credo. Because competition in the hands of the State will cause misery, government should be limited to protecting citizens from domestic and foreign threats to their safety, security and autonomy — and maintaining the nation's infrastructure (roads, bridges and parks). Education, healthcare, and especially "the dubious, arguing or absurd programs" to bring about "equality," should be left to individuals or to a Free Market, in which consumers are the final arbiters of success.

Insisting that "it is not a fantasy," Mamet does not define the Free Market or examine how it works (and fails to work) in the real world. Acknowledging that "of course" the government should provide a safety net for the needy, he does not indicate whether public schools, child labor laws, the Food and Drug Administration, social security, Medicare and Medicaid are among the dubious or absurd initiatives best left to the private sector.

When he turns to Israel, Mamet remains in character. He is absolutely certain that the Arab-Israeli conflict is a stark and simple struggle between good and evil: Israelis, who "vanquished attackers, pushed them back, and then returned to them the lands from which they attacked," want only "to be left in peace within their borders." Arabs want only "to destroy the State of Israel."

Mamet ails American liberals with one brush, lambasting them for sympathizing with Arabs based on an "ignorant-or-middle-headed" assessment of the "insoluble, exaggerated, unjust, or skewed" Palestinian claims, and disdain for Jews as "colonialist oppressors." He excoriates the Left for "progressing from the nursery rhyme — that 100 matter what the context, Peace is Good and War is Bad — and for the proposition that the parties can resolve their differences through further negotiation if pressure is applied to Israel to make concessions."

"What common ground was there," Mamet asks, "between Hitler's desire to turn the world into a Nazi slave state, and the Western desire to remain free?"

In Juitius, Mamet points out, if a combative cannot escape from a hold applied to him, he can signal his opponent and "tapp out." In a "real fight," his son wondered, "you can still tap out, can't you?"

"No," Mamet replied, "the definition of a real fight is one in which one cannot tap out."

"Well, then," the 10-year-old asked, "what do you do?"

In such a case, Mamet explained, you had better win. On his son's face, he told us, "was the beginnings of maturity."

Perhaps. And Mamet's charge that liberals hold Israel to a higher standard than the standard they apply to any other country may well be justified. But his faith-based, all-or-nothing analysis — and his strategy for victory — will not persuade anyone who isn't already a true believer.

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