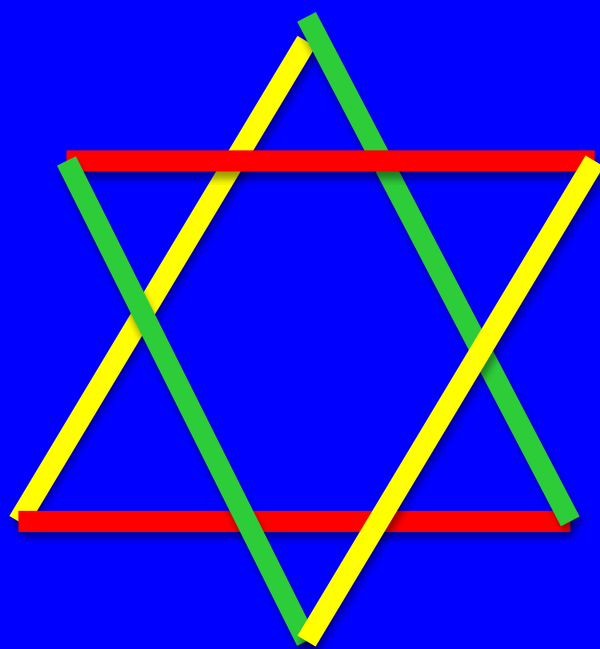


ZIONISM



Off the Cuff
essays and articles
2008-2018

DON MILLIGAN

ZIONISM



Off the Cuff
Essays and articles
2008-2018

These pieces may be copied and circulated in any form providing that they are reproduced without alteration or amendment and are cited as:

© Don Milligan 2018, *Zionism: Off the Cuff essays and articles, 2008-2018*
www.donmilligan.net

CONTENTS

	Page
Zionism: Introduction	3
Bibliography	21
Oppression and Apartheid	23
A Colonial Venture	33
Gaza Blockade: Israel's Pariah Status	37
Boycotting Israel	43
Gaza: Atrocity Exhibition	48
Justin Bieber and Palestine	52
Catastrophe Day	57
Impressions of Israel	62
Imperialism and Palestine	76
Solidarity with Palestine	83
A Bloody Conundrum	90
What Does Hamas Want?	95
Anti-Semitism	101
Siding with the Oppressed at all costs	109
The Haavara Agreement 1933	117
Labour Party: Hating Jews & Anti-Semitism	122

Zionism: Introduction

May 4, 2018



IS THERE A JEWISH NATION? The answer given to this question is often, no. There is what Moshé Machover has called a “Hebrew” nation – the Jews born and raised in modern Israel – but for him this nation does not embrace the Jews or Jewish communities living in other countries across the world. The rejection of Jewish nationhood is rooted in the

observation that Jews are united neither by race, language, or territory. Jews have many different mother tongues; they come from different races, and have never, since first and second century struggles in and around Judea, lived together in one place or region.

Consequently, the conclusion reached is that Jews do not pass muster as a nation. They must be considered as an ethnic group united merely by religious observance or by the secular cultural traditions associated with religiously observant Jews.

Some of those promoting this sort of argument will concede that the vast Yiddish-speaking communities of Jews in the 'Pale of Settlement' during the final decades of the Russian empire exhibited many features of a real Yiddish nation, united by religion, language, territory, cuisine, literature, and music. But even here, in this *de facto* Yiddish realm Jewish nationhood was not uncontested.

This was because throughout the nineteenth century the dominant struggle of the Jews was for emancipation, not nationhood. Jews wanted the right to live anywhere they chose, they wanted the right to enter the universities and the professions, they wanted full social equality. Jews were emancipated in France in 1791, in Austria-Hungary in 1867, and in a host of other European countries between these dates. Jews had, with the exception of Spain, Portugal, Russia, and Romania, won civil equality throughout Europe by 1900.

This achievement together with the Jewish Enlightenment pioneered by Moses Mendelssohn in the latter years of the eighteenth century and by Avrom Ber Gotlober and many others in the nineteenth, promoted the idea that Jews could move beyond the historic isolation imposed upon closed Jewish communities and live freely in any country, embrace the secular loyalties demanded by the state, and adapt to the common life of the countries in which

they lived without relinquishing either the practice of Judaism or broader aspects of Jewish culture and identity.

Even in Russia where hatred of Jews was integral to the autocratic rule of the Tsars the Jewish masses sought freedom within the Russian Empire rather than separation from it. This is why the general Jewish labour federation of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, The Bund, was founded in 1897 uniting Jewish workers across the Western regions of Russia.

Against the advice of Lenin and others, the Bundists saw the urgent need for specifically Jewish organisation, but they stopped short of national claims, focusing instead upon the struggle for socialism amongst the Jewish working class. Without endorsing nationalism of any kind they celebrated Jewish life with the promotion of women's equality and other progressive causes through Yiddish language and cultural creativity.

This strategy of pursuing emancipation through civil integration with the surrounding gentile communities was fatally undermined after the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in March 1881. His death was swiftly followed by waves of pogroms, which apparently arose spontaneously across the Pale of Settlement in which hundreds of Jews were murdered and tens of thousands rendered homeless as Jewish neighbourhoods, towns and villages, were attacked and looted throughout the enormous region from the Baltic to the Black Sea. John Doyle Klier in his magisterial study, *Russians, Jews, and the Pogroms of 1881-1882*, described the anti-Semitic riots as a crisis, not simply for the Jews, but for the Russian Empire:

For the better part of two years rioting was endemic across a wide swath of a strategic region of the empire. Major cities, such as Kiev and Elisavetgrad, fell under mob control. The

countryside was unsettled by pogroms and rumors of pogroms. The urban proletariat and the rural peasantry, the two groups feared most by the security-minded government, threatened to slip from state control. The ability of the imperial authorities to maintain stability, law, and order was called into question [. . .] Control was wrested from the rioters, the *pogromshchiki*, only through stationing large contingents of troops throughout the troubled areas”.

Of course, modern forms of anti-Semitism had been gathering pace throughout Europe for decades before the Tsar’s assassination. As old forms of life and economic arrangements were undermined by the growth of capitalism millions of people were dismayed by dislocation and rapid change. This was the context in which medieval restrictions imposed upon Jews began to be eroded by Jewish participation in wider society; Jews began to be associated, with general cultural and social disturbance, with revolutionary upheavals, and the emergence of large-scale commercial and financial competition associated with the development of a society increasingly dominated by commerce and market relations.

It was a situation in which venerable caste-like hierarchies began to be questioned by assessments based upon the quality of expertise and performance rather than lineage or ‘breeding’. It is a world in which Yermolai Alexeievitch Lopakhin, the child of former serfs, buys the estate and chops down *The Cherry Orchard*. The old world and the old certainties are being fatally undermined.

A general unease about society and the role of Jews within it began to emerge as Jews entered the general cultural and professional life of society, often excelling in one field of endeavour after another. As early as 1850, the composer Richard Wagner, incensed by the commercial success of the Jewish

opera composer and impresario, Giacomo Meyerbeer, wrote 'Das Judenthum in Der Musik' – 'Judaism in Music'. Wagner believed that "Judaism is the evil conscience of our modern civilisation." He ended his essay in the following manner:

From out of his isolation as a Jew, he came among us seeking for redemption: he found it not, and had to learn that only *with our redemption, too, into genuine Manhood*, would he ever find it. To become Man at once with us, however, means firstly for the Jew as much as ceasing to be Jew [...] Without once looking back, take ye your part in this regenerative work of deliverance through self-annulment; then are we one and un-dissevered! But bethink ye, that one only thing can redeem you from the burden of your curse: the redemption of Ahasuerus – *Going under!*

There is a murderous logic in Wagner's argument in favour of the self-annulment and disappearance of the Jew he regarded as essential for the progress of creativity and civilisation. As Jews made their way to the top of many professions and fields of endeavour the apparently solid imperial political structures in central and eastern Europe began to tremble; social, ethnic, and nationalist pressures that were to prove insurmountable, began to assail imperial governments and provincial elites.

These were the circumstances in which the wholesale repression and murder of Jews fatally undermined the aspirations of Jewish Enlightenment and of the belief that Jews could take their place in society on the same terms as everybody else. The new anti-Semitism, more febrile and active than medieval Jew hatred, proved more absolute, even more resolute and systematic in the killing and maiming of Jews. From Odessa to Vilnius, to Lviv,

anti-Semitic peasants, merchants, and intellectuals, brought a brutal end to the idea that Jews would be able to take their place in society as equal and valued citizens.

As a result some two million Jews fled to America and Jewish nationalism began to emerge as the only solution to what was proving to be the endemic nature of anti-Semitism. In 1882 Leon Pinsker published *Selbsternmanzipation – Auto-Emancipation* in which he advocated the gathering together of Jews in Palestine, Syria, or North America. The Jews, “must become a nation” he argued, because “Judeophobia” was endemic in situations in which Jews were capable only of martyrdom – the answer was self-emancipation.

The events of the last few years in *enlightened* Germany, in Romania, in Hungary, and especially in Russia, have effected what the far bloodiest persecutions of the Middle Ages could not. The national consciousness which until then had lain dormant in sterile martyrdom awoke the masses of the Russian and Romanian Jews and took form in an irresistible movement towards Palestine. Mistaken as this movement has proved to be by its results, it was, nevertheless, a right instinct to strike out for home. The severe trials which they have endured have now provoked a reaction quite different from the fatalistic submission to a divine condign punishment [. . .] today, when a number of other subject and oppressed nationalities have been allowed to regain their independence, we, too, must not sit a moment longer with folded hands; we must not consent to play forever the hopeless role of the “Wandering Jew.” It is a truly hopeless one, leading to despair.

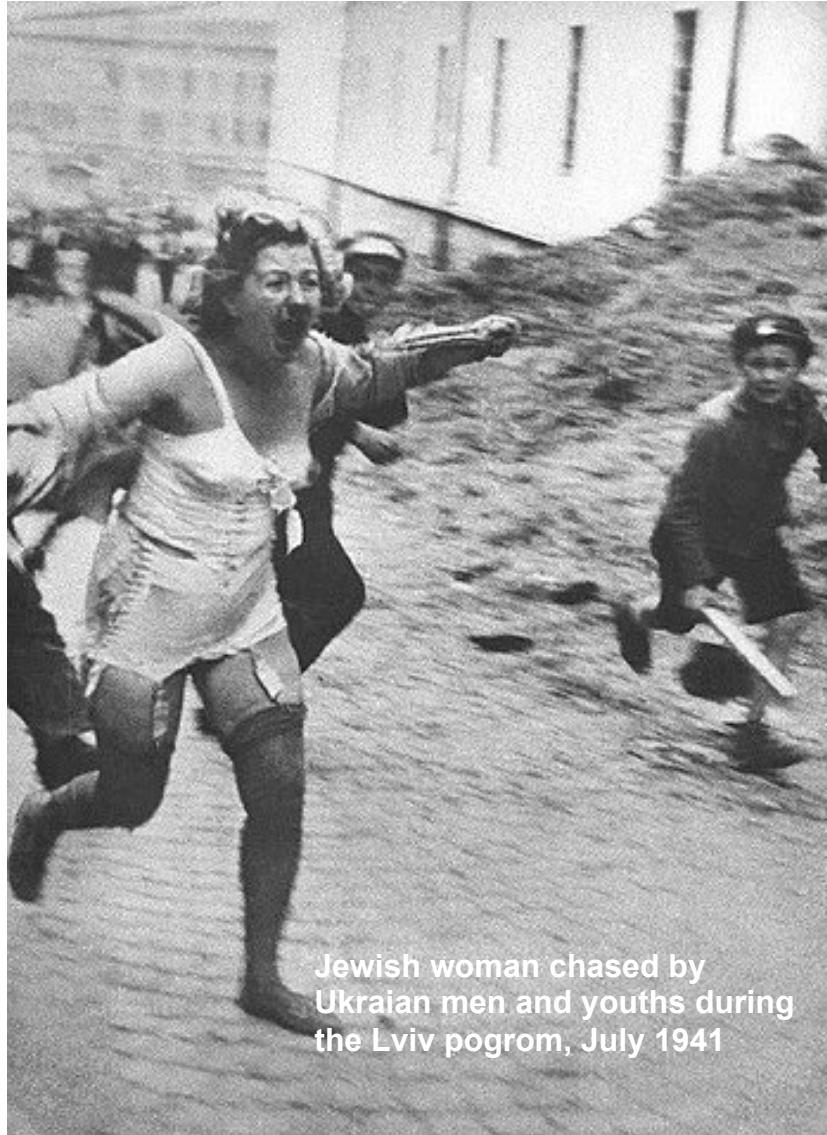
Consequently, Pinsker concluded his pamphlet with the proposition that the only solution lay “in the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living upon its own soil” ranked as an equal alongside all other nations. Undeterred by the struggles of Hovevei Zion – The Lovers of Zion – and the failure of the Bilu'im pioneers in Palestine in the early 1880s Zionism became a major element in Jewish responses to anti-Semitism.

Theodore Herzl was deeply shocked by the Dreyfus Affair and rampant anti-Semitism in France, the first country to emancipate Jews (after the dissolution of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). It appeared to him that even in enlightened France, even in Paris, ‘the city of light’, the capital of European culture, Jews were not safe. In response he published *Der Judenstaat – The Jewish State*, in 1896, a much more detailed pamphlet than Pinsker's, designed to dispel any utopian elements that might adhere to the Zionist project. The following year the First Zionist Congress was convened in Basel and the movement was placed on a firm institutional and financial footing.

Despite this, Zionism remained a minority movement until the late thirties and early forties of the twentieth century when the murderous violence heaped upon the Jews by nationalists in Lithuania, Ukraine, Romania, Germany, and Poland, made any response other than Zionism and escape to Palestine unsustainable. The refugee quotas imposed by the USA, and by Britain and her Dominions, made Palestine the only realistic option for those fleeing the waves of killings, which followed hard on the heels of the outbreak of the First World War that turned into a veritable tsunami of massacres from the summer of 1941 onwards.

The years between 1914 and say, 1952, presented Jewish opponents of Zionism with increasing difficulties. Perhaps only in the United States, despite widespread discrimination, was it possible to argue the

case for the success of Jewish emancipation. Postwar pogroms in Poland, Britain's continued opposition to Jewish migration to Mandate Palestine, and Stalin's



anti-Semitism provided dismal evidence for the continued failure of emancipation.

In the late twenties Stalin had, of course, supported the establishment of Birobidzhan by Jews transplanted from Ukraine to faraway Siberia on the border with China. The town was formally established in 1931 and became the centre of the Jewish autonomous Oblast in 1934. However, without

resources in a territory in which few other people had opted to live, Birodzhnan was destined to remain a propaganda device designed simply to support the progressive credentials of the Soviet Union. It had no impact whatsoever on the anti-Semitism common in Soviet life or on Stalin's anti-Jewish witch-hunts.

Perhaps the most tragic figure of the anti-Zionist left was Abram Leon, the author of *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*. In this work he develops a dense account of why the status of Jews as a "people-class" can only be overcome by socialism. Yet despite the reality arising around him, despite his stalwart opposition to Stalinism he was able to write:

The ferocious persecutions against Judaism render stark naked the stupid bestiality of anti-Semitism and destroy the remnants of prejudices that the working class nurse against the Jews. The ghettos and the yellow badges do not prevent the workers from feeling a growing solidarity with those who suffer most from the afflictions all humanity is suffering.

And the greatest social explosion the world has ever seen is finally preparing the liberation of the most persecuted pariahs of our planet. When the people of the factories and the fields have finally thrown off the yoke of the capitalists, when a future of unlimited development opens up before liberated humanity, the Jewish masses will be able to make a far from unimportant contribution towards the building of a new world.

This does not mean that socialism, brought to maturity by a wave of a magic wand, will remove all the difficulties that stand as obstacles to the solution of the Jewish question. The example of the USSR shows that even after the proletarian revolution, the special structure of Judaism – a heritage of history – will give rise to a number of difficulties, particularly during the transition

periods. During the time of the NEP, for instance, the Jews of Russia, utilizing their traditional business experience, furnished numerous cadres for the new bourgeois class. Moreover, the great mass of Jewish small tradesmen and petty artisans suffered greatly at the beginning of the proletarian dictatorship. It was only later, with the success of the Five Year Plan, that the Jews penetrated en masse into Soviet economic life. Despite certain difficulties, the experiment was decisive: hundreds of thousands of Jews became workers and peasants.

Leon was a brave communist, murdered in 1944 in Auschwitz as a Jew, as a member of the Nazi's "enemy-people" rather than the "people-class" of his own account. Clearly the optimistic assimilationism of his thought and analysis had little or no bearing on the experience of Jews in general, or of his own terrible death in a gas chamber. Evidently, the socialist and communist left had no answer either to the 'Jewish Question', or to the Zionists who predicate their nationalism upon the manifest failure of Jewish emancipation.

The outlook common on the left regarding Zionism has rarely reached the heights of Abram Leon's deeply flawed attempt to engage seriously with the problem of anti-Semitism. It is true that implicit in his analysis is the idea that Jews are a problem created by feudalism, exacerbated by the crisis of capitalism, and will only be solved as Judaism and the Jews are wafted out of existence during the construction of true socialism. The contemporary left thinks something similar with rather less coherence and honesty than Abram Leon.

The modern focus of anti-Zionism is the fate of the Palestinians and the colonial nature of Israel. The left's ire is focused upon Israel as a pariah state fit only for dissolution. Ken Loach, the socialist filmmaker recently

reiterated the view, common on the left, of the criminal nature of Zionism:

History is for all of us to discuss. All history is our common heritage to discuss and analyze. The founding of the state of Israel, for example, based on ethnic cleansing, is there for us to discuss So don't try to subvert that by false stories of anti-Semitism.

The fact that Turkey, along with postwar Poland and Czechoslovakia, Stalin's Ukraine after 1944, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were also "based on ethnic cleansing" does not detain Ken Loach or many others on the left. Their ire is directed wholly at the Jewish state and at Jewish nationalism.

The scale of the ethnic cleansing carried out by Jewish forces is not in doubt. In March 1948, two months before the British left Palestine, Haganah put the final touches to the plan at their headquarters on Yarkon Street, Tel Aviv, to expel more than half of Palestine's population from their ancestral towns and villages. Historian, Ilan Pappé, estimates that by the end of the process:

... more than half of Palestine's native population, close to 800,000 people, had been uprooted, 531 villages had been destroyed, and eleven urban neighbourhoods emptied of their inhabitants. The plan decided upon 10 March 1948, and above all its systematic implementation in the following months, was a clear case of an ethnic cleansing operation ..."

Consequently, there are those, who like Jacqueline Rose, will ask why shouldn't Israel be singled out for criticism. Because, it is indeed the case that in the fighting between 1947 and the armistice of 1949 the Jewish forces fighting those of Jordan, Syria, Egypt,

and their allies, carried out massacres and extensive violations of universal rights. Jacqueline Rose made this point in the following manner:

To those who object to criticism of Israel on the grounds that it is being singled out, a question must nevertheless be put. Why is criticism of everyone else a *precondition* of criticizing Israel? (Rather than, Why is Israel being criticized *instead* of everyone else?) Isn't this argument in itself a form of exclusivity? – a plea for special protection under cover of the claim that Israel is being unfairly attacked. By what standards, then, should Israel be judged? If the standard is international law or universal rights, then the fact that other nations violate these principles is, surely, irrelevant.

She is right, forms of *exclusivity* are relevant here, “Why is Israel being criticized *instead* of everyone else?” The answer in part, at least, is because they are Jews. The real powers in 1945 ratified the extensive alteration of Poland's frontiers, and the expulsion of millions of ethnic Germans, just as they have done on many other occasions with regard to ethnic cleansing by other states. The Jews, have, however been singled out for special criticism, and continue to be characterized by many on the left as a pariah state, and it is reasonable to ask, why?

It remains true, of course, that responsibility for Israel's ethnic cleansing and violence is routinely denied in what are, to be frank, psychotic assertions of innocence issued by Zionist authorities in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Israel is always simply a victim, never an aggressor. The raw argument of Zionism, often elaborately camouflaged, is: “It's us or them”. As far as the Zionists are concerned the war of 1948 was a war of survival in a life and death struggle for territory. Since then the logic of war and survival has

dominated all the actions of the Zionist state in its dealings with Palestinians, and with neighbouring Arab states. Those in charge of the state apparatus in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem reason, that protection of its citizens is the first duty of any state. “Any state would behave as we do if attacked by its neighbours” is the bland and routine response to criticism of the Israel Defence Force’s swift and overwhelming violence.

The Zionists are undoubtedly correct in this assertion, and they not unreasonably ask: “Why is Israel being criticized *instead* of everyone else?” They conclude, perhaps inevitably that “it is because we are Jews.” Psychotic assertions of innocence flow from this inescapable answer fed, no doubt, by ineradicable memory of the pogroms and massacres that gave birth to Zionism in the first place. Consequently, they insist: “Our violence and oppression are the responsibility of those who attack us.” As mad as it seems this Zionist rationale is, in fact, the standard response of anybody engaged in war.

However, perhaps the most significant aspect of Zionism, apart from the expulsion of three quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs from Israel in 1948, and the continued occupation of the West Bank, is the manner in which Zionism has revealed the intrinsically synthetic nature of nationalism, not simply that of the Jewish nation, but that of all other nations.

The Zionists in synthesizing the multiplicity of Jews into a singular nation were giving practical expression to the idea of nationhood lost during the struggles with the Romans in first and second century Judea. Zionists were in fact engaged in a *Völkisch* enterprise similar to that taking place in pre-Imperial Germany, and amongst the multiplicity of language groups throughout Ukraine, Poland, and the wider Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

During the nineteenth century an array of nationalists claiming to represent ancient organic communities – *Volkskörper* – spent enormous

amounts of energy inventing and resurrecting national costumes, music, specific religious confessions and liturgies, together with distinct histories and literatures, all designed to undergird claims to nationhood. The Jews, with their extraordinarily robust religious traditions, with the rabbinate tracing its origins back into the sixth century of the common era, had perhaps more of a claim to nationhood than say, Czechs, Serbs, or Ukrainians, despite their lack of territorial concentration or linguistic unity.

The Zionists, in successfully creating the Jewish state, recreating Hebrew as a modern language, and winning over the support of the vast majority of Jews worldwide have demonstrated that the Jews, far from being a special case, have pursued, in the most exceptional circumstances, a path entirely familiar to nationalists and state builders of all stripes since the dawn of the nineteenth century.

To be sure, the nationhood of Syrians, Iraqis, Lebanese, and Jordanians, is as synthetic as that of Israelis – they are the result of the French and British partition of Ottoman territories in 1920 following the Treaty of Sèvres. The carve up of the Ottoman Empire had been settled between Britain and France in the Sykes-Picot Agreement four years earlier. The result was borders drawn in London and Paris, which rode roughshod over historic ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences, cramming their diverse millions into new ‘nations’ by fiat, none of which gained full independence from London or Paris until 1946-7.

Palestine, ruled by Britain following the collapse of the Ottomans, was also part of this process, but Palestinian nationhood and consciousness was the direct result of the struggle with the Jews for the possession of Palestine. The Palestinians of the Ottoman Empire were not a nation, and the British Mandate (1920-1948) did not make them one. Despite the huge Arab Revolt of the late 1930s – Palestinian nationhood, as synthetic as that of the Jews, only

arose gradually in response to the challenge of Zionism, eventually achieving autonomous institutional and political form during the second half of the twentieth century.

This, no doubt, continues to dismay most of the left who, of course, have no answer to nationalism except to counterpose the 'legitimate' nationalism of the Palestinians to the 'illegitimate' nationalism of the Jews, whilst all the time lazily asserting an equivalence between the State of Israel and Apartheid South Africa, or even the Islamists of Islamic State. Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn, in the course of claiming to fight anti-Semitism, with the use of his unctuous phrase, "Our Jewish friends", recently made clear this equivalence:

Our Jewish friends are no more responsible for the actions of Israel or the Netanyahu government than our Muslim friends are for those various self-styled Islamic states or organisations.

Implicit in the outlook of Loach and Corbyn is a rejection of the ordinary character of Jewish nationalism during the progress of state creation, and the specific nature of Zionism as a response to the unparalleled waves of persecution and killings, which brought Jewish nationalism and the Jewish state into existence. The seventy years following the assassination of Alexander II, punctuated by the outbreak of the First World War, the collapse of Europe's territorial empires, the clash between Polish and Ukrainian nationalists, and the rise of fascism, made the Zionist response to the failure of emancipation unanswerable.

Certainly, neither the communist or the socialist left has had any answer to the failure of Jewish emancipation, or to the concomitant rise of Jewish nationalism, other than repeatedly expressing the pieties of secularism and the common class interests

of the common people, while staunchly supporting the claims of Palestinians to nationhood, to the right of Palestinians to 'return' to their ancestral homes in what is now Israel, and to the liquidation of the Jewish state.

Many people on the left can be quite cagey about this, whilst they determinedly refuse to conflate Jews with Zionists they are perfectly prepared to conflate the violation of universal rights by Israeli politicians with Zionism. This is because outright opposition to Jewish nationalism and the existence of the Jewish state appears to be *de rigueur* in most leftwing circles. If pressed many socialists will hurriedly clarify: they merely oppose specific actions of Israeli governments. This, labored distinction, however, is more honoured in the breach, as denunciations of IDF and Israeli government actions routinely blur into resolute expressions of anti-Zionism. Poet, Tom Paulin, put the matter succinctly:

Look, you're either a Zionist or an anti-Zionist,
there's no middle way. Everyone who supports
the state of Israel is a Zionist.

Thus opposition to Zionism, Jewish nationalism, and the Jewish state admits no legitimate case for the existence of Israel.

The fact that a minority of Zionists are fierce opponents of the occupation, of the settlements, and of the wall, is brushed aside. So too is the fact that a fairly large number of Jews across the world, whilst outraged by the conduct of Israeli governments, soldiers, and police, are not opposed to the existence of the Jewish state. Many Jews may also be disturbed by the messianic fervor of Zionist ideology and commitment, without ever suggesting that the Jewish state should be dismantled or demographically destroyed by 'returning' Palestinians.

The inescapable truth of anti-Zionism on the left is that it is an expression of unqualified opposition to the

right of Jews to nationhood, and to the founding of a state by Jews. On the left, and specifically in the Marxist tradition, notably expressed by Karl Marx himself, and by Abram Leon, the historic emancipation of the Jews is to be accomplished by their disappearance, *not* by their transition from the status of a 'non-historic people' – living precariously within the interstices, first of feudal society, and then within that of 'decaying capitalism' – to a nation with its own language, territory, and state.

Zionism, complete with its messianic mission, represents for most socialists a violation of the proper movement of history. It confronts the broad left with a bold, assertive nationalism, rather than a nationalism, like that of the Palestinians, inspired by the struggle for 'liberation from colonial domination' – the only form of nationalism considered legitimate within leftwing and socialist circles.

Anti-Zionism is the result of this outlook and has led to a straightforward rejection of both the *idea* and the *reality* of Israel. It is inevitable; therefore, that the socialist left will be haunted by charges of "holocaust denial" and "anti-Semitism", because they insist upon conducting themselves as if the creation of Jewish nationhood had simply not taken place.

However, this 'blind spot' is of a piece with what Anthony Julius has called, "the anti-Semitism of condescension" traditional in England. We have not had Jew-hatred in England of the murderous sort since the thirteenth century, so the modern left is dismayed by insinuations that they might be bigoted with regard to Jews. To be sure there is much talk in some socialist circles of Rothschild, of the Jewish Lobby, and intimations of unwarranted or surreptitious Jewish influence in public affairs, but hating Jews does not loom large.

As a consequence dismay and disbelief often accompany charges of anti-Semitism amongst people on the left in Britain. As absurd as this might sound

they regard their lively hatred of Zionism as a different matter altogether, something almost unconnected with Jews. Many socialists in Britain have caricatured Zionism so thoroughly that they have produced in their own mind a political movement, or a colonizing force, which somehow has no necessary connection with the Jews of the pogroms, of the holocaust, or of the modern Jews of the diaspora. Rather they see Zionism as, in some sense, a product of imperialism or the malign machinations of Washington, not as a worldwide movement amongst the Jews to create their own territory with its own language and state.

It is common on the left to reject the reality of Israel and experience great anxiety when confronted by the overwhelming support the Zionist state commands amongst Jews throughout the world. Socialists often clutch at the straw of anti-Zionist Jews in the desperate hope that these tiny secular and religious circles will provide sufficient cover for their prejudice and condescension. Of course they don't hate Jews, such a thought is appalling to them, but their hatred of Jewish nationalism and of the Jewish state makes their anti-Semitism ineluctable.

What follows is a selection of brief articles on Israel posted over the last ten years. There are many other related pieces on my site about Islam, Islamophobia, and the standing sympathy which the British left displays for Islamic causes, however the focus of the selection gathered together here is upon Israel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- APPLEBAUM, Anne, *Red Famine: Stalin's War on Ukraine*, London: Allen Lane, 2017.
- BARTOV, Omer, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz*, London: Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- BROWNING, Christopher R., *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
- FRANKEL, Jonathan, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews 1862-1917*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
- HALKIN, Hillel, *Jabotinsky: A Life*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.
- HERZL, Theodor, *The Jewish State*, 1896, New Orleans: Quid Pro Books, 2014.
- JULIUS, Anthony, *Trials of the Diaspora: A history of anti-Semitism in England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- KLIER, John Doyle, *Russians, Jews and the Pogroms of 1881-1882*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- LEON, Abram, *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation*, 1946, New York: Pathfinder, 1970.
- MACHOVER, Moshé, 'The formation of the Jewish nation', *Weekly Worker*, May 16, 2013.
- MARX, Karl, *On The Jewish Question*, 1844, Marxists.org, www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/, accessed 01/05/18.
- PAPPE, Ilan, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2006.
- PINSKER, Leon, *Auto-Emancipation*, 1882, New York: Federation of American Zionists, 1916.

- POSTONE, Moishe, 'Anti-Semitism and National Socialism', <https://libcom.org/library/anti-semitism-national-socialism-moishe-postone>, accessed 25/04/18.
- ROSE, Jacqueline, *The Question of Zion*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- ROSE, John, 'Karl Marx, Abram Leon and the Jewish Question – a reappraisal', *International Socialism* 2, 119, Summer 2008.
- SEGEV, Tom, *1967: Israel, the War and the Year That Transformed the Middle East*, 2005, London: Abacus, 2008.
- SERVICE, Robert, *The Last of the Tsars: Nicholas II and the Russian Revolution*, London, Pan Books, 2018.
- SMELE, Jonathan D., *The Russian Civil Wars: 1916-1926*, London: Hurst & Co, 2016.
- WAGNER, Richard, 'Judaism in Music', 1850, London: Kegan Paul, 1892-99.
- YANKLOWITZ, Rabbi Dr. Shmuly, et. al., *Jewish Peoplehood: Assimilation, Survival, and Continuity*, Phoenix: Valley Beit Midrash, 1917.
- ZAMOYSKI, Adam, *Warsaw 1920: Lenin's failed conquest of Europe*, London: Harper Press, 2008.

Israel, Oppression, and Apartheid

May 23, 2011

WHEN PEOPLE ARE DENIED equal rights, whether or not they have them on paper, they are oppressed. More or less equal access to education, housing, employment, healthcare, law, political participation, and cultural expression, are the defining issues. From this standpoint it is quite clear that poor people are oppressed, regardless of their formal rights, because their capacity to exercise these rights is severely limited or curtailed by poverty.

However, there are many circumstances where this oppression moves beyond that structurally imposed by material inequality to take on the form of political oppression in which state agencies and other powerful social institutions ensure, with or without the sanction of law, that specific groups of people by reason of their gender, their race, their ethnicity, or their sexual orientation, are prevented from expressing themselves, or accessing social amenities and opportunities on the same terms as everybody else in that society.

From this it will be clearly seen that Bengalis in East London are oppressed; Gypsies in Hungary and Romania are oppressed; women are oppressed in Saudi Arabia; Indian and Pakistani migrant labourers are oppressed in all the Gulf States; homosexuals are oppressed in Iran, and Tamils are oppressed in Sri Lanka. All of these people, and many other groups and populations around the world, are oppressed, in different ways, and in different circumstances, for profoundly different historical reasons. Sometimes this oppression is more or less spontaneous - the product of indifference to ingrained disadvantage, prejudice, and ill treatment - at other times this oppression is imposed in a deliberate and conscious manner by authorities and privileged

groups intent on maintaining advantages against the pressure of a feared but subordinate section of the population.

Consequently, the only thing that the oppressed have in common around the world is that they face indifference, prejudice, and ill treatment, because of who they are, or because they are deliberately singled out by the police, by government bureaucracies, and by other powerful social institutions, that are committed to ensuring, for whatever reason, that they are denied equal access to what their society has to offer.

If one approaches these problems from this point of view it is evident that the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are oppressed. Despite having the right to sit in the Knesset, the right to vote and participate fully in elections, despite having formal access to all facilities and social benefits on the same basis as Jewish Israelis, Arab citizens cannot gain access to higher education in Arabic or in Islamic institutions with the same facility as Jews can access Hebrew or Jewish universities and colleges. They cannot leave or re-enter Israel as easily as other citizens, they cannot have friends or relatives to visit as easily as other citizens, and they cannot move about as freely as Jews, or decide where they want to live as easily as other citizens.

The reason for this is that the loyalty of Arab citizens to the Jewish state is always in doubt, and the sympathy of Arab citizens towards the enemies of Zionism and of Israel, is always suspected. Given that in the course of the foundation of Israel during 1948 some 750,000 Arabs were expelled or fled into exile, it is not unreasonable for Israeli police, soldiers, government agencies, and cultural organizations, to assume, that its Palestinian citizens might be less than enthusiastic when it comes to maintaining the Jewish and Zionist character of the state. From there, it is but a small step for many Israelis to assume or fear that Arab citizens cannot be trusted, should be exhaustively monitored and checked at police and border posts, should be controlled

residentially, and restricted in their access to Islamic and Arabic educational institutions.

These fears arise from, and are exacerbated by, the direct oppression and subordination of the Arab Palestinians who live across the 1967 line in the West Bank; Israel's Arab citizens cannot be hermetically sealed off from the Palestinians who, although stateless, reside in the occupied and annexed territories broken up by settlements housing half a million Jewish Israeli citizens, who are protected by a web of military highways patrolled by the Israel Defence Force. Israel's Arab citizens are culturally, racially, and linguistically, indistinguishable from the Arabs of the West Bank that it directly oppresses through the denial of freedom of movement, of free trade and open economic relations, and through the denial of statehood. Consequently, whatever the intentions and desire of the Israeli state, or of Israeli liberal opinion, their own Arab citizens suffer much the same sorts of disadvantages, and many of the humiliations meted out daily, to those Arabs who live on the 'wrong' side of the 1967 line.

Israeli Arabs have for many years been unable to secure Israeli citizenship or rights of residence for fiancés or spouses who come from the West Bank. Some exceptions are made if the Arab in question can demonstrate some special service or loyalty to the Zionist state. The application of the Citizenship and Entry laws were 'softened' further in 2005 by the assumption that West Bank men over 35 and women over 25 are less likely to be terrorists or active enemies of the Zionist state. However, it is more difficult for Arab citizens to acquire leases from the Israel Land Administration, which controls access to 93% of the country's land; the same is true of building permits. Both, leases and permits for land or building in Israel are, of course, impossible if you are an Arab from the West Bank. The privileges and rights, which accompany military service with the IDF, or engagement in national service in social and welfare activities are unequally applied and

distributed. Consequently, the infrastructure enjoyed by Israeli Arab communities are generally inferior to those of Jewish citizens; Israel's Arab citizens are, by and large, poorer and experience a higher level of unemployment than their Jewish neighbours.

The pro-Palestinian Left in Britain, and around the world, is not wrong about any of this. Palestinians are oppressed - they are denied the exercise of equal rights - by the Jewish state in Israel, and by many of its agencies. They are also oppressed by many other powerful Jewish institutions and community bodies dedicated to preventing everything from, Arab men dating Jewish women, to preventing Arabs moving into particular districts or neighbourhoods.

Inequality is fundamental to Israel; it is in the DNA of states like Israel or Pakistan. These states declared their ethno-religious character at their foundation; they maintain it in their basic laws; it is their *raison d'être* - it is why they were created. Consequently, they insist that they have a particular ethno-religious character. Therefore, we cannot be surprised to learn that citizens that do not share the core religious or ethnic sympathies, character, and commitments of the state will be regarded as less than wholly Pakistani or Israeli and treated unequally. A distinction must be made here between theocracies like Iran and Saudi Arabia where the religious authorities have significant powers regarding the framing, application, and enforcement of the law, and Israel and Pakistan which while not being theocracies, are respectively Jewish and Islamic states. Israel, of course, is not like Pakistan in many other respects, not least because it is the only *Jewish* state in the world, while Pakistan shares its explicitly Islamic character with a number of other polities.

Whatever the efforts of Jewish Israeli socialists and liberals down the years this is a circle that cannot be squared. A liberal state requires that all citizens be treated equally irrespective of their religion or ethnicity. This is indeed the formal position in Israel (as it is in

Pakistan), but in reality Arabs who constitute more than twenty per cent of Israel's population, drawn from Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Bedouin communities, automatically represent a demographic threat to the Jewish character and commitments of the state, and are inevitably considered to be less reliable citizens when Jewish Israel confronts its Arab enemies.

It is for reasons of this sort that states like Israel and Pakistan should never have been established. However, they both exist now - they are both very substantial 'facts on the ground', and they cannot be approached effectively by challenging the historical reality (or legitimacy) of their foundation.

We are where we are, and we need to proceed from where we are. The tragedies, which accompanied the expulsion of centuries old German communities from Eastern and Central Europe in 1945, are not going to be reversed, any more than the vast movements at the same time of Poles, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians are subject to revision. The Greeks expelled from Anatolia during the foundation of the modern Turkish state in the early twenties are not going to return 'home'. The Italians are not going back to Rejeka (never mind the Hungarians), and the Austrians and Germans are not going back to Trieste. The massacres and injustices, which accompanied the partition of India in 1947-48, are not going to be undone - whatever happens in Kashmir; the maintenance of open wounds for sixty or seventy years by Pakistanis, Indians, Kashmiris, or Palestinians, keeps the pot on the boil, but it does not have the possibility of resolving the problems, righting historical wrongs, or of changing the facts on the ground.

Clearly the Palestinians must have a state, but that state must be based upon full recognition of Israel's right to exist. A Palestinian state cannot be predicated upon the 'right of return' to Israel of Palestinians (and their descendants) who were expelled or fled in 1948; Palestinian statehood cannot be based upon the unraveling of 1948, or the basic elements of the armistice

of 1949. Of course, the unilateral Jordanian annexation of the West Bank, and Egyptian control of Gaza are dead letters, but Hamas, and all other Palestinian parties to the negotiations, must accord Israel full recognition, accept the right of the Jewish state to exist within the boundaries established by the war of 1948, and accept its right to protocols and arrangements which offer it the possibility of defence *in depth* of those boundaries established and recognised by all sides as international frontiers.

After all, Israel - although not an 'innocent' by any means - has been invaded by Arab armies on three separate occasions since the foundation of the state, and has, as a matter of historical record, been attacked by its neighbours far more often than it has attacked them.

Negotiations for the closure and evacuation of Jewish Settlements upon territory unilaterally annexed by Israel after the War of 1967, and on land throughout the West Bank, could only begin on the basis of Hamas and Fatah's acceptance of Israel's legitimacy, and upon acceptance that the refugees and their descendants do not have a 'right of return' to what were their ancestral villages and farms, which now lie inside Israel, because such a move would undermine the integrity and security of the Jewish state.

There is no possibility whatsoever of bringing about peace on the basis of the dissolution of the Zionist state, unless you mean a Carthaginian Peace, a peace in which the Jewish state is utterly destroyed, its citizens dispersed, in order to be replaced by a largely Arab population, and a predominantly Arab state. This is certainly what Hamas, and most of Fatah, want. They are perfectly prepared to make deals and come to agreements short of this, but so far they have been unwilling to sacrifice the 'right of return', or to accord legitimacy and full recognition to the Jewish state. This is because in the long run most of the Palestinian parties envisage the dissolution of the Jewish state.

This is where the parallels beloved by much of the pro-

Palestinian Left break down. Those who suggest that Israel is an Apartheid state want to envisage Israel as a kind of South Africa, the Apartheid state that keeled over in response to wholesale popular resistance of great masses of youth, and worldwide boycotts. Unfortunately, these parallels are the product of either lazy thinking, or unwarranted 'optimism', or both. Apartheid South Africa owed its origin in the first instance to the repression and subordination of black pastoralists and hunters by Dutch farmers. This dispossession of the black population was then regularised and enshrined in a multitude of provisions and practices imposed by the British colonial authorities. Attempts by the big bourgeoisie, and the big mine owners in particular, to break the 'colour bar', resulted in the Rand Revolt in 1921-22 in which white workers, ably assisted by the South African Communist Party, fought to maintain white privilege, and the division of the country's working class along racial lines. In the event twenty thousand troops had to be deployed by Prime Minister Jan Smuts who also sanctioned the use of artillery, tanks, and aerial bombardment; hundreds of workers were killed, including some leading members of the Communist Party.

The big bourgeoisie in South Africa, dependent upon foreign investment, always struggling for cheaper labour had, unlike the white workers, the Afrikaner farmers and their allies, no particular commitment to the structured racial division of the working class. However, as the British Empire decayed and Afrikaners gained in political clout in the late nineteen forties, they enshrined the racial divisions and racial oppression of the black population in a series of laws, which denied full political equality to the black and coloured masses, prescribed permitted places of residence, and restricted movement by the use of internal passports and employment laws. These oppressions led to the endorsement of armed struggle by the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. In the fullness of time, this armed struggle, mass resistance among school children and

youth, and worldwide boycotts resulted in bringing the Afrikaner parties to their knees. However, as long as the danger of social revolution existed the international bourgeoisie backed the Afrikaner regime as it murdered children in the streets, assassinated ANC leaders, and jailed and tortured whoever it could get its hands on.

The logjam was finally broken by the collapse of Communism in 1989-1991. The implosion of the Soviet Union and of the worldwide communist movement opened up the possibility of overturning Apartheid without social revolution, and without the threat of communism. The rest is history. The super exploitation of the black masses continues apace, the whites that could not adjust, and had sufficient resources, have fled to Western Australia, and other suitable climes, leaving the white Anglo and Afrikaner urban bourgeoisie to share the fruits of life in the gated communities of the 'Rainbow Nation' with the new class of black officials, professionals and investors. The poor whites and white farmers are indeed embattled but powerless. South African mining interests, and South African capitalism more broadly, was protected by the settlement with the ANC.

Now the similarities between South Africa and Israel are sparse indeed. It is true that the Israeli state is founded upon the oppression of the Palestinian population - its Arab citizens and those Palestinians living in the West Bank. However, it is in no sense dependent economically upon its own Arab population, or on that in the West Bank. Israel could manage perfectly well without an Arab population; indeed many Israelis would like nothing better. Now, South Africa without a black population is inconceivable. All attempts to summon up enthusiasm and interest in an Afrikaner homeland during the 1990s foundered upon the realisation that such a white homeland would be one without farm labourers and servants. Afrikanerdom and Anglo-Apartheid was always founded upon the exploitation and servitude of the native Africans. Zionism in Israel on the other hand is based upon the expulsion of most of the Arab population

and the political oppression of the remaining 1.5 million - indeed the Zionist state only occupies the West Bank for strategic reasons - and the Settlers only occupy the West Bank with the long term objective of permanently wresting control of what they call Judea and Samaria from the Palestinian population - indeed most of the ultra Orthodox Jewish settlers would be perfectly happy if all the Arabs on the West Bank left the territory altogether.

Israel is founded upon the displacement and political oppression of the Palestinians, not upon their exploitation - although I'm sure that goes on too. In South Africa the mode of rule - Apartheid - was at stake not the territorial integrity of the state or the exploitation of the black masses. This is the fundamental reason why comparisons between Israel and Apartheid-era South Africa are absurd. Comparisons also break down the minute one looks at the nature of any possible settlement. The South African settlement was based upon the sidelining and defeat of largely rural Afrikaner political interests and concerns, once it was made abundantly clear that the ANC and the SACP would not create a social revolution, but would, on the contrary, guarantee the interests of the white bourgeoisie and of big capital. This is why a revolutionary crisis and an open civil war were averted, and the fighting in Mozambique, Angola, and Namibia could be brought to a close.

In Israel the state represents the interest of the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population. (Incidentally, it has the overwhelming support of the majority of Jews worldwide.) Despite an extraordinarily fractured political culture, endless shifts, and toing and froing in the Knesset, there is no body of opinion in Israel that believes that implementation of a Palestinian 'right of return', or the replacement of the Zionist state with some other kind of structure, would protect the Jewish national homeland, or guarantee the security and safety of its Jewish population. This is why there is no Israeli 'Mikhail Gorbachev' or 'F. W. de Klerk' waiting in the wings of history with a plan to dissolve Zionism.

For as long as Hamas, Fatah, the other Palestinian parties, and the pro-Palestinian Left, worldwide, continue to demand the 'right of return' for the 1948 Palestinian refugees, and their descendants, to the land that is now Israel, they are implicitly calling for the dissolution of the Zionist project, and hence for the dissolution of the Jewish national homeland.

However unlikely such an outcome is in practice, it is, of course, not inconceivable. In which case we would merely replace the problem of Palestinian refugees and Palestinian statelessness with Jewish statelessness and Israeli Jewish refugees. When the broadly pro-Palestinian Left piously insists that all could live happily together they are simply adding bad faith to the grandstanding that is their usual stock-in trade. The 'two-state' solution will have to be founded upon full Palestinian recognition of the legitimacy and integrity of Israel or there will be no solution at all.

Finally, the oppression of the Palestinians by the Israelis, can only be brought to an end, (1) by the establishment of a secure and prosperous Palestinian homeland with its own sovereign state, and (2) by the growth in the sense of security and confidence enjoyed by Israel, which would result in the withering of the fear and suspicion which Israeli Jews inevitably feel towards those whom they currently oppress. In other words, only peace will bring an end to the oppression of the Palestinians - their oppression is the direct consequence of the War between the Jews and the Arabs - only the ending of this war will bring about the end of the oppression.

A Colonial Venture

January 5, 2009

THE ZIONIST PROJECT was always without doubt a colonial project. Forged at the height of Europe's imperial adventure, the project for a permanent Jewish homeland was predicated upon the colonization of a piece of territory in the gift and under the protection of one or more of the Great Powers. Just as Liberia was to be the home of America's emancipated slaves so the new Zion was to be a home for Europe's emancipated Jews. Both projects in their own distinctive ways were destined, perhaps inevitably, to disaster.

Unless the Jewish homeland was to be sited somewhere entirely uninhabited it would, like every other European settler colony, have to be founded by the expropriation and subordination of the original inhabitants. These aboriginals, whether in South America, East Africa or the Levant were easily distinguishable by their lack of energy and their low level of culture. The European settlers, by contrast, demonstrated their natural superiority by their startling ingenuity and their capacity for hard work; unlike the lazy good-for-nothing locals they carved farms out of the wilderness and made the desert bloom. The destruction or displacement of those who stand in the way of progress, improvement, and industry, has never needed any other justification.

These European virtues, along with democracy, the rule of law, and a lively civil society, have for many years been used to justify the existence of the State of Israel. Not unnaturally, the great mass of Palestinian Arabs takes a radically different view of their displacement and oppression. The trickle of Jewish settlers did not arouse much hostility or tension during the last decade of the nineteenth century and not even during the larger migrations of Jews, which followed the Kishinev Pogroms of 1903 and 1905. However, as re-

pression aimed at the Jews became more violent and more general the numbers of Jews living in Palestine grew, reaching 84,000 in the early twenties to well over half a million by the mid forties. Jewish migration on this scale radically changed the situation resulting in sporadic inter-communal rioting and bomb attacks, and eventually in sustained fighting between Arab and Jewish militias in November 1947, which widened into full-scale war on the departure of the British from Palestine in May 1948. Egypt, Trans-Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq declared war on the fledgling Jewish state, and aided by forces from Saudi Arabia and Sudan, the Arab armies invaded Palestine.

Although they inflicted heavy casualties on the Jewish forces, the defeat of the Arabs was fairly swift, and by March 1949 the State of Israel began a process of state building and consolidation in which millions of Arabs were displaced or exiled. This bloody process has gone on and on, grinding on through wars, rebellions, and generations, from November 1947 to January 2009. Assisted initially by the Soviet Union and armed via Czechoslovakia, recognised by the United States, and subsequently recognised by Britain, the foundation of the Jewish state was from the start always tangled up with the regional interests and ambitions of European states, the Russians, and the United States of America.

Should the State of Israel have been established? The answer has to be no. Like Southern Rhodesia, whose state was founded upon the exercise of privileged citizenship for a settler population of one ethnicity, ranged against a native population of another, Israel could never be anything but a Spartan state in a permanent state of armed preparedness against those it had dispossessed.

This much is clear. However, we all know that the founders of the State of Israel, worked not out of some abstract Zionist aspiration, but in direct response to waves of anti-Jewish persecution and murder through-

out central and Eastern Europe, which culminated after 1942 in the Holocaust in which Jewish life and culture was more or less extinguished throughout Europe. The State of Israel would not have been established if the British, the Americans, the Australians and Canadians had opened their doors to Europe's Jews during the nineteen thirties and forties. The quotas, which limited the entry of Jews fleeing persecution into these territories, admitted only small numbers. This was because there was a fear, widespread among political elites in the West, that admitting large numbers of Jews would provoke domestic anti-Semitic unrest and disorders. This fear, in the context of depression, large-scale unemployment, housing shortages, and the rationing of much else, was not entirely unfounded.

This was a tragedy borne of tragedy. In a similar manner, and perhaps for similar reasons, the large-scale resettlement of Palestinian Arabs with the full rights of citizens has not taken place in the neighbouring Arab states or in the rich countries of the West. Sixty years after the establishment of the State of Israel, and forty years after the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, literally millions of Palestinian Arabs continue to be displaced persons living as refugees in camps and townships bereft of proper services, education or economic life. No country or group of countries has made any significant move to offer these people citizenship or a future. The result is war without end and a widespread belief on both sides – among Arabs *and* Jews – that only ethnic cleansing of one sort or another will settle matters.

This has set the scene for a tradition of posturing on the left in which Israel is identified as a kind of apartheid state maintained simply to further American interests. These leftists insist upon the abolition of Israel and foundation of a secular state in the land of Palestine in which all Arabs and Jews would live harmoniously together. This absurd fantasy is can-

vassed in order to enable those on the left to stand shoulder to shoulder with Arabs and Muslims in their battle to liquidate the Jewish State. It enables them to pose as progressive secularists as they line up with Hezbollah and Hamas and other Islamists whose aim is to wipe Israel off the map.

The current war in which the bodies of little girls are being lined up in rows on the floors of hospital morgues, in which fathers and mothers in pyjamas and night-dresses are buried in the ruins of their houses, in which young men and women who should be at school and university are slaughtering each other in the streets, should not be thought of as an occasion for Tony Benn or Ken Livingstone, Lyndsey German or George Galloway to pose, yet again, as the friends of the oppressed and tribunes of the people. Attacking Israel while supporting Hamas and Hezbollah, will contribute precisely nothing to ending oppression and bloodshed in Israel, in Gaza, or in the occupied territories.

The broad left of the Stop the War Coalition, and the Islamists, take shelter behind Annie Lennox and Bianca Jagger's calls for an immediate ceasefire, while all the time committing themselves and their organizations to the victory of the Arabs over the Jews, and to the abolition of the State of Israel. The left's political bankruptcy shadows that of their allies in the Arab and Islamic world and mimics that of the irredentists in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv as much as it does that of the friends of Israel in Washington and London.

This left, along with their Islamist allies, opposes the two-state solution in which the Jews of Israel and the Arabs of Palestine would be guaranteed territorial and demographic security. In doing so they oppose the only conceivable way out of a crisis brewed in a witches' cauldron from anti-Semitism, colonialism, ethnic cleansing and terror, religious particularism, and the self-interested manoeuvres of great powers.

Israel's Pariah Status

June 7, 2010

ISRAEL IS NOT ALONE in being a state founded in the midst of massacres, and the dispossession and/or expulsion of entire populations. Turkey, Poland, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka spring readily to mind and if one wanted to take a longer view we could look at the history of the United States, Australia, and Great Britain; massacres and ethnic cleansing lie at the foundation of many, if not most, nation states in the world.

Yet, Israel has earned a place, which is almost unique in being quite so widely reviled for its brutality and human rights abuses which when practiced on a bloodier and much larger scale in Sri Lanka or Russia's Caucasus pass more or less unnoticed – or if not exactly unnoticed, like the actions of the Sudanese state in Darfur, have never become a *cause célèbre* for mass protest movements around the world.

Israel was not always in this unique position. Indeed, until 1967, many people regarded Israel as both a model democracy and as a normal state. Zionism had socialistic and progressive credentials that had apparently survived Israel's War of Independence in 1948-9 and the Suez Crisis of 1956 more or less unscathed. Then came the Six-Day War in 1967 in which Israel was confronted by a coalition of Arab armies from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, supported by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. Israel won hands down, and, in less than a week, it transformed itself from a victim into a regional power ruling over occupied Arab territories and their Arab populations. This view was consolidated six years later in the much tougher circumstances of the Yom Kippur War in which Israel, after serious initial losses, succeeded in soundly defeating a surprise

attack coordinated by both Egypt and Syria, and supported by many other states in the region.

Israel was evidently a power to be reckoned with having emerged victorious in all major military engagements with Arab armies. Such compelling evidence of Israel's military prowess when combined with the gradual emergence during the nineteen sixties of Palestinian national consciousness, and of a Palestinian national movement, particularly in the territories occupied by Israel after 1967, began Israel's long descent into pariah status. Israel was a state manifestly fighting for its survival in which the entire population could be readily mobilised to defend the homeland at the drop of a hat.

These are the circumstances in which the progressive aspects of Zionism, its socialistic flavour, and its commitment to human rights and liberal principles have been steadily eroded. War in any state – Britain and America during the Second World War for example – results in the suspension of many democratic rights, it results in mass internments, the suppression of freedom of movement, organisation, and the press. The problem for Israel has been that this situation is anything but temporary – the building of walls, the staffing of checkpoints and military posts, the emergence of clear distinctions between citizens who can be trusted and those who cannot, and the distinction between citizens who consent to being ruled, and those subjects of the state who do not, have become, with every year that has passed, more and more important.

Since 1967 the right of Israel to exist has been widely questioned – its very legitimacy as a state is challenged by more or less all of its neighbours and by many peoples and governments further afield. This has driven a wedge deeper and deeper into Israeli society as its public and political life has drifted over the years, further and further to the right; through all the ups and downs of Israeli politics and its

bewildering array of fractious political parties, and coalitions, those disposed to more liberal policies have lost out to irredentist trends laying claim to the entire West Bank and even to the territory of the Kingdom of Jordan. Many fundamentalist Jews can see no reason why any Arabs at all should be allowed to live in *Eretz Yisrael* – the land promised by God to the Jews. Benjamin Netanyahu's government falls some way short of such extreme positions but his preparedness to play fast and loose with Israel's religious right, his preparedness to allow them to 'create facts on the ground' by increasing the size of Jewish settlements on the West Bank and in Jerusalem, reveals the character of his government and the state of Israeli politics like nothing else.

Israel finds itself in a permanent state of war; it faces existential threats on all sides. This is not an imaginary state of affairs. It is indisputably true; Iran and a number of other states openly seek its destruction. They advocate the abolition of Israel, and their threats are anything but idle. Hamas and Hezbollah seek the destruction of Israel and are explicitly committed to killing Jews, and to declaring Palestine "from the River to the Sea" free of Jews and of their Jewish state. Hezbollah's Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, is on record pledging never to recognise Israel: "I am against any reconciliation with Israel. I do not even recognise the presence of a state that is called 'Israel'". However, they have been less than consistent in their published statements and programmes, sometimes including, and sometimes omitting, their commitment to the destruction of Israel as the mood and political circumstances suited them.

This is not the case, however, with Hamas, the de facto state authorities in Gaza. In their 1988 Charter they reveal that destroying Israel and killing Jews is a central component of their divine mission. These are not simply policy statements that can be shelved or discarded; hating and killing Jews, and believing in the

destruction of Israel, is their *raison d'être*. Hamas are prepared to contemplate a *hudna* or ceasefire with Israel in return for a Palestinian State 'within the 1967 boundaries' with its capital in East Jerusalem and the 'right of return' for all Palestinians (and their descendants) who fled in 1948/9 from the lands that now form the territory of Israel *proper*. These conditions, as Hamas is well aware, would result in the destruction of the State of Israel and would consequently not be acceptable to any Israeli government.

Israel, on the other hand, is prepared to negotiate a settlement, which would involve some land swaps and would preserve a significant number of the Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Israel would make no concessions on Jerusalem, which would remain entirely within their sovereign territory as the capital of their state. It would reject the right of Palestinian Arabs to return to Israel *proper* and would seek to ensure that any Palestinian state owed both its sovereignty and its security to Israel who would, as a matter of course, reject the Palestinian's need for any armed forces greater than police and militia maintained for internal security; Israel's version of the "Two State Solution" is evidently, really a "One and a Half State Solution" which would not be acceptable to any conceivable Palestinian leadership.

Recently, entirely inappropriate comparisons have been made with the North of Ireland. Ignoring entirely the fact that Irish Republicans although absolutely committed to the eventual unification of a sovereign Irish State, have never been committed to the destruction of the British State nor have they advocated massacring Northern Ireland's Protestants, or the British people in general. The outlook of Irish Republicans towards Unionists and to the British, even the outlook of the 'Continuity IRA', is radically different from that of Hezbollah or Hamas or of the Iranian State towards Israel in particular and to Jews

in general. There is no basis for a settlement or for negotiations between these irreconcilable enemies.

Because most Israelis and their government see the struggle between Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran, on the one hand, and Israel on the other, as an existential struggle in which defeat would result in the end of Israel and the massacre and/or expulsion of the Jews they boldly support the blockade of Gaza and any and all measures taken by the Israel Defense Force against Islamist military formations that threaten them and their children.

Into this War, Palestinian solidarity and peace campaigners of one sort or another have mobilised against Israel by highlighting the manifest suffering and oppression of Palestinians in Gaza, and on the West Bank. Their *raison d'être* has been to relieve the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population battered by war, blockades, and by economic disintegration. They are, of course, far from neutral. They drape themselves in Palestinian flags, and fedayeen scarves, they support “the right of the oppressed to fight back against the oppressor”; they support Hamas and Hezbollah – as, in moments of great excitement, they shout: “Viva Palestina!” and “We are all Palestinians Now!”

Most recently, the Free Gaza Movement has been striving, by running the Israeli blockade of Gaza, to free up the right of Hamas to import anything it likes into the territory. The Government of Israel knows, however, that this would include missiles and other war materials for use in random attacks against Israel and her citizens. The peace campaigners point to the wheelchairs, the baby food, the medicines and building cement, and insist that no weapons are carried aboard their ships. This is all, undoubtedly true, but it is beside the point, because no one can be in any doubt that if the blockade of Gaza is lifted, Hamas would immediately replenish its arsenal of guns and rockets for the continuation of its war with Israel.

Consequently, my advice to those interested in matters humanitarian is to work out a way of ensuring that Israel widens the categories of things that can be imported into Gaza, and supports an Israeli ban on the import of weapons and related materials. This could be done in a number of different ways through third-party negotiations, or by the insertion of an international force to guarantee Israel's security from attacks by Hamas. However, nothing of the sort can be achieved by implicitly allying oneself with Hamas, by boycotting Israel, or by encouraging the diplomatic isolation of Israel.

The War cannot be brought to an end by supporting those who seek the destruction of Israel. Similarly, the War cannot be brought to an end by supporting Israel's right wing and the Jewish religious zealots who seek nothing less than the expulsion of Arabs from Israel and the West Bank. The War cannot be brought to an end by Israeli governments committed to the deployment of overwhelming violence against any threat to the security of its citizens, however slight.

The War can only be brought to an end by strengthening the progressive forces inside Israel and the progressive forces within the Palestinian community. If the United States, the European Union, and the Palestinian solidarity and peace movements, adopt any other strategy there will simply be war without end in the lands of Israel and Palestine.

Boycotting Israel

September 7, 2009

THIS SUMMER KEN LOACH the radical filmmaker caused something of a stir by pulling his latest film, *Looking For Eric*, out of the Melbourne International Film Festival. In doing so he was supporting the left's international attempt to isolate Israel. Loach emailed festival organizer, Richard Moore, demanding that he reject Israeli government sponsorship of the event; Moore refused so Loach withdrew from the festival.

This boycott forms part of a coordinated effort on the part of pro-Palestinian campaigns throughout the world. Their argument is clear and unambiguous: Israel is illegally occupying Palestinian land, corralling its people behind concrete barriers and barbed wire fences; Israel sustains its occupation by denying Palestinians the opportunity to develop their own economic and political institutions. Israel is the oppressor and must at all costs be defeated by using all available means.

For Palestinian solidarity movements formed by socialists, communists, Muslims, and Islamists, around the world this means boycotting Israel. It means organizing within trade unions and other bodies to close down all contacts with Israeli institutions, with Israeli sportsmen and women, Israeli artists and academics. It also means attempting to build a consumer boycott of Israeli goods and services in an orchestrated campaign to undermine Israeli economic life by crippling its industry and foreign trade.

While not supporting suicide bombers or the indiscriminate firing of rockets into Israel by Palestinian resistance groups, the solidarity organizations claim to be able to "understand" why Palestinians, as oppressed people, are prepared to carry out terror attacks against Israeli civilians. However, this "understanding" stops at outright or open support for terror

attacks upon Israel; a division of labour is maintained between those engaged in fighting explicitly to destroy the state of Israel, and those solidarity organizations that seek to emphasize the suffering of the Palestinian people by calling for a boycott of all things Israeli.

This is a well-established technique on the left where support for one side in an armed struggle is couched in terms of medical aid, humanitarian assistance, and political solidarity for the oppressed, while broadly endorsing the objectives of the armed insurgency in question. In the Israel-Palestine struggle this means deploying a boycott of Israel in pursuit of a “single state solution”. The single-state of left-wing imagination is one in which the Israeli state is dismantled and replaced by a single state covering the whole territory of Israel-Palestine which would guarantee equal rights for all its citizens regardless of religion, race, or ethnicity. Or, as the common Palestinian solidarity slogan puts it: “From the Jordan to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free!”

Try this slogan with “Israel” instead of “Palestine” and you will immediately see that it is not really a secular or progressive slogan at all; it is not aimed at uniting Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Israelis – it is a slogan calling for the destruction of the Jewish state, it is a slogan which implicitly proposes a Palestinian state dominated by Palestinian Muslims who, given a century of enmity and bloodshed, are unlikely to guarantee the physical well-being or the livelihood of the Jewish population in a territory newly liberated from Jewish control by armed Palestinian insurgents and their allies in the solidarity campaigns.

Indeed, the absurdity of the “one-state solution” being canvassed by the secular left and their Muslim associates throughout the world is the principal reason why most Jews in Israel and most Jews in the world support the continued existence of the state of Israel; they fear that without the Jewish state, Jews would be driven out of Israel-Palestine in a wave of ethnic

cleansing facilitated by mass killings and terror carried out by revanchist Palestinian Arabs. It is perfectly true that this might *not* happen – it is literally conceivable – or perhaps, even imaginable, that all would live happily together letting bygones be bygones, but most Jews quite sensibly do not want to trust their lives and the lives of their families and friends to a lah-lah-land dreamed up by those campaigning on behalf of Palestinians.

Despite this reality the broad socialist left (with few exceptions) persists in advocating its phantasmagoric “secular single state solution” by depicting Israel as a kind of apartheid state hell bent on oppressing and exploiting the Palestinians. Consequently, the old South Africa of white rule and Bantustans is conjured up in a handy parallel with contemporary Israel. South African apartheid was brought down (so those in the solidarity movement reason), by a combination of armed struggle, mass uprisings, and boycotts; it worked in South Africa, and it will work in Palestine. This is the strategy: mass uprisings, armed struggle, and boycotts will bring down the hated Zionist state.

There is, however, a flaw in the plan: Israel is nothing like South Africa. The apartheid regime was held together by an active alliance between Afrikaans-speaking farmers, small businessmen, and the white working class. This arrangement for decades won the acquiescence of the white English-speaking bourgeoisie settled in South Africa, and the bosses of big international firms, for as long as relative peace and stability reigned. As the mass mobilisations, ferocious violence, and the ANC’s credibility, grew the only thing that kept the English-speaking bourgeoisie and the international firms in bed with apartheid was fear of social revolution and communism. Once the Soviet Union and communism started to disintegrate the big bourgeoisie pulled the plug on apartheid; Mandela was released and the Rainbow Nation became, for a time at least, a good place to do business.

Israel, on the other, is a garrison state; it is a state established by the dispossession of some 700,000 Palestinians by armed Jewish settlers, who had themselves fled successive waves of persecution in Russia and Europe between around 1905 and about 1945-7. The Jewish state exists to defend these settler-refugees and their descendants from anti-Semitism and from revanchist Arabs; that is its *raison d'être*. The ideology and practice of the Israeli state is built entirely upon the Zionist assumption that the Jews can no longer exist without a state.

Anti-Apartheid boycotts actively expressed and canvassed support for racial equality throughout the world. Boycotts did not bring white South Africa to its knees, but they made it abundantly clear that white South Africa had no future. Boycotting Israel on the other hand does one thing – it invites people throughout the world to boycott the Jewish state, and it invites them to boycott Jewish institutions, Jewish businesses, Jewish artists and Jewish intellectuals who either live in Israel, work in Israel, or endorse the continued existence of the Jewish state. Inescapably, the boycott campaign is a campaign aimed at boycotting Jews.

Of course, many campaigners are indignant at the charge of anti-Semitism. Consequently, Palestinian solidarity organizations are assiduous in their attempts to distance themselves from anti-Semitism by stressing that their opposition is not to Jews, but to Zionists. However, this is not a distinction that can be sustained with much credibility in a world in which much Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim opinion is informed by Holocaust denial, and is indeed explicitly and virulently anti-Jewish.

Therefore, the oppression of the Palestinians, the occupation of the West Bank, and the grievous isolation and dispossession of the population of Gaza, can only be brought to an end by a negotiated partition of Israel-Palestine between Arabs and Jews, with the security of *two* independent states guaranteed by the

United States and the European Union. On the other hand the boycott endorsed by the Palestinian solidarity movement will promote more anti-Semitism and a sense of embattled isolation that can only help to cohere the Israeli masses behind the current policy of occupation and repression.

Gaza: The Atrocity Exhibition

January 12, 2009

THE MERE THOUGHT of emaciated children clinging to the corpse of their mother for hour after hour while Israeli troops prowl the dark ruins chills the blood. There is nothing acceptable about such a thought or such a reality. This is the view of Navi Pillay, the UN high commissioner for human rights, of a host of other humanitarian organizations, and of the emerging body of international law concerning the conduct of soldiers engaged in war fighting. The soldiers are responsible for the safety and welfare of civilians unfortunate enough to cross their path. The Israeli Defence Force, or the Hamas fighters, whoever had the tactical advantage, should have rescued these children and the surviving adults. This much is clear.

Reports of circumstances like these, of the shelling of schools, attacks on those rushing the wounded and dying to hospital, and the bombing of residential districts and markets, have dominated news coverage of the war in Gaza. Internet, television, and newspaper reporting, using film and information garnered by residents and the local employees of aid agencies, have shaped this humanitarian focus. Consequently there has been little detailed discussion of the progress of the fighting or of the specific military objectives of either side – all attention has been upon the suffering of the civilian population. Reports of this suffering have gone on to mobilise the outrage of demonstrators throughout the world and has resulted in elaborate apologies and expressions of understanding for the actions and policies of Hamas.

Meanwhile Israeli ministers have denied all responsibility for mass killings by insisting that Hamas is using the population of the Gaza Strip as a “human

shield". In this way, the Israelis with, it must be said, little prospect of success hope to join the rest of the world in concentrating upon the suffering, which according to Ehud Barak and Tzipi Livni, is the exclusive responsibility of Hamas.

Israel also blames Hamas for the destruction of Gaza's economy: since June 2007 when Hamas took control of the territory 40,000 farmers and 70,000 workers have lost their jobs. According to the World Bank, 98 per cent of Gaza's industry was shut *before* the current war broke out. It was, Livni argues, Hamas that forced Israel to destroy Gaza's economy. In this gruesome game of denying responsibility Israel's actions are the responsibility of Hamas, while Hamas only fires rockets indiscriminately at civilians because Israel compels it to do so. Both sides are deeply concerned with humanitarian issues, both sides would like, if only they had the choice, to avoid civilian casualties.

However, atrocities are an integral part of war. You cannot fight wars without atrocities. Drunk, drugged or traumatised soldiers are, no matter how alert the military command, going to rape, torture and murder, enemy soldiers and civilians. When these entirely predictable events are revealed by the humanitarian focus of the modern media all and sundry will express shock and horror at man's inhumanity to man. The tired old indignation will be dusted down and we will all be surprised and outraged all over again. Although it is well known that the brutality and lawlessness inherent in wars is the principal reason for avoiding them.

Then, there is the collateral damage: the accidental or unintended killing of large numbers of ordinary men, women, and children. Sometimes, of course, these mass killings are entirely deliberate – witness the destruction of German cities during the forties – but justified by including the enemy's civilians as "legitimate targets". This kind of thought is what allows Hamas to fire rockets at will into Israel. Then there are

the apparently unintended killings associated with surgical airstrikes and carefully targeted artillery and tank fire. These killings may be unintended, but they are most assuredly not unexpected. Israel knows only too well that bombing towns and cities, shelling city blocks and refugee camps will slaughter very large numbers of women, children, adolescents, and old men, not to mention the young men, who are of course fair game in any war.

Despite all this absurd argy bargy about “proportionality” it is quite clear that Hamas would inflict existential damage upon Israel if only it was more efficient and better supplied. Most of the people who dwell upon demands for proportionality are implicitly calling upon the IDF to keep their killing roughly in line with that of Hamas. That this would make no military sense does not detain them because the concern of these peace mongers is purely humanitarian – not unnaturally, they want atrocities kept to a minimum. At any rate they would rather Israel did not carry them out.

This focus upon civilian casualties has resulted in an almost exclusive focus upon Israel’s culpability. A bitter historical irony is alleged where it is said that Israel has turned Gaza into a “concentration camp”. According to the Vatican’s Cardinal Renato Martino, the Gaza Strip increasingly resembles a concentration camp; some have even compared it to the Warsaw Ghetto. This is where the focus upon misery leads us. One is tempted to ask the Cardinal where the train tracks from Gaza to Treblinka and Auschwitz are; where are the daily selections for the gas chambers set up by the IDF for the systematic destruction of the Palestinian population?

This search for entirely inappropriate historical parallels in the fight against Israel has led many people on the left to compare the fight against Zionism to the fight against Apartheid in South Africa. Naomi Klein is even calling for a boycott. She apparently

believes that it was the worldwide boycott of South African goods that resulted in the surrender of the Apartheid state to Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress. This rather naïve view seems to ignore the state of virtual civil war, which existed in South Africa after 1985 on the one hand, and the collapse of communism between 1989 and 1991 on the other, which made it both necessary and possible for De Klerk to surrender to the ANC without unduly empowering the South African Communist Party.

On top of gross political naivety, there is another problem with Naomi's "Boycott Israel" plan – anti-Semitism. Such a boycott would inevitably spread to a boycott of Jewish firms and businesses throughout the world on the extended basis that their owners are Zionists who actively support Israel. This kind of boycott is already in place in Iran and throughout the Arab world. It is also canvassed by a number of leftist and Islamist groups in Britain. To extend it any further is folly of the worse sort.

The reason for the present war is the refusal of Israel and Hamas to recognise the legitimacy of each other's existence. Israel's refusal to end the occupation, remove the settlements, and return to its 1967 frontier, is based upon the entirely reasonable fear that Palestinian political organizations and their allies in Lebanon, in Tehran and Damascus, want to destroy the Jewish state. This fear has led Israel, perhaps inevitably, into the wholesale oppression of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza – this oppression in turn guarantees the existence of a more or less permanent armed Palestinian insurrection. It is a malign circle of murder and oppression that only big powers can break. The solution is not boycotts, or wars without end, but the recognition of two independent states, whose security is mutually guaranteed by each other, and underpinned by European and American money and weapons.

Justine Bieber and Palestine

April 18, 2011

“AS LONG AS YOU GUYS ARE HAPPY, I’M HAPPY.”

So spake Justin Bieber. It’s his distinctive view on how to compute the elements of “a good first date”. Although, it is not clear to me that Justin has ever had a ‘date’, he surely knows what he looks for in a girl: she’s got to have a “good smile”, she’s “definitely got to have a good personality”, and finally, “I like a girl that can make me laugh.” (He is not forthcoming on the question of whether he expects to be able to make her laugh.) Like Paris, the son of Priam, he clearly expects to be the one judging the maidens, rather than being judged. Which is just as it should be.

His appeal is the appeal shared by all boy stars since before we had boy bands - what is offered is the fantasy of having sex while remaining a virgin, eroticism unsullied by sweat and other bodily fluids. The appeal is not dissimilar from those good looking vampires who despite promising much, do not bite, and are certainly never going to drink your blood. It’s a delicious offer of risk without jeopardy, of desire without the danger of consummation. The minute Justin looks like a man who might fuck you his magic will be lost; the boy will have to move on.

Justin and his Mum are past masters at managing this paradox; they will delay the inevitable for as long as they can. In a similar vein they understand that Justin must be unsullied by other realities which is why they refused the invitation issued by Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, for Justin to meet Jewish Israeli children who had just had a lucky escape from a Hamas rocket attack.

Netanyahu should have hosted a party for teenage Israelis, Arabs and Jews, to meet Justin and his Mum; but no he had to spoil everything by talking about the War. Justin wasn’t going to fall for that. So Netanyahu missed a vital opportunity to present his country as a

normal, fun-loving country, in which all kids are equally cherished. Clearly, Netanyahu is not as well endowed with political acumen as Justin.

One can see from this incident why Israel is having such difficulty in being anything other than a pariah state. Israel insists that it is “the only democracy in the region”, and, consequently, that it’s Arab citizens have the same rights as its Jewish citizens, but this is belied by the Prime Minister’s first instinct, which is to present Jewish children as victims of Palestinian violence, when everybody knows that kids on all sides are the hapless victims of the War. The fact that the Prime Minister’s office thinks it can use Justin Bieber to focus attention on the situation of children and teenagers from the western Negev who live with the threat of Kassam rockets fired from Gaza, without regard to the predicament of Palestinian children in the War, reveals a serious failure of imagination among Israel’s military and political elite.

Justin and his Mum just want to enjoy the adulation of fans in Tel Aviv, see the sites of the Holy Land, and have some fun. They do not want to be besieged by the paparazzi or to be “dragged into politics”. The subsequent denials by Netanyahu’s aides, and of the children who had escaped from the bombed out school bus, that they had ever been invited to the Prime Minister’s office to meet Justin Bieber are pointless; the damage has been done. Netanyahu has demonstrated that he cannot manage public relations with a teen idol’s entourage.

Some might say that this is the least of his problems, but I’m not so sure. You cannot canvas the idea that Israel is an essentially benign, enlightened, and democratic power, and yet at every twist and turn reject any responsibility for the sixty-three years of murder and mayhem Jews have shared with Arabs in Israel, Palestine, Jordan and Lebanon. Similarly, the Palestinians, whose organizations are past masters at presenting themselves as victims, have recently scored an own goal by murdering Vittorio Arrigoni because he came from an

“infidel state” and had entered Palestine in order “to spread corruption”.

Vittorio Arrigoni was throttled to death by Salafists, people steeped in the virtue of the first generations after the life and death of the Prophet. They have been condemned on all sides, but this will do nothing to undermine the sense that Palestinians are Islamists simply committed to the destruction of Israel, and indeed, to the destruction of anybody who disagrees with them. The problems here are more than problems of presentation. Justin Bieber can easily refuse engagement, but nobody else who lives there can refuse to be “dragged into politics”. They are all steeped in politics whether they like it or not.

For Netanyahu and his political allies the problem is clear - how to get the Palestinians peacefully to accept the annexation of Jerusalem, and of large swathes of Samaria and Judea (West Bank), by Israel. For the Palestinians the issue is how to retain a presence in Jerusalem and clear the Israelis out of as much of the West Bank (Samaria and Judea) as possible. Both want the same territory, and both want peace and security for their respective peoples.

This situation is not unique. In the mid-nineties Croatian generals, Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markac, used murder and mayhem to drive 200,000 Serbs out of the Krajina during Croatia’s Homeland War. There are numerous other examples in which states have founded themselves in the midst of efforts to clear territories of people whose ethnicity, race, language, or religion, did not fit the profile desired by the prevailing political and military authorities. However, what is unusual, if not unique, about Israel’s efforts to annex Jerusalem and the West Bank since 1967 is its use of a graduated concoction of planning regulations, land purchases, policing, and security measures, to squeeze Arabs progressively out of more and more of the Old City, and out of more and more of Samaria and Judea.

This mixture of litigation and police repression has

been driven by Israel's need to keep the Americans on board and by their need to maintain an air of legality and innocence over their actions. They cannot sweep down burning and killing in a terror campaign to clear out the Arabs. Consequently, they merely demolish Arab housing that has been built contrary to planning laws, engage in a combination of compulsory and commercial land purchases, set up road blocks, and use soldiers, police posts, and road closures, to protect Jewish settlers and Jewish settlements, scattered throughout the West Bank. Simultaneously, they strenuously offer to negotiate with whoever will listen, because, after all, all Israel wants is peace.

This is not a stalemate, nor is it the defence of the *status quo*. With every year that passes there are more Jewish settlers and settlements on the West Bank, more of Arab Jerusalem has been nibbled away, more young Jewish Israelis have the less than edifying experience of militarily protecting the religious zealots and racists who insist that there is no such thing as a "Palestinian", and that consequently, all Arabs must be driven out of the land of *Eretz Yisrael Ha-Shlema* - or the "Whole Land of Israel".

However, Benjamin Netanyahu is not an unreasonable man; unlike the settlers he so resolutely protects, he is prepared to offer full or partial control of at least forty per cent of the West Bank to the Arabs. He simply cannot grasp why the Palestinians do not enthusiastically grab such a generous offer with both hands. The incomprehension is mutual.

Things cannot go on like this. Despite the best efforts of Tzipi Livni and other leading politicians in Israel the question of the settlements bars all attempts at a negotiated peace. The refusal of the State of Israel to fix her own borders with the West Bank has merely encouraged those Jewish groups who maneuver for the annexation of everything west of the Jordan, and wish to encourage the Arabs, by all means at their disposal, to leave Israel by crossing the river.

Now, the Israelis have to contemplate the possibility that the United Nations General Assembly will unilaterally recognise a Palestinian State as early as September. Israel will then be confronted by having to accept an eastern border imposed by the UN or face the prospect of refusing to recognise the frontier of a neighbouring member of the United Nations. The truism that Israel can find no peace *without* a Palestinian State will then be joined with the observation that she can find no peace *with* a Palestinian state.

Instead of walling themselves in, or walling the Palestinians out, the Israelis will have to participate in the construction of a viable Palestinian state. This means helping to stimulate the economy and investment by guaranteeing freedom of movement around the West Bank, and by relaxing security restrictions on cross border trade in labour, products, and services. Most importantly, it means making it clear to the settlers that they will have to either accept full citizenship accorded to them by the new State of Palestine, or, if they wish to enjoy the protection of the State of Israel, they will have to abandon their settlements, cross Israel's eastern border, and return to Israel proper. It must mean a decisive end to the aggression perpetrated by settler communities in which the police and armed forces of Israel are hustled into protecting them - by the fear that the Arabs will simply massacre the Jews on their territory.

Israel is no longer an innocent boy David with a slingshot, but a grown man with heavy armour, rockets, and nuclear weapons, capable of fucking all comers. For this reason protestations of innocence and victimhood will no longer suffice. Tzipi Livni, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the rest of them in the Knesset need to come to grips with the situation and help establish the sovereign State of Palestine right now.

Catastrophe Day

May 16, 2011

YAWM AN-NAKBAH is held on the day following Israeli Independence Day. It is the day on which many Palestinians commemorate the expulsion of their grandparents and aged relatives from their ancestral homes and villages. Although this day has only been prominent in the Palestinian protest calendar since the 1990s it does mark a series of undoubtedly traumatic and tragic historical events.

On May 15-16, 1948, armies from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded Israel. They were rapidly and roundly defeated, and armistice agreements were signed during the spring of 1949. Egypt was left in occupation of Gaza, Jordan annexed the West Bank, and Israel was left in possession of the rest of the territory.

During, and after the war, some 260,000 Jews fled from Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, and North Africa, and 750,000 Arabs were expelled or fled from Israel. Subsequently, hundreds of thousands of more Jews quit Iran and the Arab lands for Israel, many being deprived of all their possessions on the way - the result is that some forty per cent of Israel's modern population can trace their roots back to those who fled from Iran and the neighbouring Arab states.

Unlike the Jewish refugees who settled in Israel, much of the Palestinian diaspora has retained its refugee status, and have for whatever reason, failed to become fully settled citizens of Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. Consequently, the 'right of return' has remained uppermost in their minds. They are irredentists who demand that the results of the War of 1948 be unraveled by insisting that all those driven out of Israel sixty-three years ago, *and their descendants*, be allowed to return, in order to settle in their lost villages and to occupy their lost lands and houses.

The fulfilment of this demand, they know, would result in the collapse of the Jewish state, and the flight of some seven and half million Israeli Jews to Europe, North America, Australia, or anywhere else they could find to let them in. This desire appears to lie at the heart of Palestinian aspirations - the evaporation of the state of Israel, and the disappearance of its people.

Many left wing people in Britain want to endorse what they call the 'two-state' solution without fully recognising the religious, racial, and ethnic, intransigence at the heart of this struggle. Many more people on the left in Britain and around the world endorse this Palestinian aspiration by supporting what they often describe as a 'single secular state' between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean, encompassing the whole of the Palestinian territories and Israel, in which Arabs and Jews would be able to live in peace and harmony assured of equal rights in perpetuity. This utopian scheme is often welcomed by Palestinian organisations although they must surely know that the dismantling of the Zionist state could only be accomplished by its military defeat, in the course of which, most of the Jewish population would be prevailed upon to leave the territory by victorious Arab armed forces.

In Israel we have a state founded largely by refugees in 1948, which constantly faces existential threats from a mass of refugees, and their descendants, backed by two irregular armies - Hamas and Hezbollah - by the Palestinian Authority, and by all of the neighbouring Arab states. While Hamas's Charter (1988) makes clear that its *raison d'être* is hating and killing Jews, and destroying the "entity" known as Israel, it is perfectly willing to endorse a cease fire with the "entity"; it is prepared to back the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, but it steadfastly refuses to recognise Israel.

Founding member of Hamas, Mahmoud Zahar, speaking last week, explained that recognising Israel would "preclude the right of the next generation to

liberate the lands. . . . What,” he wondered, “will be the fate of the five million Palestinians in the diaspora” if Israel is recognised? However, Zahar insisted that Hamas is prepared to recognise a Palestinian state “on any part of Palestine” as opposed to Hamas’ proclaimed aim for a state “from the river [Jordan] to the [Mediterranean] sea.”

This is the heart of the problem. Full recognition of the State of Israel by the government of any future Palestinian state, without ‘the right of return’ for the refugees of 1948 and their descendants, would mean accepting that Israel is not only a legitimate state, but that it is here to stay. This is what Hamas, and it must be said, much of Fatah, is unwilling to contemplate. The Palestinian cause is not simply about freeing the occupied territories on the West Bank, or lifting the blockade of Gaza; it is about destroying the State of Israel demographically by ensuring that there are more Arabs in Israel than there are Jews - 23 per cent of Israel’s population is already Arab, and any mass return of refugees would clearly undermine the Jewish character of the country. ‘The right of return’ is an irredentist project, which aims at reversing the effects of the military defeats suffered by Arab armies in their attacks on Israel, most notably in 1948, 1967, and 1973.

Similarly, Israel is determined to frustrate Arab aspirations by fracturing the territorial coherence of the Palestinian lands on the West Bank of the Jordan by legal finagling, by fraud, by evictions, by direct annexations, by denying the right of West Bank Palestinians living abroad to return to their own homes, and finally, by the deployment of economic clout. As a consequence, Israelis have created more than a hundred communities in Palestinian territory with a total population of over half a million of their Jewish citizens; they have built a dense network of roads to supply and defend these settlements - moving Israel Defence Forces throughout the West Bank at will. All these measures have consolidated Israel’s grip, and

undermined all attempts by the Palestinian Authority to exercise sovereign control over its own territories.

Despite this unpromising situation on the ground the Palestinian parties, including Fatah and Hamas, are planning to declare, unilaterally, the sovereign independence of a Palestinian state in September and hope to gain recognition for this move at the United Nations in New York.

This is the context in which we should understand last Sunday's mass demonstrations at Israel's frontiers with Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. This was a highly organized and well-orchestrated international plan to challenge, once again, the right of Israel to exist, by insisting that all those Arabs driven out of Israel in 1948, and their descendants, have a right to return 'home'. All the Palestinian parties know that the 'right of return' is non-negotiable as far as Israel is concerned. Consequently, the mass demonstrations on Israel's borders graphically emphasize Zionist intransigence and violence; they focus attention upon Israel's refusal to enter into meaningful negotiations. Evidently, the Palestinians hope that this novel form of Intifada will help them to garner support at the United Nations for the unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood that they plan to make in September.

No doubt the Syrian dictatorship was delighted by the opportunity provided this weekend by demonstrations against Israel to distract attention from its use of tanks, torture, and mass arrests, against its own citizens. Similarly, moves against Israel will help shore up the street cred of the Jordanian monarchy and of the military dictatorship in Cairo. These demonstrations on Israel's frontiers were a brazen attempt by Palestinian parties who, despite formal electoral procedures, are far from democratic, and for embattled Baathist and military dictatorships, to derail or distract the Arab democratic movement by refocusing it upon anti-Israel rhetoric, and by endorsing irredentist demands for the destruction of the State of Israel.

The Zionist state cannot surrender the West Bank until Palestinians fully accept the right of Israel to exist in perpetuity. This does mean accepting that 1948 cannot be unraveled, and rejecting, once and for all, the 'right of return'. Similarly, Palestinians cannot establish genuine sovereignty without the removal of Jewish settlements, or at the very least, acceptance by the populations of these settlements, of the sovereignty of the Palestinian state, and the acknowledgement of their own full Palestinian citizenship. If Jewish settlers are unprepared to accept Palestinian sovereignty they must leave the territory of the Palestinian state and cross the frontier back into Israel.

Both scenarios are extremely unlikely. The Jewish Settlers are not going to accept Palestinian sovereignty and no government in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv is simply going to abandon them to their fate. The Palestinians are not going to surrender the 'right of return' - so the issue of the forthcoming struggles and wars will hinge upon whether one accepts the right of Israel to exist or not. Those on the left in Britain need to come clean now and acknowledge that by espousing the 'Palestinian cause', and by supporting the Palestinian 'right of return', they are rejecting Israel's right to exist.

Impressions of Israel

January 21, 2012

AFTER A TWO-WEEK HOLIDAY in Israel in January 2012, I'm now a world-class expert on the politics, cultural mores, and anxieties of Israeli society, able to pontificate at length on all things Israeli The absurdity of this proposition is self-evident, until I reflect on the suspicion that no matter how long I stayed in the country it would always remain the home of fathomless contradictions, a bottomless pit of anxiety, bad faith, and inarticulate distress.

I walked for days and many miles throughout Tel Aviv, from the north-south highway, Ayalon Route 20, to the sea, and from Ramat Aviv Gimel in the north, down to Shapira in the south, and across to Old Jaffa. What I discovered was a truly marvelous Jewish city, a city in which an old Christian Englishman,¹ who could speak none of the city's languages, read none of its signs, nor make head-nor-tail of its bus routes, was able to roam, safely at will, without the slightest unease or tension from the most bourgeois districts to the most dismal run-down neighbourhoods.

Tel Aviv is an unequivocally residential city. People live on all the main thoroughfares and in side streets lined with apartment blocks from one end to the other. Consequently, there are children, young people, old people, and everybody else in between, living in multi-generational communities throughout. This certainly seems to have strengthened the atmosphere of civility, which reigns supreme. It means that in neighbourhoods packed with workless black refugees from the horn of Africa, in Arab areas scarred by the malign neglect of the Jewish state, a stranger can walk freely without the caution and sense of readiness demanded by forays into the poorer parts of

¹ I'm a non-believer, but 'ethnically' Roman Catholic nonetheless.

Manchester, Salford, or London.

Infirm elderly Jewish ladies are often accompanied by Filipino maids, who help them get through their days, no doubt well regulated by the immigration authorities; 'help' secured at bargain prices. Black men sweep the streets. I'm sure that there must be a White road sweeper or two, but they were elsewhere whenever I was about. In any event, Tel Aviv is certainly one of the cleanest cities that I've ever been in. It is litterless except in the small areas where the population is largely Arab and the municipality's priorities do not seem to run.

I was struck with wonder at the almost miraculous achievements of those who built this state, those who raised Hebrew from the dead, and lifted the shekel from the pages of the *Book of Genesis* into the currency of everyday life. In Tel Aviv they created in the teeth of wholesale Turkish deportations, Arab pogroms, and British repression, a vibrant modern city, in which during the thirties and forties of the last century the Jewish survivors of a veritable tsunami of killings, literally waded ashore to reclaim their humanity and build a new life.

The evidence of this is plain on every side. From the names of streets, boulevards, and parks, from the plaques and strangely inconspicuous monuments, from the city's quiet domestic thirties' architecture, rendered in heavily patched cement, to the older streets of Neveh Tzedek or Florentin, built as the Jews beginning to crowd into Palestine during the early years of the last century felt the need to free themselves of the Arab hostilities of Jaffa by building a new European city on the sand dunes to the north and east of the ancient city from which Jonah had set sail. Now, the cityscape is scattered with bold commercial towers, banks, big companies, hotels and shopping malls, all staking their claim for attention, along with one or two high rise ritzy apartment blocks.

Interestingly, I saw no bronze men on horseback,

no heroes on granite pedestals; no obelisks or marble arches. Tel Aviv is not Vienna, London, or Paris – it is not even Dublin; admirable rebels have no monuments here. The city's first mayor, Meir Dizengoff, does bestride a rather modest horse half way up Rothschild Boulevard, but the war memorial in the same vicinity, lacks the monumental grandeur of London's Cenotaph.

However, this absence of sculptural bombast cannot be taken at face value. A short visit to the New Central Bus Station starkly reveals the Spartan character of the state and society. There, in what must be one of the worst bus stations in the world, crowded, neglected, dirty, one is confronted with milling crowds of teenagers in loose military fatigues, girls manhandling sacks as big as themselves, and lads shouldering rather large serious-looking guns. All normal in countries practicing universal military service you might think. But, in Israel, the girls are conscripted alongside the lads, many of whom go on leave with their guns. Consequently, eighteen and nineteen-year-old boys can be seen choosing ice cream, sitting in bars and restaurants, or simply walking about the streets with battle rifles, carrying the latest sights, or sub-machine guns slung casually across their backs. These heavily armed kids do not swagger; they are more likely to be bored than boastful. Most of them seem well mannered, and looked good to this old homosexual, but in the stained concrete labyrinth of Tel Aviv's bus station the abnormality of the situation is pointed up by the large red signs in English pointing one to "Shelter" – these are the points to which one would briskly make one's way in the event of rocket or aerial attacks by the Arabs on the Jews.

Tel Aviv is a city always potentially at war, in a country, which has never been at peace. This reality is never far from the surface. These slightly-built lads, and the girls overtopped by their luggage, are real soldiers who might find themselves in battle at any

moment, or working in military communications, or intelligence, or a host of ancillary operations in a real war in which the survival of the state, of their own lives, and those of their families, are at stake. This is ordinary. The abnormality is normal. This strikes me, but it is of little or no interest to those sitting with me in McDonald's gazing out in the bovine way one does when munching on a burger.

On Lilienblum, a world away from the proletarian hubbub of Lewinsky, little girls of ten or twelve year's of age run messages for Mum, or simply mess about in the dark winter streets, while gay men greet each other in pavement cafés and elderly Jewish men garner charitable donations from passers-by. It's a heavily armed, peaceful 'alternative' scene, attractive, prosperous, and easy-going. This is the premier Jewish city of the Jewish state. It arose on the principle of separation from the Arabs, and rests entirely upon the principle of Arab exclusion. Consequently, peace is simply not on offer.

This dismal reality becomes much more apparent fifty minutes drive to the east in Jerusalem, an ancient city in the possession of the State of Israel, with a very old section still surrounded by imposing Ottoman walls, pierced at intervals by enormous stone gateways. The walled city is divided into quarters between Christians, Arabs, and Jews, but in reality it is a largely Arab city except for the Jewish Quarter. (The Jewish Quarter was entirely destroyed and looted by Arabs in 1948, the synagogues were dynamited, and the rabbis and their people forced out.) The Jewish quarter has some fine new buildings, but for the most part Jerusalem's old city is an enchanting warren of narrow old streets and covered markets. It is a bustling place in which Arabs live and work and in which people from Arab East Jerusalem come to shop for fruit, vegetables, spices, cheap clothes and all manner of electrical and household goods. Of course, there are racks of t-shirts punning in English, and mounds of

tourist junk on all sides, but for all that it is an authentic old town.

To the West of the old city is modern Jerusalem, with some impressive twentieth century buildings – survivors from the British occupation of the city. This is a busy modern Jewish city; it is the State of Israel's capital, it is where the Knesset sits in its formidable building, a kind of ersatz Parthenon symbolic of both the parliament and state's democratic credentials. Here, in the modern city there are plush hotels, shops, and restaurants, elegant modern trams, and well regulated bus services. There is even a gay bar, unmarked and unnamed, down a scruffy back street, to be sure, but it is there nevertheless. There are no embassies, of course, they are all in Tel Aviv – this is because few, if any, other countries recognise the legitimacy of the State of Israel's occupation of Jerusalem. I stayed in an old Arab house near Shivtei Yisra'el close to the district of Me'a She'arim. This neighbourhood is dominated by the multiplicity of ultra orthodox Jewish sects, collectively known as Haredim – literally, those who tremble before the Lord.

The Haredim population of Israel is growing rapidly; they are hostile to the free presence of women in public spaces, and resolutely opposed to women having any independent role in public life. These deeply reactionary people are on a collision course with the State of Israel – there were riots when I was in the country and bizarre television footage of embattled police attempting to subdue crowds of irate black-hatted men defending their claims to complete autonomy from the state and their right to discriminate against women and girls.

Despite the truly awful religious and ethnic tension Jerusalem is a ravishing city, from the Mount of Olives, and from the roof of the Roman Catholic Austrian Hospice (at station IV of the Stations of the Cross on the Via Dolorosa), the city is magnificent. The sombre stony terraces of the Jewish cemetery beyond the city

walls, the golden cupolas of Russian churches, the spires and towers of the Armenians, and the bulk of the Church of the Dormitian, where Mary, the Queen of Heaven, sleeps in perpetuity. The place is a charnel house of competing death cults all paradoxically offering life eternal, all equipped with a multiplicity of tombs, sacred rocks, and highly significant spots upon which a number of entirely improbable events are said to have occurred. For proprietorial possession of these sites Jews, Christians of different stripes, and Muslims of all kinds, are prepared periodically, to fight and even murder each other.

The Via Dolorosa, the supposed route that Christ took from his judgement by Pontius Pilate, his flagellation at the hands of the soldiery, to his death on Calvary and the placing of his mortal remains in the tomb. This mythological nonsense conjured up during the thirteenth century has resulted in a well-defined route, which terminates at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This is a fascinating place of ancient churches within churches in which Christians, Armenians, Greeks, Russians, Copts, and Latins, periodically battle it out with mops, brooms, and fists. It is here at the Sepulchre of Jesus that the holy flame of the Resurrection descends from Heaven every Easter and spontaneously lights a candle from which the faithful light their own candles by more regular non-miraculous means. Here, and everywhere else Christ is supposed to have been, there are coachloads of Orthodox Christians come from Russia to kiss altars, revered holy stones, and selected icons.

Above the city the vast ceremonial platform of the Temple Mount dominates the view. The site of the Jewish temple destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, now it is home to the great Al Aqsa Mosque, and the seventh century Masjid Qubbat As-Sakhrah. This lavishly decorated octagonal shrine, topped with a golden dome, marks the spot from which Mohammad rode up to Heaven in the company of the Angel

Gabriel for a prayer meeting with Moses, Abraham, and Jesus.

Below this Muslim eminence is the Western Wall, sacred to Jews; apparently it is a remnant of the original bastions, which supported the Temple built following the return of the Jews from their exile in Babylon. At the Wall there is a men's section and a smaller women's section. When I was there some ecstatic Haredim were singing and dancing as they carried their Torah Scrolls towards the Wall for what I could only imagine was a kind of spiritual refuelling. A large number of women standing on plastic chairs were leaning over the gender fence applauding, and cheering on the chaps, apparently endorsing their own subordination to this most patriarchal of cults in a city dominated by patriarchal cults.

We also saw the city scattered over its undulating hills from the top of the Mount of Olives. We'd gone up to see the Chapel of the Ascension built on the very spot from which Christ was wafted up to Heaven. And, having been stung for a Jewish 'blessing' on entering the Western Wall plaza by a bunch of Haredim, with great hats and splendid side locks, earlier in the day, we were determined not to be 'taken in' again by sacred freeloaders. So, at the entrance to the courtyard of the Chapel of the Ascension we boldly brushed past the gate keepers until we realised that the two poorly dressed Arabs equipped with a couple of white plastic chairs were indeed the official custodians of the Chapel, and were simply asking for the ten shekel entrance fee. The Chapel of the Ascension is an elegant, simple little round building, standing in the centre of a circular courtyard surrounded by high masonry walls.

It was well worth the perilous ascent of the Mount of Olives in a minibus that serves the Arab bus route to Et-Tur. Fortunately, it was a Mercedes bus, so despite its battered and cramped interior, it could career around sharp bends and take the 30° slopes with

ease. Simply by taking this Arab bus we had left the thriving modern society created by the Jews in Israel into the second world disorder of Arab society. I got the impression that the standard of living had plunged as I moved across an invisible line. At Et-Tur at the top of the Mount of Olives large numbers of unemployed or underemployed Arab men and boys were in evidence, standing around chatting, idling away the day, houses and other buildings, along with pavements and roadways, in a poor state of repair.

A similar scene was re-enacted at Bethlehem and at Acre. Whenever I entered predominantly Arab neighbourhoods, and went into the small Arab villages and towns at which we stopped, while driving, the poverty of the population was much in evidence. Ten year olds trying to sell packs of chewing gum, younger children simply begging, gypsy cabs touting for trade. These are impressions, I have no statistical evidence to offer, but I suspect that unemployment and poor levels of educational provision and attainment are widespread in a way, which for Jews would be considered extremely unusual. This general air of neglect and decay is underlined by the dilapidated state of buildings, and public utilities.

This would seem to be a fair reflection of the way in which the State of Israel views its Arab citizens. The Chief Educational Office of the Israel Defence Force explains the British distaste for Jews during the British Mandate occupation of Palestine from the fact that the Jews “sought to extend the cultural borders of Europe to the banks of the Jordan river” and in so doing destroy the oriental charm of the place.² Israel’s towns and cities certainly confirm this view – the vernacular architecture of the Arabs, their use of materials and structural forms appropriate to the climate, have given way, almost entirely to decidedly

² Chief Educational Officer, Office of Information and Training, *Ha Haganah*, Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Publishing House, 1985, p.40.

European apartment blocks, high rises, occasionally sprinkled here and there with houses topped with steeply sloping red tiled roofs, which would not look out of place in Southern Germany or Austria; they appear to be waiting for a good fall of European snow. Israel's architectural choices are not the product of some Gulf State's mad emulation of Hong Kong or Shanghai with glassy glitzy towers, but a rather staid, intensive assertion of Israel's European identity, regardless of the large numbers of Jewish refugees who have entered the country from Africa, and the Arab countries since 1940.

Israel is a European country and has no place for Arabs. Between 1948 and 1966 the entire Arab population of Israel was subject to the martial law regulations dreamed up by the British when they were in charge. Things do not seem to have improved much since then. By and large, Israel's Arab citizens are more or less invisible to the visitor – unless you go into specific Arab neighbourhoods, towns or villages – they are nowhere to be seen. The mainstream of Israeli society is Jewish – secular, religious, or Haredim – the Arab citizens appear to have no cultural or social presence despite being about a fifth of the population. Crossing the line into territories under military occupation brings this general invisibility into sharp relief. Here, the intentions of the State of Israel are explicit.

On our way to Bethlehem we crossed the line into occupied territory, we saw the vast concrete Wall and its related fences, and swept through the military checkpoints without difficulty, we didn't even need to show our passports, the young soldiers could tell at a glance, when the windows were wound down, that we were decent Europeans. From the bottom of the steps, which lead up to Manger Square and the Church of the Nativity we could see an enormous Jewish settlement shining across the valley quite unlike any of the ramshackle Palestinian hamlets

which litter the hillsides. The hatred and resentment of the Arab guides, drivers, and beggars, gathered looking out at the stolen land was palpable.

In Acre, at the north of Haifa Bay, in the Western Galilee, almost on the Lebanese border, the line between Arabs and Jews is similarly distinct. A third of the population are Arabs and apart from a sprinkling of Christians the rest of the population is Jewish, largely hailing from Russia. Most of the Arab population lives in the ancient walled city gathered about the citadel of the Crusader Knights Hospitaller. There is also a fine mosque – the Jezzar Pasha Mosque – put up in the late eighteenth century by the Ottoman governor, known rather unnervingly as ‘The Butcher’. There is also a large caravanserai, the Khan al-Umdan, a fine eighteenth century two-storied columned structure built around a large square. Despite being a ‘world heritage site’ and extensive and costly on-going restoration work on the fabulous twelfth century Crusader buildings and fortifications, the old town is very poor and neglected – by all accounts the proximity of the town to the Lebanon has damaged the tourist trade and the state appears to have done little to improve matters. In complete contrast the new largely Jewish town is a well constructed, if somewhat dull little place.

It does, however, have a smashing modern railway station and an excellent frequent service to Tel Aviv, an hour and a half away. Seniors travel half price on Israel Railway, which I thought was remarkably decent of them! In the short trip to Tel Aviv the train was packed with young lads and their guns, young women soldiers with their enormous luggage, and a smattering of civilians, and of course, old folk like me, taking full advantage of the astonishingly cheap fares.

The Israelis are a smashing lot. By and large courteous and witty – though they can be disconcertingly direct. On many occasions I thought the person I was talking to really *had it in for me*, only

to be greeted with an amused smile, the moment they had given me whatever it was I wanted. If on the other hand, they do not have what you want, they immediately make it clear that only somebody loose in the head could possibly want whatever it was – “Why do you want that?” they ask irrelevantly, and accompany what is clearly meant to be a rhetorical question, with gestures expressive of bewildered disbelief.

All the Jewish Israelis I spoke to, cab drivers, Zionist and peacenik academics, court interpreters, and barmen, had a lively sense of the contradictions in which they live. They are well aware that the State of Israel is in an impossible position, compounded by militant settlers in the occupied territories, by Haredim, by Hezbollah, by Hamas, by people who will loose a wave of bus bombings, random murders, and rockets if they once let their defensive guard drop. Despite many misgivings if one lived in Israel, one would value the strong arm of the Israel Defense Force and of all those lads with battle rifles and sub-machine guns. What became clearer to me is that Israelis are not a ‘colon’ or ‘planted’ colonial population, they cannot be expelled; they are not going anywhere.

It is common for supporters of the Palestinian Solidarity cause to talk about Israelis as if they were white Rhodesians, the English farmers in Kenya’s ‘White Highlands’, or the whites in Algeria before their expulsion in mid 1962 when more than one million people – ten per cent of Algeria’s population – fled to France. There is no parallel here with Israel or her Jewish population.

Israel was always a colonial endeavour, but it was a colonial venture of a special sort. It was established in the teeth of opposition, first, from the Ottoman Empire, and, secondly, from the British Empire. Both Empires pursued contradictory policies towards the Jews and towards Palestine, but neither of them ultimately supported the migration of Jews into Palestine. The

first Jewish settlements of the modern era began with the establishment of the Jewish farming community, Petah-Tikvah, in 1878. Others followed this in the 1880s, which sought to protect themselves from Bedouin brigands and other Arab robbers by hiring Bedouin watchmen and guards. Jewish migration intensified into Palestine during the first decade of the twentieth century under the stimulation of larger and larger pogroms against Jews in Imperial Russia. In 1907 a group of Jewish watchmen who believed in self-defence formed a security organisation, called Bar Giora, after one of the leaders of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in AD 66-70. In 1909 Bar Giora founded a public Jewish security organisation called Hashomer – The Watchmen. In 1920 these armed groups were organised into the Haganah and the construction of the Jewish state in Palestine began in earnest.

David Ben-Gurion did not simply 'declare' the independence of the State of Israel in 1948; it was already in *de facto* existence with considerable armed forces answerable to a dense matrix of Jewish civil and cultural institutions engaged in everything from education to construction. This state had come into existence during the course of bitter struggles in which the Jews were occasionally allied with the British colonial authorities, and at times their sworn enemies. At all times from 1920 onwards the Israelis were engaged in a war of attrition with the Arabs for possession of Palestine. The Jewish refugees came in, wave after wave, from Europe, Africa, and from the neighbouring Arab countries. Most arrived with what they stood up in, having been dispossessed – robbed blind – by the states driving them out. From Baghdad to Vilna, from Kiev to Casablanca and Cairo, in they came, through the twenties, thirties, and forties.

The Arabs of Palestine relying on their traditional, or semi-feudal notables, landlords, merchants, imams and intellectuals, and upon neighbouring Arab states,

did not build a Palestinian State. The Jews built a state while the Arabs organised violent strikes, murderous anti-Jewish riots, and waited to be saved by external forces – Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. The result was that by 1948 they had nothing at all to match the web of Jewish communal institutions, nor the well-developed military formations of the Haganah and Palmach. The Jews had established themselves in Palestine as armed settlers, fleeing the grotesque waves of murder and starvation to which they had been subjected throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first fifty years of the twentieth. They had nowhere else to go. Defeat was simply not an option.

And so it remains to this day. Defeat is not an option. Israelis, by and large, do not have anywhere else to go. The presence of a prosperous and influential diaspora Jewish population in the United States does not materially alter this reality. Israel, shot through with contradictions, seemingly incapable of doing anything other than batten down the hatches whenever trouble looms, is a real state which has matured over the last hundred years, in the service of a real society composed largely of Jews – secular, religious, orthodox, and Haredim – who all live and struggle together with the lively and fearful sense that things cannot simply go on the way that they are. If for no other reason, Haredim and the Arab couples, who are given to having six, seven, or eight, children, will in a comparatively short time, simply overwhelm the ordinarily religious and secular Jewish population – the population which the State of Israel largely depends upon for its coherence and continued existence.

So, my impression of Israel and Israelis is of a people and a country not easily given to panic. A place where polite and entirely peaceable young chaps saunter about shouldering battle rifles, and everybody believes in democracy, but not, of course, for those intrinsically unreliable elements of the population that might well harbour active sympathies for the enemies

of the state. This is not exactly a schizophrenic condition, but it comes as close as any state or culture can to a pathology in which an entirely coherent and apparently healthy culture has arisen, self-defined, and self-created, upon the extirpation of the Arabs. Unlike apartheid era whites the Israelis do not need the Palestinians, the Jews have built an entire society predicated upon their absence – they'd get along just fine if the Arabs all simply crossed the Jordan.

I liked Israel, I loved Tel Aviv; I will definitely go again. I just hope that this truly wonderful people and really smashing country finds a way beyond their troubles to the emancipation of the Palestinians, upon which all their futures depends.

Imperialism and Palestine

March 11, 2012

OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS there has been much toing and froing between the Palestinian National Authority and the Security Council of the United Nations concerning recognition of Palestinian statehood prior to a final status agreement with Israel regarding settlements, land swaps, refugees, security, and recognition of international frontiers. Acceptance of this plan would complicate matters greatly because the boundaries, powers, and security arrangements of such a state would immediately be disputed by Israel. The Jewish State would not remove its troops from the West Bank, surrender Jerusalem, or accept the Armistice Line of 1949 as the boundary between the two states - the Jewish settlers would not withdraw from Judea and Samaria. Consequently, recognition of a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood by the Security Council or the UN General Assembly would not only be unable to alter anything on the ground; it would merely isolate the Jewish State and compound her intransigence.

What has been remarkable about this Palestinian initiative is the way it appears to have failed to keep the issue alive. In both the region and the wider world the struggle of the so-called 'Arab Street' against military dictatorships, and autocrats of all kinds, seems to have overtaken Palestine. I have no doubt that popular sentiment throughout the Arab, Turkish, and Persian worlds is largely with the Palestinians in their struggle against the Jewish State, but the issue of Palestine's final status has not played a conspicuous role in any of the popular democratic uprisings. Palestine appears to have slipped off the agenda for the time being.

I think that the reason for this is that the Palestinians themselves have rarely been the prime movers in the struggle between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine. Of course, there have been periods of popular revolt -

the riots of 1920, 1929, the Arab Revolt of 1936-39, and the Intifadas of the late eighties and early nineties, and again during the first five years of this century, but in none of these disturbances have the Palestinians succeeded in establishing a movement which secured the unequivocal support of the Arab states. Underlying this reality is the radically different experience of the Jews and the Arabs regarding state building.

The Jews in Palestine began to establish their state around 1920. The Jewish army, Ha Haganah, founded in 1920, emerged out of small groups of armed Jewish settlement guards, the Hashomer in 1909 and Bar-Giora in 1907. The Jewish National Fund was established in 1901 and the Palestine Bureau in 1908 - all these initiatives were tied together by the elections in 1920 for the Assembly of Representatives of the Palestinian Jewish Community. This assembly was a multi-party parliament of popularly elected deputies, which remained in existence until the Knesset replaced it in 1949. What is clear is that the State of Israel proclaimed in 1948 by David Ben-Gurion, had been robustly growing in institutional coherence and confidence for almost thirty years before the War of Independence of 1948-49.

This is why Israel was able to defeat the combined forces of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and contingents from Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In contrast to the Jewish forces united in what they regarded as an existential struggle, the Egyptians and the Jordanians had divergent and conflicting territorial interests, and the Palestinians had no significant autonomous or independent role in their own military struggle. Palestinian irregular forces were divided between the Army of the Holy War set up by the Arab Higher Committee, and the Arab Salvation Army established by the Arab League.

These disastrous conflicts were an echo of struggles between elite families of notables (A'ayan), that had led Palestinian society from the days of Ottoman Syria - a vast imperial territory which embraced parts of Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq, and all of modern Syria, Lebanon,

Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. In what are now Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank, the leadership of these urban notables, who were also substantial landowners, retarded the development of modern Palestinian institutions for many years. Even the plethora of Arab political parties established between 1932 and 1935, and the foundation of the Arab Higher Committee in 1936, represented attempts by rival notable families like the Huysayni and the Nashahibi to retain their leadership of the Arab struggle against the British and the nascent Jewish State. Apart from these traditional leaders, there were two small communist parties which came together to form the Palestine Communist Party in 1923, but this organization split in 1944 when the Arab members left to found the National Liberation League In Palestine - and promptly condemned themselves to isolation from broader Arab opinion by supporting proposals for the partition of Palestine between Arabs and Jews.

Following Israel's victory in 1949, Palestinian Fedayeen fighters carried on a sporadic but protracted campaign of cross-border raids and attacks upon Israel, but they were never able to mount a serious challenge to the Jewish State; these disparate Fedayeen bands were not united until the Palestinian Liberation Organization brought them together following the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967. Indeed, the PLO, itself, was not founded until the Arab League took the initiative at the Cairo conference by proposing the formation of an organization dedicated to "the liberation of Palestine by armed struggle" three years earlier, in 1964.

Whilst there is no doubt that the Palestinian nation exists, just as the Kurdish and the Welsh nations do, Palestinians in common with many peoples across the world, have never had a state of their own, or lived in a defined territory ruled entirely by their own national institutions. Instead, their lands have been occupied by the Ottomans, the Egyptians, the British, the Jordanians, and finally, by Jews. Matters were further complicated by pan-Arab aspirations and schemes, which during the

fifties sowed yet more confusion. These conflicting pressures, together with the weakness of their political institutions, has meant that in their modern struggle for independence and statehood, Palestinians have been at the mercy of Arab monarchs and dictators. These states, like Egypt and Jordan, have even pursued their own territorial designs in attempting to lay claim to different parts of Palestine.

Perhaps, paradoxically, the leaders of Arab states have employed the Palestinian cause as a useful way to emphasize a pan-Arab outlook, and as a means by which tyrants and autocrats could deflect opposition by posing as robust enemies of imperialism, or as the stalwart defenders of Islamic faith, and more often than not, as both. Anti-imperialism became the watchword for regimes propped up by billions in Western aid, and by receipts from Western oil companies.

The Arab regimes despite all their huff and puff have been the creatures of imperialism since their inception; they've been the recipients of billions in foreign aid, and the beneficiaries of sweetheart deals with the United States, France, and Britain - and when not these - then with the Russians. This is one of the most curious things about the Palestinian solidarity movements - they never tire of reciting, chapter and verse, how much aid Israel gets from America, without ever pondering on the aid supplied to the Arab states allied to the PLO by the USA, or the billions of dollars passed directly to the Palestinian Authority - which amounts to *thirty per cent* of its annual budget. In 2008 the West Bank and Gaza received \$1.8 billion in foreign aid and eighty per cent of it came from the USA and the EU. The United States pours billions of dollars into countries throughout the Arab world - Egypt alone has received \$30 billion over the last forty years.

Anti-imperialist rhetoric has been a key feature of the way in which the anti-democratic regimes in the region have been able to pose as the friends of the Arab masses in general, and of the Palestinians in particular. When the truth has been that the regimes in Cairo,

Damascus, Amman, and elsewhere, have been dedicated to the survival of their own oligarchic elites and not much else. They have done little or nothing for the Palestinians, and nothing except stunt the economic and social prospects of their own people for more than sixty years. They have ruled hand-in-glove with Western investors in extractive industries, and related infrastructure companies; they have also maintained a very fruitful relationship with the aerospace and armaments industries in France, Britain, and the United States.

All this began to change following 9/11 when the Americans decided in their criminally irresponsible manner to bring democracy to Iraq. This ham fisted effort resulted, not simply in the catastrophic collapse of Iraq's state, and the disintegration of her society, but in weakening democratic forces throughout the region for a period of seven or eight years. However, with the overthrow of Ben Ali in Tunisia at the beginning of last year, the Arab masses in one country after another have unleashed the struggle for democracy - there is still an extremely long way to go - but there is no going back. The Western Imperialist powers have been forced to withdraw support from Ben Ali, Gaddafi, Mubarak, Assad, and Yemen's Ali Abdullah Saleh - they will, of course, continue to back Egypt's military, absolute rulers like the Saudi royal family and other tyrants in the region, as long as these despots are able to maintain stability and order, but if they lose their grip, the West will rapidly pull the plug on them, as the investors and governments in Washington, Paris, and London, work out new ways of relating to the region.

Strikingly these movements have more or less eclipsed the Palestinian battle for statehood. The old arrangements in which Arab tyrants sought to keep the question of Palestine as a badge of their own anti-imperialist credentials, and as an open wound in which they could periodically twist the knife, have now come to an end. Palestinian refugees need full rights of settlement and citizenship in neighbouring Arab states, they

also need an independent state of their own, without reference either to the destruction of Israel, or to phony anti-imperialist rhetoric. These demands will, no doubt, re-emerge with the progress of democracy in the Arab world. It is too soon to say, but if the Egyptian revolution succeeds in overthrowing the military dictatorship in Cairo, then a new chapter will open for the Palestinian people.

In the interim, all kinds of dangers abound. It is not inconceivable, in the midst of revolutionary upheaval that populist demagogues will try to cope with Egypt's economic and social problems by promoting an insurgent 'peoples' war' against the Jewish State. Provocations on the Temple Mount and a new Intifada cannot be ruled out. In the present circumstances such developments would present Israel with new and extremely difficult problems. Consequently, in the current hiatus, when the uprising in Syria is forcing realignments between Hamas and Fatah; when Hezbollah is facing similar dislocations as its alliance with Iran is placed in jeopardy by the gradual disintegration of Assad's dictatorship; when the Palestinians have, to all intents and purposes, lost a number of their false friends in the Arab League; now would be a good time for Netanyahu and the Jewish State to reach out in the most concrete way to seek a new accommodation with the PLO.

Israel will have, at some stage, to sign a real peace with the Palestinians - not with the Egyptians, the Syrians, or Jordanians - but with the Palestinians in Israel-Palestine, with their own Arab citizens, with the Arabs of Gaza and the West Bank. Consequently, as the Arab revolutionary crisis deepens they need to place the Palestinians at the centre of all their calculations - a genuine peace with neighbouring states - will depend entirely upon their capacity to treat fairly with the Palestinians. Israel must, of course, maintain its posture of armed self-defence, but its ludicrous attempt to maintain its security by the sustained oppression of its own Arab citizens, and a policy of repression in the

occupied territories, must come to an end. Israel cannot avoid the new realities emerging all around it.

These are challenging times for Israelis. The Jewish State, absorbing wave after wave of Jewish refugees, arose over the course of the last hundred years out of a struggle with British colonialists, Palestinian notables, absolute monarchies, and nationalist dictatorships. It never had democratic opponents or partners in the region. Israel, no less than Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or Egypt, has been a *status quo* power for forty-five years - used to dealing with the murderous violence, dishonesty, skulduggery, and just plain bad faith of its neighbours. Now, the modern Arab revolt, has, for the first time raised the prospect of a rupture in the arbitrary and autocratic nature of Arab political arrangements. This will alter everything. Having to engage with other democratic states in the region will compel the Jewish State to radically alter its posture and its conduct. The formal and informal oppression of Arabs in Israel and on the West Bank will have to be brought to an end. Israel will have to accept a sovereign Palestinian state composed of two large blocks of contiguous territory, one across the West Bank, and the other extending from Gaza to the Egyptian border.

Of course, the argument with the Arab masses concerning the right of the Jewish state to exist would lose none of its sharpness or its urgency; Israel will continue to bristle with guns and weaponry for some time to come, but democracy in Syria, Jordan, and Egypt, will decisively alter relations between the Jewish State and the Palestinians, and open up the possibility of a final settlement in which the general intransigence of both sides is slowly clarified into discrete issues, which can be negotiated point by point, until a *modus vivendi* is reached.

Solidarity with Palestine

November 20, 2012

SOLIDARITY with Palestine is now *de rigueur* for leftwing groups in Britain. There are one or two exceptions, but they are few and far between. By and large, to be leftwing in Britain means supporting the Palestinian cause. It means supporting the leading Palestinian organizations, and sympathising with their allies in the region. Despite the politics, social outlook, and religious prejudice sponsored by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood, and so on, most socialists now count themselves proud to travel along with Islamist parties in the battle against Israel and the Jews.

People on the left will bridle at the phrase “*and the Jews*” because they want to maintain an iron distinction between the programme of hating and killing Jews, espoused by Hamas, and their own strictly political motivation. Socialists do not hate Jews - consequently, they emphatically prefer the secularist objective of fighting Zionism. The British left is at pains to insist that it's solidarity with Palestine has nothing to do with anti-Semitism and everything to do with fighting against the state of Israel.

Unfortunately this is not a distinction that has much currency in the Arab world where the fight against Israel is seen as a fight against the Jews. Pogroms and state-sponsored discrimination against Jews in many Arab countries resulted in the flight of hundreds of thousands of Jews to Israel, France, Britain, and the United States from the 1930s through to the 1950s. In some countries, notably Lebanon and Tunisia, governments attempted to pursue more liberal policies, but popular hostility towards Jews still resulted in

large-scale emigration. The record of governments, political leaders and clerics in Algeria, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Egypt, and Morocco is considerably worse, punctuated as it was with riots, killings, discriminatory laws, and the wholesale confiscation of Jewish property. Iran, in common with many Arab and European countries, has a similarly long tradition of pogroms, periodic massacres, and highly structured discrimination against Jews. This reality resulted in mass emigration of Iranian Jews to the United States and Israel both before and after the revolution of 1979. There are still Jewish neighbourhoods in Tehran, and also in Casablanca, and Tunis, but these communities are a shadow of their former size and complexity.

It is in this context that Holocaust denial and conspiratorial ideas concerning the role of Jewish domination, canvased by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, continues to flourish in the Arab and Persian worlds. Of course, none of this can be laid at the door of the left in Britain or of those advocating solidarity with Palestine, but it does, inescapably, have some bearing on the nature and history of the Jewish state - Israel is, after all is said and done, a *Jewish State*, brought into existence by Zionist activists and by waves of Jewish refugees fleeing a tsunami of pogroms and mass killings.

This Jewish state began its nascent existence in 1920 with the election of the 314 members of the first Assembly of Representatives, and the formation of Haganah, the Jewish defence force. In the years between 1920 and the formal proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948, these institutions spearheaded the struggle of the Jews in Palestine with the colonial authorities, and with the traditional leaders of the country's Arab population. It was a period marked by anti-Jewish riots and killings, by huge strikes and political

strife between the Arabs and the British marked by temporary alliances and cooperation between the British and the Jews against the Arabs, and subsequently to full-scale guerrilla warfare between the British Army and Jewish terrorist groups. Throughout this period from 1920 to 1948 the issue in contention between the government of the British Mandate and the Arabs on the one side, and the Assembly of Representatives on the other, was Jewish immigration. The British and the Arabs wanted it curtailed and Jewish cultural, political, economic, and military organizations insisted that Palestine should be regarded as a legitimate homeland for Jews fleeing persecution.

Since the Israeli War of Independence 1948-9, several more wars, 'retribution operations', and two intifadas, have continued this struggle between Arabs and Jews for the possession of Palestine. Indeed, since 1967 Israel has subjected the Arab population of the West Bank to a stringent occupation in which growing Jewish settlement, security considerations, military priorities, and police regulations, have resulted in the carve up of Palestinian territories into ever smaller cantons - making life for the Arab population of Palestine, and of Israel as a whole, increasingly difficult and humiliating.

This is what the left and leftwing organizations committed to solidarity with Palestine are responding to - the manifest oppression of Palestinian Arabs both within Israel (defined by the borders established at the end of hostilities in 1949), and within the territories conquered and placed under military occupation since the war of 1967. Revulsion at Israel's conduct has been compounded since her unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, by the blockading of the territory, and by the large scale attacks upon Gaza carried out by the Israel Defence Force in

2008 and again in 2012.

All this misery, oppression, and bloodshed is caused by the insistence of the State of Israel that Jews have every right to live in Palestine and to defend themselves from violent attacks carried out by Palestinians, and sponsored by their allies in Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iran.

The Palestinians are not making anything up - their land was violently partitioned by Jews and hundreds of thousands of their kin were driven into exile in the midst of war and terror. Similarly, the Jews are labouring under no illusions when they argue that since 1920 the Arabs have repeatedly attempted to drive them out of Palestine, randomly murdering Jews, orchestrating wholesale invasions by Arab armies, and more recently carrying out sustained campaigns of shootings, bombings, and rocket attacks against Israel and her citizens.

Over the years every Palestinian strike against Jews has hardened the stance of Israel, strengthening irredentist sentiment throughout the Jewish community, legitimating explicitly racist violence and greater repression against the Palestinians. This has in turn stiffened the resistance to Israel among the country's Arabs, intensifying religious intolerance, and deepening the hatred of Jews.

This vicious circle of oppression, dispossession, and violence, has worked out to the distinct disadvantage of the Arabs. The Jews, better prepared and better organized, have won every major confrontation with the Arabs. On every occasion since 1920 the Palestinians, and their Arab allies, have failed in their manichean struggle with the Jews. Israel has repeatedly come out on top and, consequently, the Palestinians have undoubtedly been more sinned against than sinning. Couple this with the fact that

Israel has been more or less allied to Britain and France, and bankrolled by the United States, and the case for solidarity with the Palestinians seems to be overwhelming for those on the left.

Casting the Palestinians as the poster children of the struggle against imperialism, and Israel as the client of Wall Street and Washington inevitably seals the deal. This cannot be said for the endless bloodletting in the Caucasus, in Sudan, in Syria, Sri Lanka, Xinjiang, or the Kurdish lands in Turkey - the left's focus cannot reasonably be everywhere at once - so it concentrates on the most pressing problem, Western imperialism. Indeed, the attention it spares for Libya or Syria, is always legitimated by the attention it pays to US involvement in the mayhem. This is why, no doubt it focuses upon US aid to Israel and ignores entirely Federal dollars poured into Palestine and Egypt continuously over the last forty or more years.

Bearing all this in mind, one solution proposed on the left is the creation of a Palestinian state in which all the Palestinian refugees that fled or were driven out in the war of 1948-9, and their descendants, are allowed to return to Israel. It is suggested that such a Palestinian state, would come fully equipped with armed forces possessing offensive capacity, with its capital in Jerusalem; it would, as a matter of course, exercise full sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza. In another version, many on the left conceive of a single secular state in which Jews and Arabs would live happily alongside each other in peace and equity.

The bitter truth is that in both leftwing versions of this projected future radical socialists imagine a world without Israel - the Zionist state would be demographically destroyed by the 'return' of hundreds of thousands Palestinian Arabs to its territories, and Jews would be once again in a

permanent minority. It is difficult to credit that any sensible person could think that peace and tranquility would prevail for Jews in Palestine in the absence of the state of Israel - surely the reason for the existence of this *Jewish* state is the exigencies not only of the European Holocaust, and pogroms and persecution throughout the Arab and Persian worlds, but the Hundred Years' War fought by Arabs against Jewish settlement in Palestine. The key institutions of the state of Israel arose in order to promote, facilitate, and defend the right of Jewish settlement in Palestine. It exists for no other purpose.

Leftwing people who endorse the Palestinian cause should come clean - they seek the dissolution of the state of Israel and *ipso facto* a new Jewish diaspora, which would follow the dissolution of the Knesset and the disbandment of the Israel Defence Force. Jews would, once again, flee from pogroms and massacres.

Behind the humanitarian focus of civilian casualties and gross oppression, promoted by the Palestinian solidarity movement, lies a refusal to grasp the brutalities of the Hundred Years' War - the preparedness of Netanyahu, Lieberman, and West Bank settlers, to promote occupation and oppression without end - is more than matched by the truly terrible Jew-hatred promoted by Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the rest. Focusing upon one, while turning a blind eye to the other, is no solution at all.

The recent enthusiasm for the 'Arab Street' and revolutionary upheaval in the region is, in regard to Palestine, just another way of saying that Egypt should open the Rafah Crossing in order to facilitate the victory of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad, in their struggle for the extinction of Israel. Despite the awful deaths in Gaza and the shortages, injuries, and indignities heaped upon its

people, the liberation of Palestine - "From The Jordan To The Sea, Palestine Will Be Free!" - the victory of Palestinian military formations and organizations - is not a recipe for peace. On the contrary, it can only stimulate continued military intransigence on the part of Israel and most of the Jewish population in Palestine.

The truth is that without a peace imposed by America, Egypt, Turkey, France, Jordan, post-Assad Syria, and Britain, in which a Palestinian state is established, in a manner that guarantees the integrity and security of Israel, there can be no solution.

A Bloody Conundrum

July 18, 2014

IN JUNE 2010 when surveying the war in Israel-Palestine I wrote in *Off The Cuff*:

The War cannot be brought to an end by supporting those who seek the destruction of Israel. Similarly, the War cannot be brought to an end by supporting Israel's right wing and the Jewish religious zealots who seek nothing less than the expulsion of Arabs from Israel and the West Bank. The War cannot be brought to an end by Israeli governments committed to the deployment of overwhelming violence against any threat to the security of its citizens, however slight.

The War can only be brought to an end by strengthening the progressive forces inside Israel and the progressive forces within the Palestinian community. If the United States, the European Union, and the Palestinian solidarity and peace movements, adopt any other strategy there will simply be war without end in the lands of Israel and Palestine.

Although the second paragraph now seems even more absurdly aspirational than it did four years ago, the first paragraph remains grimly apposite. From the far left to the moderates, solidarity with Palestine is taking the form of calls for the destruction of the Jewish state. This is militarily implicit in support for rocket attacks upon Israel's towns and cities with the old injunction: 'Do not equate the oppressor with the oppressed!'

The desire to destroy the Jewish state is also implicit in support for demands for the 'right of return' for the refugees and their descendants to the villages and towns that Palestinians fled from - or were expelled from - during the Israel Independence War of 1948-9. Everybody knows

that if elderly Palestinian refugees and the descendants of those refugees who have since died returned to the territory of what is now Israel the Jewish state would collapse and its citizens would be killed or driven into exile.

It is the worst kind of bad faith to claim otherwise. As Arabs gather in Hebron to cheer the Hamas rockets flying towards Israel's population centres, and Jews on a hill above Sderot gather to cheer and clap the bombs falling on Gaza, the appetite for inter-communal bloodshed is unmistakable.

Indeed Seumas Milne summed up the 'Palestinian solidarity' position rather well in the *Guardian*:

Palestinian resistance is often criticised as futile given the grotesque power imbalance between the two sides. But Hamas, which attracts support more for its defiance than its Islamism, *has been strengthened by the events* of the past week, as it has shown it can hit back across Israel - while Abbas, dependent on an imploded "peace process", has been weakened still further.

The conflict's eruptions are certainly coming thicker and faster. Despite heroic Israeli efforts to fix the narrative, global opinion has never been more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. But the brutal reality is that there will be no end to Israel's occupation until Palestinians and their supporters are able to raise its price to the occupier, in one way or another - and change the balance of power on the ground.

Seumas makes clear what this means earlier in his article when, after accurately describing the nature of the Gaza blockade, he says: "So the Palestinians of Gaza are an occupied people, like those of the West Bank, who have the right to resist, by force if they choose", though not, he adds, by "deliberately" targeting civilians. He

writes this in the full knowledge that this is exactly what Hamas is doing by firing hundreds of rockets at Tel Aviv.

The duplicity and dishonesty of all sides in this war and among their international supporters is indeed breathtaking. Both sides have been fighting in a sustained fashion for the possession of the same piece of land since 1920 or thereabouts. Both sides have wantonly killed non-combatants and deployed terror as an act of policy. The Jews have been more effective because they began to construct both the military and civil elements of their state in earnest almost thirty years before it came into formal existence in 1948. The Arabs initially relied upon the leadership of traditional Palestinian notables, and on the military muscle of Egypt, Jordan, and other Arab states. Consequently, Palestinians did not begin to create genuinely independent military, civil, and political institutions until the late sixties, by which time Israel had developed a powerful spartan state capable to defeating all comers.

What Seumus Milne calls “the grotesque power imbalance between the two sides” has its roots deep in the lengthy construction of the Zionist state, and in the corresponding failure of Palestinian Arabs to follow suit. In the present situation this imbalance creates both the spectacle and the reality of Palestinian victimhood that is the stock-in trade of Palestinian solidarity campaigns everywhere. Slaughtered Palestinian children, bombed Palestinian hospitals, weeping distraught crowds of Arabs amidst the rubble. All undoubtedly true. Appalling mayhem wrought by Netanyahu and the Israel Defence Force.

What is the solution? Israel must stop the bombing? Israel must lift the blockade of Gaza? Netanyahu, must sit down with the leaders of

Hamas and the Palestinian authority and negotiate?

Well, yes, while Israel appears to have all the cards. Hamas and the Palestinian Authority cannot concede on the 'right of return' or on the final status of Jerusalem. Even if the Israel Defence Force cleared all Jewish settlers and settlements from the West Bank, even if the free movement of Palestinians in and out of the Gaza strip was guaranteed, even if Israel accepted the establishment of a Palestinian state, Zionists could not agree to the loss of Jerusalem, or the 'return' of millions of Arabs to Israel, and expect their state to survive.

This accounts for the implacable nature of the Israeli state. It accounts also for the trenchant and inflexible positions of their Palestinian opponents. While the oppressed and the oppressors are not equal on the battlefield, in the mortuaries, or in living injured and disfigured lives, they are without doubt equally trapped by their terrible histories, and by the terrible aspirations of their peoples.

It is true, that it would have been better, if the State of Israel had never been established. While not being theocratic, it exists (rather like the Islamic Republic of Pakistan) to give privileged status to citizens on the basis of religion and ethnicity. This is the inescapable fact of Israel's creation and its continued existence. Yet, it cannot be dismantled or otherwise dissolved without adding a new wave of refugees to the Jewish diaspora. On the other hand we cannot expect Palestinian Arabs to quietly accept their own dispersal around the world, or their imprisonment in cantons garrisoned and guarded by the Israel Defence Force.

Some means must be found to guarantee the security and freedom of both peoples in this tiny territory. How? I have no idea. But I remain

convinced that 'Solidarity with Palestine', and campaigning for the defeat and dissolution of the Jewish State, will bring neither peace nor security.

What does Hamas want?

August 3, 2014

ON THE FACE OF IT this is an easy question to answer. Hamas wants open border crossings. It wants an airport and a deep-sea port under international supervision, the reestablishment of industrial development zones, and free territorial coastal waters of 10km to allow the reestablishment of Gaza's marine fishing industry. These are entirely reasonable demands, given that Gaza's population of 1.820,000 is set to rise to 2.13m by the end of the decade. The population is very young - half of the people in Gaza are under 30 and it is extremely crowded (although it should be noted that London, New York and Singapore are more densely populated.) Youth unemployment is running level with Spain's at around 50 per cent, and the schools are so crowded that more than half of government schools, and seventy per cent of UN schools have to operate two shifts a day in order to cram in as many kids as possible.

With its youthful population, well over ninety per cent literacy, and its situation on the Mediterranean this little territory - no bigger than four London boroughs - could easily become a burgeoning 'city state'. So Hamas's demands are surely practical, far sighted, and reasonable.

However, because it refuses to disarm, insists on its right to attack Israel, and rules out the 'demilitarization' of Gaza, Netanyahu's government will not lift the blockade of the territory. Consequently, none of Hamas's economic demands can be met.

Hamas, the acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement, founded in 1987 during the first *intifada*, has always had a complicated relationship with the Israeli state. They have at times maintained high-level contacts with the government in Jerusalem, with members of the Knesset and with the Israel Defence

Force; despite frequent assassinations of their leaders Hamas has a record of pragmatism in its dealings with its enemies. The authorities in Israel have used this by seeking to play off the Islamists of Hamas against the more secular elements of Fatah. Much skullduggery and murder has characterized the relationship between Fatah, Hamas, and Israel - Fatah has even cooperated with the IDF in order to suppress Hamas organizations and permit the Israelis to carry out mass arrests and killings of Islamist militants.

This is the context in which Hamas refuses to disarm the fighters of its Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, and remains intransigent regarding Netanyahu's demands for the demilitarization of Gaza.

However, it is as well to take Hamas's much vaunted pragmatism with some care, if not exactly a pinch of salt. This is because Hamas believes in something called 'phased liberation'. What they mean by this is eroding the control exercised by Israel over historic Palestine, step-by-step, until the final solution - the dissolution of the Zionist state - is achieved. According to Hamas this would result in a situation in which religious freedom for Christians and Jews would be guaranteed "under the wing of Islam". Muslims would not, of course, be allowed to reject their religion, or have the freedom to convert to another religion, or be free to become avowed atheists. This is because Hamas intends to establish an Islamic polity across all the territory of Israel and Palestine.

The Islamic Resistance Movement believes that the land of Palestine is an Islamic Waqf consecrated for future Moslem generations until Judgement Day. It, or any part of it, should not be squandered: it, or any part of it, should not be given up. Neither a single Arab country nor all Arab countries, neither any king or president, nor all the kings and presidents, neither any organization nor all of them, be they Palestinian or Arab, possess the right to do that. Palestine is an Islamic Waqf land consecrated for Moslem generations until Judgement Day. This being so, who could claim to have the right to represent Moslem

generations till Judgement Day?

This is the law governing the land of Palestine in the Islamic Sharia (law) and the same goes for any land the Moslems have conquered by force, because during the times of (Islamic) conquests, the Moslems consecrated these lands to Moslem generations till the Day of Judgement.

It happened like this: When the leaders of the Islamic armies conquered Syria and Iraq, they sent to the Caliph of the Moslems, Umar bin-el-Khatab, asking for his advice concerning the conquered land - whether they should divide it among the soldiers, or leave it for its owners, or what? After consultations and discussions between the Caliph of the Moslems, Omar bin-el-Khatab and companions of the Prophet, Allah bless him and grant him salvation, it was decided that the land should be left with its owners who could benefit by its fruit. As for the real ownership of the land and the land itself, it should be consecrated for Moslem generations till Judgement Day. Those who are on the land, are there only to benefit from its fruit. This Waqf remains as long as earth and heaven remain. Any procedure in contradiction to Islamic Sharia, where Palestine is concerned, is null and void.

"Verily, this is a certain truth. Wherefore praise the name of thy Lord, the great Allah." (*The Inevitable* - verse 95).

There are certain infelicities in this translation of the 1988 Hamas Covenant or charter, published online by the Avalon Project at Yale. For example bin-el-Khatab is both "Umar" and "Omar", but I think we can assume that the text is broadly accurate. One could, of course, quote murderous passages from this document concerning the Jews and their sinister control over world politics and finance, worthy of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, but without resorting to this, it is plain that Hamas is an Islamist organization that believes all civil law and the conduct of government should be subordinated to simple interpretations of the Quran and the doings of the Prophet of God, Muhammad.

Many Jews, of course, believe something similar,

that Israel was given to them by God, which, I suppose, in claims of priority, has got to beat conquest by a seventh century caliph. Despite these absurd notions it is evident that the trajectory and termination of Hamas's politics are the establishment of an Islamic polity across the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel, a polity in which all would be subject to the rigours of Sharia until the Day of Judgment.

Under the rubric of 'phased liberation' Hamas entered the Palestinian unity government on June 2 this year. In line with its policy of 'phased liberation' Hamas formally agreed to (i) recognition of Israel, (ii) acceptance of previous diplomatic protocols governing relationships between the Palestinian government and Israel, and (iii) the renunciation of violence.

All this was wrecked following the kidnapping and murder of three Jewish teenagers by members of the Qawasameh clan in Hebron on June 12. The Israelis responded to this gruesome crime by carrying out mass arrests of Hamas people on the West Bank (ably assisted, it must be said, by Fatah); actions that led to the *de facto* collapse of the Palestinian unity government and the present war in which Hamas resumed its attacks on Israel.

So, what does Hamas want? The unequivocal answer is an Islamic polity that includes all the territory between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, from the frontier with Lebanon in the north to the Egyptian border in the south. In order to get this it must seek the destruction of the state of Israel. This is what Hamas means by national liberation.

It is a profoundly reactionary goal; indeed, it is as reactionary as the Zionist reality in which a state designed especially for Jews oppresses both its Arab citizens, and those Palestinians who live under occupation on the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip. Let me be clear - there is nothing to choose between Netanyahu's present and a Hamas future.

It is outrageous that the Stop the War Coalition and

its allies in the various Palestinian solidarity campaigns advocate the destruction of Zionism and Israel, as the 'progressive secular solution' to the war in Israel-Palestine, when they know full well, that the Islamists involved intend to drive out most of the Jews and establish their own obscurantist rule until the Day of Judgment. I have no doubt at all that this de facto alliance between Islamism and most of the British left rests upon the belief that Zionism is the creature of American imperialism, which leads the comrades and fellow travellers to opt for whoever can be said to be fighting the Americans.

National Liberation, and the struggle against imperialism have long motivated socialists because, of course, despite their many reactionary features, national liberation movements engaged in the struggle against colonial and neocolonial domination, had many positive or progressive features regarding social equality and the emancipation of women. There was, in times past, a progressive kernel to many otherwise reactionary campaigns for self-government, home rule, or national independence.

This is not the case with Hamas because Islamization cannot be cast as 'national liberation'. It carries with it none of the goals which socialists are committed to regarding social equality, the supremacy of the civil law, secular education, and the rational determination of economic and social policy. Islamism comes in many different shapes and guises, but its *raison d'être* is, by definition, the shaping of government, the determination of law, and its enforcement, by religious authority, by religious rulings, and by the scholarly interpretation of religious texts.

Despite the carving up of the West Bank and the bloody siege of Gaza there is no solution to the rival claims of Jews and Palestinians to the lands of historic Palestine other than the establishment of two states. The wretched maneuvering of Hamas, of Netanyahu,

and those to his right, cannot create a 'road-map' for the future - they are all equally creatures of oppression and war. The occupation must be brought to an end, and the oppression of the Palestinians by the Zionist state must cease, because only policies that aim at reconciliation and a two-state solution have the scintilla of a chance of creating a foundation for emancipation and peace.

Anti-Semitism

March 20, 2016

WHEN I WAS A KID Jews were both, exotic and familiar. ‘They’ were wealthy and lived on the top of the hill, in Hampstead and Golders Green – confusingly, I also knew that ‘they’ lived in Bethnal Green and Stepney, notoriously poor and embattled parts of London. My mum cleaned the houses of rich Jews in Hampstead. Consequently, she was able to introduce us to what in our neighbourhood at the time were the mysteries of black bread, pickled herring, and bagels – indeed she’d often worked for Jewish families since coming over from Tipperary as a maid-of-all work in the late nineteen twenties. My middle sister married a Jewish lad, John, whose father was active, along with my dad, in the Amalgamated Engineering Union. John’s working class family, had been wealthy and bourgeois, but had lost everything when they fled from Vienna as the Nazis took over in 1938. My Mum, adored John, and took great delight in secretly getting one over on the Catholic Church when he participated fully in the mass at my eldest sister’s wedding.

However, there was always a sour note at the back of everything. Sister Gertrude, the nun who taught my Catechism class was clear that the Jews had killed Christ. The repetitions of the creed, “I believe in Jesus Christ who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried . . .” made the point that the Roman governor had washed his hands and left the decision up to the ‘High Priests’ and the Jewish crowd who had connived at the condemnation of Christ, ensuring that the Son of God died on the Cross. So there it was, the blood libel, at the heart of Roman Catholic liturgy.

Suspicion, stoked over the centuries, ensured that Jewish craftsmen were excluded from guilds, while

Jewish peasants and their families were corralled in separate villages, and Jewish artisans and merchants confined to urban ghettos like that founded in the Venetian Republic; the restriction of Jews to commerce, moneylending, and related trades, resulted in them being permanently ensnared by activities considered parasitical by the wider society.

The legal emancipation of Jews in the French Revolution, and in many parts of Europe during the course of the nineteenth century resulted in competition between Jews and Roman Catholics, striving to make their way amidst the insecurities of burgeoning capitalist societies. Jews newly admitted to the learned professions, created widespread dismay, by beginning to win the glittering prizes. The success of Jews in the universities and in a wide range of commercial and industrial fields stoked dangerous anxieties amongst Christians of all stripes throughout Central and Western Europe. This resulted in the emergence of the modern hatred of Jews, in which medieval prejudices morphed into anti-Semitism ratified by the ancient Christian blood libel newly decked out with thoroughly modern conspiratorial notions concerning the manner in which Jews “look after their own”, in which “they always stick together” to the disadvantage of those of us “not of the Hebrew persuasion”.

These, often bloody tensions, were greatly magnified by political instability in Eastern Europe and particularly in the Russian Empire which refined and perpetuated the blood libel against Jews with the publication in 1903 of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. The *Protocols*, a grotesque forgery, tells of the way in which Jews engage in the ritual murder of Christian infants, and plan to create Hebraic world domination. Astonishingly, this fraudulent document is still circulated widely throughout the world. It finds its rationalist echo in the deployment of notions like “the

Jewish lobby” which we are supposed to believe determines American and British foreign policy.

As is well known the popularity of hating Jews enabled the Hitler regime in the 1940s to employ specialist squads to sweep through the Baltic States, Byelorussia, Ukraine and Eastern Poland, fearlessly killing the Jewish population of entire cities, towns and villages. Furthermore, widespread anti-Semitism enabled the Nazis to deport Jewish men, women, and children from all over Europe to specially designed killing centres where Jews could be murdered in a more systematic manner.

The German fascists discovered a great many allies and collaborators throughout Europe who actively participated in this, the greatest and most lethal pogrom of all time. To this must be added the routine compliance of police, town hall officials, clergy, bank managers, property speculators, landlords, furniture and antique dealers, railway administrators, train drivers, freight car handlers, and signalmen, in country after country either allied with Germany or occupied by the Wehrmacht.

This almost unimaginable tsunami of murders resulted in the desire to heap all blame on the Germans, as if the Nazis could have achieved this vast undertaking without indigenous support from every country they operated from. It has resulted in generalised amnesia, or in elaborate apologetics in which we are told, for example, that Pope Pius XII did all he could to put a stop to the slaughter, by talking to Nazi leaders “behind closed doors”, or that the Poles suffered too, “not just the Jews”. Indeed many members of parliament in Warsaw are at pains to bury the words of the historian Jan T. Gross who pointed out in 2000 in his book, *Neighbors*, that “One summer day in 1941, half of the Polish town of Jedwabne murdered the other half”. This was a reference to the massacre of Jews carried out by Polish Roman Catholics (not by Germans), which to this day leads to

shouts of “Treason!” and “Zionism!” being hurled by members of the Freedom and Justice Party upon those Poles who refuse to forget the wretched complicity of many of their country’s Roman Catholics in the murder of Jews.

Most grotesque of all these rationales has been the attempt to blame the Zionists – those Jews who from the eighteen nineties fought for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. The Zionists we are often told collaborated with anti-Semitism and even with Nazi leaders, because fascist repression made it easier for them to encourage Jewish migration to Palestine.

It is at this point that anti-Semitism intersects with the outlook of the British left. The Labour Party and the socialist and communist left has a good record of opposing racism in all its forms, yet some on the left have got themselves into hot water concerning the manner in which hostility towards Zionism and the State of Israel can, and often does bleed into anti-Semitism.

The problem of Israel, the undoubted oppression of Israel’s Arab citizens, and of those Arabs living in Gaza, and under occupation on the West Bank, has resulted in alliances, implicit, and actual, between sections of the left and explicitly anti-Jewish organisations like Hamas and Hezbollah. Indeed many on the left deny both the need, and the right, of Jews to found their own state, and this position has resulted in widespread calls for the dissolution or even the destruction of the Jewish state contained in many charters, programmes, and slogans circulated by Palestinian organisations and supported by the left – “From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free!”

Many socialists justify this position by calling for a multi-faith secular state in which Jews and Arabs would live side-by-side in peace and harmony. In abstract terms this is indeed an excellent idea, but in practice it is a disingenuous suggestion, often made

by those on the left who wish to cleave to their alliances with armed insurgents in Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt. Although, the call for a secular Arab-Jewish state has impeccable socialist credentials it is specious because, we all know that conferring the right of return to what is now Israel on all Palestinian Arabs would result in the liquidation of the Jewish state, and the flight of the Jewish population to wherever they could find a safe haven.

The truth is a peaceful transition to a multi-racial, multi-faith state in Israel-Palestine would depend entirely upon the emergence of stable democratic political systems in all of Israel-Palestine's neighbours – something that is not in prospect any time soon.

Those on the left who demand the overthrow of the Zionist state evidently have a particular objection to the Jewish character of the state. Of course they would say that they object to 'Zios' or to Zionism, not to Jews as such. But from the point of view of Jews living in Israel or throughout the world, the distinction can often seem to be rather academic in a struggle where the right of Jews to have a state is in contention. One can see this in the absence of left-wing opposition to the existence of the state of Pakistan founded explicitly for and by Muslims on the partition of India in 1947 (and formally established as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in 1956) despite the terroristic expulsions of Hindus, Sikhs, and others, and widespread persecution and oppression of non-Muslims in that country to this day.

No, the left focuses its opposition to the idea of a confessional state upon Israel, and only upon Israel, claiming that the Jews alone among all ethnicities have no legitimate right or need to claim statehood.

This position is buttressed by sophisticated leftist analyses concerning the role of Imperialism and the colonial nature of the Zionist enterprise in building up the Jewish population of Palestine particularly throughout the nineteen twenties, thirties and forties.

There is no doubt that Zionism was and is a colonial enterprise that predicated the establishment of the Jewish state upon the displacement of Arabs from much of historic Palestine. This was conceived of as a gradual process in which increasing numbers of Jews fleeing persecution and murder in Europe would migrate to Palestine, buy land and other property, and establish a dense network of Jewish communities. This process was violently accelerated in 1948 with the declaration of the independence of Israel; the armies of a powerful coalition of Arab countries attacked the new Zionist state with the intention of strangling it at birth. They failed and as a consequence large numbers of Palestinian Arabs were driven into exile as they fled, terrorised by the victorious Jewish forces.

I have no doubt, no doubt at all, that the recent allegations of anti-Semitism aimed at those on the left of the Labour Party form part of a wider strategy designed to discredit the left, and destabilise the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Clearly the Tories, and Labour's rightwing have a number of dirty tricks up their sleeve. However, the reason that charges of anti-Semitism are so lethal is because of the muddle created on the left by a blind hatred of Zionism and uncritical support for Hamas and Hezbollah.

This strategic alliance between sections of the left and frankly anti-Jewish forces in Palestine, and in the surrounding, largely Arab states, makes it difficult to sustain the illusion that the left's opposition to Zionism is in some important sense not an attack upon Jews.

If the left wants to dispel the impression of anti-Semitism it will have to stop dwelling upon the victimhood of Palestinians and strive to understand the manner in which Israeli politics has over the years been driven to the right by Palestinian attacks, just as Palestinian and wider Arab anti-Jewish sentiment is underwritten and reinforced by the violence of the Zionist state. This is because the foul racism of many

Jewish settlers in the occupied territories (they call Judea and Samaria) is more than matched by the unreasoning hatred of Jews common in Palestine and throughout the Muslim world. It is true that the Arabs have usually come off worse, much worse, in armed conflicts with Israel, but this brutal reality cannot justify the left's habit of always supporting Palestinians against the Jewish population of the Zionist state.

The criminal actions of the Israel Defence Force, and those of heavily armed settlers on the West Bank, are rooted in the notion of the necessity of 'defence in depth', which is why they disregard and violate the resolutions of the UN as a matter of routine. They do this because they have every reason to believe that Palestinian organisations, and their allies in the region, have never accepted the existence of the Jewish state and have, on the contrary, every intention of destroying it demographically by enabling the Palestinians who fled in 1948, and their descendants, to return to what is now Israel. This is why Palestinians engage in armed struggle, meet Israeli terror with terror, and with popular acts of mass resistance. Both sides are fighting for possession of the same territory.

Consequently, the left will have to dispense with its Manichaeian conceptions – with its historic and simplistic opposition between the imperialist and the anti-imperialist – the interminable binary, figured as the struggle between oppressed and oppressor – in a situation in which both sides are oppressed and both sides are actual or potential oppressors, both sides are victims and victimised. If the Arab armies had defeated the Zionist forces in 1948, who could doubt that Jews in Palestine would have once again been oppressed and driven into exile? Who could doubt that if Israel had been roundly defeated in any of her subsequent wars that oppression and exile would have been meted out to the Jewish citizens of the Zionist state?

Israel was born from the concatenation of pogroms and massacres, from anti-Semitism, and from the frankly colonial solution opted for by Zionists. Its foundation created vast upheavals and great masses of refugees as Palestinians were driven from their ancestral homes, and large numbers of Jews were deprived of their possessions before being expelled, in the clothes they stood up in, by Arab police and soldiers from towns and cities across North Africa and the Middle East where they and their ancestors had lived for centuries.

It is a tragic situation born of tragedy.

Consequently, until, people on the left, stop denouncing the Jews for defending their state, and stop calling for the liquidation of Israel, while allying themselves, wholly and uncritically, with Palestinian and Arab forces, the charge of anti-Semitism will continually surface and be employed by those who want to denigrate socialists and radicals of all sorts.

The Battle of Algiers

Siding with the oppressed at all costs

May 2, 2016

IT IS FIFTY YEARS since this astonishing film was completed, and forty-nine years since its release. Its context is the revolutionary war waged for the independence of Algeria from French rule between 1954 and 1962. The film is tightly focused, not on the nationwide insurgency, but on the armed and popular resistance in the city of Algiers during the late nineteen fifties. Its form, shot in black and white, by Marcello Gatti on the streets of the European quarter of Algiers, and in the narrow lanes and byways of the Casbah often has the appearance of newsreel, an impression that is belied only by the intensity of the narrative directed by Gillo Pontecorvo.

It is difficult not to, weep, clap, cheer, and weep again, in quick succession as the brutal struggle with the colonial authorities unfolds. We see the arrogance of *le petit blanc* – the white working class French Algerians – who are presented in cafes, bars, and at the races – as indistinguishable from *le grand colon*, the high officials, professionals, and businessmen who ruled the roost in the colony. We see this privileged caste of Europeans driven mad in reaction to terrorist bombings attacking an Arab road sweeper, and even savagely beating and kicking an Arab child selling soft drinks at the racetrack. We see the whites strutting through check points, unchallenged and indifferent to the repression around them, dancing in cafes and drinking in bars, the lords of all they survey – while the Arabs confined in the alleys and rookeries of the Casbah plot revenge and plan to wreak havoc on their oppressors.

The random killing of civilians, and the targeted murder of police and soldiers, by the Front de libération nationale, FLN, results in renewed

repression. Para troops, lead by Colonel Mathieu (a character loosely based on the all-too-real General Jacques Massau), march into the city to the fevered adulation of great crowds of *le petit blanc* desperate for the defeat of the insurgency. Colonel Mathieu sets about torturing his way through the FLN cell structure. When challenged by reporters from Paris he responds with characteristic bluntness. "Should France stay in Algeria?" he asks. "If your answer is yes, then you must accept all the consequences"; this is followed by graphic scenes worthy of the flagellation of Christ, in which Arabs are beaten and blow torched to the accompaniment of Ennio Morricone's elegiac score.

The moral dilemmas at play are raised again when Colonel Mathieu parades Ben M'Hidi, a captured FLN leader, at a press conference. A journalist asks Ben M'Hidi how he can condone using women to take baskets with bombs into crowded cafes and bars, to which he replies by pointing out the vast superiority of French armaments with the pithy suggestion "Give us your bombers, sir, and you can have our baskets."

This defiant *bon mot* has been deployed down the years by the left to defend killings by the oppressed in a radical refusal to countenance any comparison of the violence of the oppressed with that of the oppressor. From Ireland to Israel, and in a great many other struggles the barbarism of the oppressed is justified. In *The Battle of Algiers* we see the FLN ordering the 'clean up' of the Casbah as drug dealers and "whores" who "talk too much" are repressed by revolutionary violence, and pimps and criminals are summarily condemned to death and murdered on the orders of insurgent leaders. A gang of revolutionary children taunting a drunk and rolling him, helpless, down a flight of steps, is contrasted with a virtuous wedding clandestinely conducted by an FLN official equipped with a briefcase, and the rubber stamps of his emergent civic authority.

So it is that the left forgives much and has historically suspended judgement and criticism of all those in struggle against colonialism and oppression. This involved turning a blind eye to the shooting up and bombing of refugee columns in the run up to the fall of Saigon, and a carefully averted gaze when the horrors of Pol Pot's regime became indefensible, although such mad depredations have always been explained as the consequence of the "American terror bombing" of Cambodia.

As communism collapsed and nationalist resistance to imperialism withered it's replacement by religious reaction has resulted in a world picture in which the only armed resistance to American and British imperialism is to be found among the patriarchal fighters of Afghanistan, Yemen, Nigeria, and Somalia, and amongst the religious fundamentalists of the Middle East and North Africa. This has placed the left in something of a quandary, perhaps best expressed by Tariq Ali, when he said that he admires the Taliban, although not their "social programme".

This predicament is perhaps most sharply revealed in the movement of solidarity with Palestine where many on the left have routinely aligned themselves with Islamists, both in Britain and in the Middle East – in alliances with people who deny the right of Israel to exist and consequently demand the liquidation of the Jewish state and the cleansing of the Jewish population, not simply from the Occupied Territories, but from Israel itself. Hamas and Hezbollah are in both word and deed explicitly anti-Jewish and none of the niceties of definition between 'Zionists' and 'Jews' are thought necessary.

However, the distinction between Zionist and Jews is of great importance to the pro-Palestinian left in Britain because it is on this distinction that their denial of anti-Semitism rests. It is a point insisted upon by the Jewish Socialists' Group and it is obviously true that Zionism, a nationalist political ideology, is not

coterminous with Jew or Jewishness, a religious and ethnic designation. Consequently, pro-Palestinians in the West hope that by holding fast to this distinction they'll be able to attack Zionism without being thought of as anti-Jewish.

This brings us to the pickle into which Ken Livingstone, Naz Shah, and Jeremy Corbyn, have now fallen. It is confusing because we can have no reason to suppose that any of these leading personalities actually 'hates' Jews in a visceral, personal, or emotional sense. The problem appears to arise simply from the fact that they have struck poses and taken up positions which appear to be anti-Semitic.

Ken Livingstone's recent suggestion that Hitler supported Zionism certainly appears to be anti-Semitic. The truth is that Hitler in the late twenties and early thirties did believe in deporting Germany's Jews. The Nazi's had a number of destinations for German Jewry in mind; Madagascar for example. Matters came to a head with Hitler's accession to power in January 1933, increasing the vulnerability of Germany's Jews tenfold. In response, the Zionist Federation of Germany with the support of the Jewish Agency signed a deal with the Nazis in August of that year which would allow German Jews to emigrate to Palestine and retain the value of much of their property, which would then be used to import German goods into Palestine. This deal, The *Haavara Agreement*, ran contrary to the worldwide campaign, led by Polish Zionists, to boycott German goods in protest against the Nazi's actions.

The fear prominent among German Jews was that support for the Polish and international boycott of Germany would in fact worsen, not improve, the position of Jews in Germany. So there was a split in Zionism and in the wider Jewish community about how to respond to the Nazi programme of attacking the rights of Jews in Germany. The Jewish Agency

wanted to get as many Jews out of Germany with as much of the value of their property as they could. Whereas others thought that the boycott campaign centred and orchestrated from Poland was the way to go.

Ken Livingstone in loosely referring to the Haavara Agreement and the desperate struggle to rescue Jews from the Nazis, (without regard to these tensions and tactical differences between Polish and German Jews, and between the Jewish Agency and much Zionist opinion in Poland and elsewhere) as evidence of Nazi support for Zionism is grotesque in the extreme. Livingstone along with much of the pro-Palestinian left is opposed, in principle, and in fact, to the existence of the State of Israel, which is why they support the explicitly anti-Jewish forces of Hamas and Hezbollah, and will clearly use any means to challenge the right of the Jewish state to exist.

The reason for this inexorable slide towards anti-Semitism is to be found in the left's historic commitment to anti-imperialism and the preparedness to tolerate all kinds of reactionary backsliding in nationalist movements. Inherent in the traditional left wing approach to colonial and neo-colonial struggles is unconditional support for those fighting for independence from their oppressors regardless of their social programmes or political outlook. Under the rubric of always refusing to equate the oppressor with the oppressed the barbarism of the colonial forces is always condemned out of hand, while the violence of the oppressed is always legitimated by their tyrannised status.

Now the colonisation of much of Palestine during the twenties, thirties, and forties, by the systematic purchase of land and other property from Arab notables by European Jewish refugees, and the creation of Jewish quasi-state civil and military institutions in Jaffa and elsewhere in the British Mandate from around 1920, resulted in the

displacement of many Palestinian Arabs, leading to strikes, killings, and armed conflict between Arabs and Jews, and between Arabs and Jews and the British colonial authorities, in a three-cornered struggle, long before the outbreak of Israel's 'War of Independence' in 1947-8. The war between Israel and a coalition of Arab armies, led by Jordan and Egypt, arose because of the rejection by Jordan and her allies in 1947 of the foundation of the Jewish state; the Arab forces wanted to strangle of the Jewish state at birth. This has been the de facto position of much Arab and Iranian opinion ever since and certainly reflects the outlook of those allies of the pro-Palestinian left, Hamas and Hezbollah. The demand for 'the right of return' to what is now Israel of those Palestinians who fled their ancestral towns and villages in 1948 (and their descendants) is in fact a demand for the deployment of a demographic move that would result in the disappearance of the Jewish majority, and the consequent collapse of the Jewish state.

Now, the pro-Palestinian left is committed to the slogan: from the "River to the Sea Palestine Will Be Free!" This is nothing less than an appeal for the ethnic cleansing of Jews from Israel-Palestine. The suggestion by Naz Shah for the forcible removal of Jews from Israel-Palestine to the United States was not a slip of the tongue or an emotional outburst, but an expression of the belief that Israel and her Jewish population should simply cease to exist.

It is at this point that the hard-held distinction between Zionism and Jews, so beloved by the left, begins to disintegrate. Because, the Arab objection to Israel is that it is Jewish – a Jewish state. The commitment of the pro-Palestinian left is that Israel should disappear because most ethnic Palestinians are Muslims and those that are not, are Druze or Christians – what they are not, is Jews. So, what is being contested is the right of Jews to have a state in Palestine, regardless of whether somebody might

allow them to have a state in Patagonia or maybe Minnesota.

The result is that one cannot, despite the best efforts of the Jewish Socialists' Group, maintain a hard-and-fast distinction between Jews and Zionists; the philological distinction is obviously true and meaningful, but clearly not in the minds of most Palestinians or of their armed organisations, or in the minds of most Jews. The right of Jews to possess one tiny state on a tiny patch of land is what is at stake.

How we got into this mess in which Palestinian Arabs and Jews have been fighting over the same tract of land for the last hundred years is a matter of record; during the first half of the twentieth century Jews fled from Europe and Russia and settled in large numbers in Palestine. The Jews found themselves in a land that had hitherto had no national existence or traditions, had been neither a state nor a country, but a province alternately ruled and populated by the Egyptians and Ottoman Turks, and finally by the British. The Jews created a state founded largely on the displacement of Arabs, a state which now oppresses its own Arab citizens, together with those Palestinians living in Gaza and in the Occupied Territories, which the Jewish settlers, illegally ensconced on Arab land, refer to as Judea and Samaria.

Extricating Jews and Palestinian Arabs from this murderous conflict everybody knows will be extremely difficult, and attempting to destroy Zionism and its Jewish state will not help matters forward. Only strategies designed to strengthen the Palestinians economically possess the possibility of breaching the deadlock. Consequently, I think that the United States and the European Union, in defiance of Hamas, of Netanyahu, and the Israeli right, should set about constructing a deep-water trading port and airport in Gaza, as a means of stimulating the economy of the Strip. It is only by such means that the war parties on

both sides of the divide can begin to be pushed back from a permanent readiness to slaughter each other.

The simplistic posture in which the left always “supports the oppressed against the oppressor” has never had a good outcome, not in Algeria, not in Palestine, or indeed anywhere else. If the Labour Party and those on the pro-Palestinian left want to stop sliding towards anti-Semitism and alliances with anti-Jewish organisations and movements, they had better stop demanding the dissolution of the Jewish state and start attempting to fathom out how to get the Jewish masses in Israel to support practical policies and programmes which aim to stop the oppression of Israel’s Arab population, end the ghettoization of Gaza, and bring the military occupation of the West Bank to a close.

Ken Livingstone and the Haavara Agreement of 1933

April 8, 2017

THE HAAVARA AGREEMENT between the German government and the Jewish Agency was signed on 25th August 1933. It was the result of talks between the Zionist Federation of Germany and the Nazi authorities. It was a complex arrangement that allowed German Jews to migrate to Palestine with the value of around fifty per cent of their assets. Thus it enabled Jews fleeing from the fascists in Germany to meet the income threshold demanded by the British civil administration in Jerusalem for Jews entering Mandate Palestine.

This ‘transfer agreement’ was controversial at the time because it enabled the Nazis to circumvent the worldwide boycott of German goods organised and supported by Jews in North America and Europe, including most Zionist organisations based in Poland.

Around sixty thousand German Jews were able to escape from Nazi persecution by moving to Palestine under the terms of this agreement. The Nazis toyed with a number of schemes for forcing Jews out of Germany before they embarked on the process of mass murder in the summer and autumn of 1941.

It is this agreement and the various Nazi schemes for the deportation of Jews that has led Ken Livingstone to claim that Hitler’s government was in some sense in league with Zionism. It is claimed that the Zionists “worked with the Nazis” to facilitate the transfer of Jews from Europe to Palestine. Specifically, Livingstone, has repeatedly insisted that “Hitler supported Zionism . . . before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews.”

Evidently, the emigration and deportation policies of Hitler’s government aimed initially at ridding Germany,

and then Europe at large, of Jews at no stage embraced support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Mandate Palestine, Madagascar, or anywhere else. Hitler did not support Zionism.

Throughout the period of Nazi domination, in addition to Jewish armed resistance and heroic risings and rebellions, Zionist and other Jewish community leaders negotiated and haggled with the fascists in desperate attempts to save as many of their people as possible. It is these contacts and agreements that Livingstone wants to characterise as “Zionist cooperation with the Nazis”.

Furthermore, the idea that the massacre of the Jewish populations of entire villages, towns, and cities, by einsatzgruppen, ably assisted by the police, local militias, and the Wehrmacht, was produced by ‘Hitler’s madness’ is certainly bizarre. The attribution of the cycle of unparalleled mass killings, carried out over a four-year period involving the active participation of hundreds of thousands of Europeans of many different nationalities, to Hitler’s disordered state of mind demonstrates Livingstone’s feeble grasp of the period and of the depth and extent of anti-Semitism in European culture.

This is, no doubt, why he greets the assertion that his repeated claim that “Hitler supported Zionism” amounts to anti-Semitism, with sneering dismay. Livingstone’s disbelief is also strengthened by his long record of opposition to racism in all its forms. True, he fell out with leaders of the Orthodox Jewish community when as the leader of the Greater London Council in the early eighties he quite rightly refused to allow religious authorities to decide which Jewish organisations should be awarded council grants. But for Livingstone the idea that he hates Jews or promotes Jew-hatred is frankly absurd. He simply doesn’t grasp the reason for all the fuss.

In this he has much in common with a great many people on the British left, both those in the Labour

Party, and those who, for one reason or another are forced to linger outside its warm embrace.

The problem is that despite many decades of supporting nationalism, and nationalists of different stripes in the struggle against colonialism and imperialism, for a large cohort of socialists Jewish nationalism remains beyond the pale. Although the left in Britain has frequently defended 'anti-imperialist' dictatorships and 'socialist' forms of repressive government, they are prepared to express unbridled hatred and opposition when the perpetrators are Jews. It is as if Jewish nationalists are alone among nationalists in attacking national minorities, supporting militarist modes of repression, and promoting reactionary social policies.

The argument appears to turn on the idea that the Jewish state, Israel, is a client of imperialism. The Jews also benefit from the support of the powerful 'Jewish Lobby', which apparently determines the foreign policy of the United States and Britain. Strangely, none of this reasoning is applied to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which is also a client of the United States. After all Pakistan is a confessional state, founded for and by a specific religious community, which systematically discriminates against citizens who do not conform to the religious strictures, of its constitution and laws, and is in league with Islamists of one stripe or another from Saudi Arabia to Blackburn.

The reason for the difference is that Palestinians in particular, and Muslims in general (with the exception of Saudi and Gulf State rulers), are seen as potentially or actually anti-imperialist, in complete contrast to Jews who are seen as the prosperous and often wealthy supporters and beneficiaries of imperialism.

It is at this point that it becomes crucial for those on the left who hate Jewish nationalism to insist that they are the enemies of 'Zionism' not of 'Jews' as such. It is the 'Zionists' who are the enemies of the Palestinians

and the left, not Jews. By insisting upon this distinction they hope to be able to rebuff suggestions that they're anti-Semitic.

Ken Livingstone recently explained the distinction in the *Morning Star*.

"The Labour Party needs to clearly distinguish between prejudice against Jews, which is totally unacceptable, and criticism of Israeli aggression, on which freedom of expression should be respected."

Jews and Zionists are indeed not synonymous – some Jews are anti-Zionist or simply not Zionists, while others enthusiastically support the state of Israel. However, by insisting that, alone among the peoples of the world, the Jews have no right to nationhood, no right to found and defend a state, the left are insisting upon a peculiar type of Jewish exceptionalism. The Scots, the Irish, the Catalans, Kurds, Armenians, and many others, may strive and even achieve statehood but the Jews should not. In fact, they should not defend their state. On the contrary, they must dissolve it.

For many on the left the solution to the manifest oppression of the Palestinians by the government of Israel is the destruction or dissolution of the Jewish state. Israel must be removed from the map so that "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will Be Free!"

This strikes me as anti-Jewish. The nice distinction employed by many on the left between Jews who are Jewish nationalists, and those Jews who are not – between Zionists and Jews – appears to me to be formally correct, but practically meaningless. My scepticism is strengthened further by the extent to which the left is prepared to ally itself with Hezbollah and Hamas, both movements that explicitly talk about the destruction of Jews and the Jewish state.

Indeed the policy of all significant Palestinian organisations is to destroy the ethnic foundation of the

Jewish state by ensuring that all Palestinian Arabs living in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt should have the right to 'return' to what is now Israel. This right to 'return' is insisted upon regardless of whether those in question have ever lived there or not. This position is consistent with the belief of many on the left in Britain that the result of the war of 1948, which the Palestinians lost, should be unravelled, and the Jewish state should be dissolved in favour a Palestinian state which would cover all of what is now Gaza, Israel, and the occupied territories of the West Bank.

This new 'one-state solution', the anti-Zionists argue, would allow Jews and Palestinians to live in close harmony side-by-side, overcoming, at a stroke, more than a century of bloody struggles for possession of the same tract of land.

It is this wholly implausible 'one-state solution' arising from the collapse, destruction, or dissolution, of the Jewish state, which the left, along with its Palestinian and Islamist allies choose to canvas, that gives rise to the notion that anti-Zionists are by and large anti-Jewish. If Livingstone and those on the left who agree with him want to stop being regarded as anti-Semites they need to stop allying themselves with those who call for the destruction of the Jewish state.

Certainly, Livingstone needs to stop attempting to blackguard Jewish nationalists by spurious assertions about their cooperation with the Adolf Hitler. But, his freedom to attack the occupation of the West Bank, the oppression of Palestinians by the Israel Defence Force, and the racist Jewish settlers (in what they call Judea and Samaria) is not in jeopardy.

However, those who seek the destruction or dissolution of Israel, those who refuse to acknowledge the right of the Jewish state to defend itself, or to exist at all, most assuredly enter the realm of anti-Semitism, regardless of their assertions that it is "the Zionists", and not "the Jews" who they have in their sights.

Hating Jews and Anti-Semitism

April 3, 2018

ANTI-SEMITISM lingers on the left in an unexamined hatred of Zionism, and in widespread opposition to the existence of the Jewish state.

There are also stagnant pools of traditional anti-Semitism puddled throughout the left, which never quite evaporate. They are regularly topped up by socialist suggestions that Jews make use of the holocaust to prevent or deflect criticism of Israel, that Jews sustain a powerful lobby staffed by their rich and influential co-religionists.

This idea: that the Jews hide behind victimhood in order to promote, often surreptitiously, their own narrow Zionist interests, certainly form part of an easily recognised anti-Semitic trope, which is often reinforced by the idea that Jewish capitalists, bankers and the like, play a prominent role in lobbying, behind closed doors, for Jewish and Israeli interests.

Such ideas are undoubtedly common on the left and are actively promoted by prominent figures like Ken Livingstone, George Galloway, and many others. Certainly, 'Jewish Lobby' is an epithet to conjure with along with 'Zionist', a political trend said to be so reactionary that its leaders flirted with the Nazis in the 'thirties concerning the removal of Jews from Europe.

So, left wing attitudes towards Zionism, inescapably feeds implicit anti-Semitism on the left, because the distinction between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism, irately insisted upon by most socialists, is never entirely convincing. No amount of "awareness training" by Momentum, or special conferences canvassed for by Lord Michael Martin are going to solve anti-Semitism in the Labour Party because discrimination against Jews is built into the political assumptions of most modern socialists.

The reason for this is to be found in the blanket rejection of Jewish nationalism. Pakistanis, Kurds, Catalans, Scots, and Venezuelans, can be nationalists, can found states, fight for statehood, and defend their states, but Jews must not, because Jewish nationalism unlike most other nationalisms is simply beyond the pale. From most socialist perspectives nationalism is regrettable, a necessary evil, or a legitimate means of fighting against national oppression, except when it comes to Jews. Jews, alone amongst all the peoples on the planet should not have founded a nationalist movement; they should not have created a state.

It is true, of course, that in common with states like, Turkey, Pakistan, or post-war Czechoslovakia and Poland, Israel was founded upon the removal or expulsion of a large number of its territory's former inhabitants. But unlike the systematic killing or expulsion of millions of ethnic Germans, Greeks, Armenians, and Hindus, from their ancestral homes, within broadly the same historical period, the expulsion of Palestinians was, and remains for many people on the left, a unique and unparalleled Zionist crime,

The Jewish state gradually came into existence – commencing with the first election of the Assembly of Representatives and of the Jewish National Council in Jaffa in 1920. The following years were marked by Arab riots and the wholesale killing of Jews, by struggles between Arab notables and the British, and by guerrilla war between the British and the Jews, culminating finally in the proclamation of Israel's independence in May 1948. The announcement of Israel's foundation was preceded by the massacre of some 600 Palestinians at Deir Yassin by Jewish militia on April 9, 1948, and the subsequent displacement in the war between Israel and a coalition of Arab states of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians before Israel's decisive victory in July 1949.

Now, according to many on the left this foundational or 'original' crime of the Jewish state can only be rectified by the wholesale return of the Palestinians expelled in the war and mayhem of 1948 – and their millions of descendants – to what is now Israel.

Palestine solidarity campaigners, and many others on the left, call for this 'right of return' in the full knowledge that such a move would inevitably result in the dissolution of Israel and of Jewish statehood. There is, of course, much talk about the foundation of "a single state" in which all – Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Israelis – could live harmoniously together. But this is merely a pipedream canvassed on the left in order to conceal the explicitly anti-Jewish policies and sentiment of Hamas, Hezbollah, and all those who call for the liquidation of the Jewish state.

It is also usual on the left for advocates of Palestinian rights to rail against the specific policies and practices of the state of Israel, regarding the settlement and occupation of the West Bank. Much use is made of the "disproportionate force" in suppressing Palestinian attacks upon the territory and sovereignty of Israel, like the recent killing of 15 Palestinians and the injuring of hundreds more by Israel Defence Force soldiers during Hamas-organised attacks upon the country's border with Gaza.

It is this standpoint that lies at the heart of the left's implicit anti-Semitism, because it is this posture that always slips effortlessly into challenging the legitimacy of Jewish nationalism and of the Zionist project in its entirety. It results in the notion, widespread on the left, that Jewish nationalism is uniquely vile and reprehensible, and alone among all the nationalisms of the world is the one whose condemnation must occupy pride of place in socialist rejection of colonialism and imperialism. Israel is, so the argument goes, an apartheid state, one committed for all time to the oppression of Palestinian Arabs, and as such only

its liquidation will do. As the slogan says, “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free.”

To criticise the policies and conduct of Israel’s government is of course perfectly reasonable. Yet to challenge the existence of the Jewish state, or to demand its dissolution is inescapably anti-Semitic. It is anti-Semitic to demand the “right of return” of all Palestinians and their descendants, because this would destroy the Jewish state.

If the left restricted itself to attacks upon the policies and actions of Likud, Tkuma, or Yisrael Beiteinu, it would be entirely reasonable – it goes without saying that it is necessary for socialists to attack the reactionary, and at times, the racist and oppressive policies of Israel’s right wing political parties and governments, particularly with regard to the occupation of the West Bank since the war of 1967. However, people on the left are rarely detained by the need for precision – they invariably prefer simply to attack Jewish nationalism and the existence of the Jewish state.

For many on the left, Zionism is a colonial enterprise, backed by imperialist powers like Britain and the United States, not merely to deprive the Palestinian people of their homeland, but as a malign outpost planted in the heart of the Middle East in order to disrupt and undermine Arab and Iranian struggles against imperialism.

The broad left’s desire to depict the Zionist enterprise as merely another European colonial venture which aimed at the dispossession and oppression of a ‘native population’ amounts, if not to a denial of the holocaust, then to a desire to remove it from the issues surrounding the birth of Jewish nationalism or the foundation of the Jewish state in British Mandate Palestine.

Zionism arose in the late nineteenth century as most of Europe’s Jews found themselves jammed up against the emerging nationalism of Hungarians,

Romanians, Latvians, Estonians, Lithuanians – and most sharply – stranded amidst the bitter rivalries, which marked the struggle between Ukrainian and Polish nationalists. This together with the savage anti-Semitism of Tsar Nicolas II and the anti-Jewish traditions of his empire, found millions of Jews in the territories that now form the three Baltic states, and also Poland, Russia, and Ukraine, in an unsustainable situation.

Jews were no strangers to pogroms and periodic outbreaks of murderous violence, but in the opening years of the twentieth century with revolutionary upheaval in Russia and the centrifugal forces at work in the Hapsburg Empire of Austria-Hungary, outbursts of anti-Jewish violence came thick and fast and were marked by increasingly ferocious violence.

Different responses emerged within Jewish communities, running from the renewed isolationism of ultra-orthodoxy and religious particularism of one kind or another, to integrationist arguments of a broadly conservative kind, or even to radical socialist and communist solutions to anti-Semitism. This was the context in which, Jewish nationalism in the form of Zionism became increasingly persuasive.

Things came to a head with the outbreak of the world war in 1914 – it was then that it began to be ‘normal’ for Jews to be murdered, robbed and raped with impunity. The to-and-fro between the armies of Russia and Austria-Hungary across Eastern Galicia resulted in pogroms of unprecedented violence, which were complicated and intensified by the virulent anti-Semitism of Polish and Ukrainian nationalism popular amongst both the peasantry and in intellectual circles in towns and cities throughout the region.

With the Wehrmacht’s attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 the systematic murder of 1.5m Jews – the entire Jewish population of numerous towns and cities – was initiated by local police formations in association with German paramilitaries. These mass shootings

were accomplished with comparative ease because the killing grounds of the holocaust in Poland, the Baltic States and Ukraine had been well prepared by the anti-Semitic violence endemic in nationalist and Catholic circles between the wars. In this sense we can understand the holocaust, in which a further 4.5m Jews were starved or gassed to death, occurred over a broader historical period than that of 1941-5.

It was the widespread and popular character of anti-Semitism in Central and Eastern Europe which rose to a lethal crescendo during the nineteen forties that resulted in recourse to Zionism and the mass emigration of Jews to Mandate Palestine – underpinned and made unavoidable during the thirties and forties by the refusal of the United States, Britain and her Dominions, to admit more than a tiny fraction of Jewish refugees.

Zionism – Jewish nationalism – and the state of Israel are undeniably the product of this tragic history – and those who seek other explanations for the establishment of Israel are without doubt anti-Semites.

The maintenance of the permanent refugee status of millions of Palestinians for seventy years by the refusal of Israel's Arab neighbours to grant citizenship to displaced Palestinians, and the refusal of Palestinian organisations to seek or accept citizenship of neighbouring Arab states, has ensured the maintenance of millions of stateless refugees who demand 'the right of return' to the home towns and villages of their grandparents and great grandparents in what is now Israel.

It is the left's refusal to accept the result of the Israel-Arab War of 1947-9 by supporting Palestinian demands for the restoration of the *status quo ante* that amounts to calls for the dissolution of the Jewish state. It is this blanket anti-Zionism which is implicitly anti-Semitic because the left singles out Jewish nationalism in particular for condemnation, while the depredations of the state against national minorities in

Pakistan, India, Myanmar, China, Turkey, Russia, Sri Lanka, and many others, passes most socialists by almost without comment. It is this peculiar concentration upon the Jewish state, and upon left-wing calls for its dissolution, which inevitably gives rise to charges of anti-Semitism.

There can be no reason at all to believe that Jeremy Corbyn personally hates Jews or believes in civil or cultural discrimination against Jews, and I'm sure that this goes for most people on the left. Yet allegations of anti-Semitism will continue to stick until socialists can come up with ideas and solutions that both accept the legitimacy of the Jewish state, and guarantee its security. Without this, the left's enthusiasm for 'Palestinian solidarity' and support for Hamas and Hezbollah will continue to reinforce the idea that most socialist opinion is, as a matter of course, anti-Jewish.