

From one Israeli pogrom to another

Israel is in trouble. Not because of the threat from Hamas rockets but because its barbaric assault on Gaza is so patently out of all proportion to the threat they face that even their traditional supporters are raising questions about their strategy. IT's traditional supporters admit as much. Even Tory MPs are criticising the UK government. The Economist has written an editorial entitled “winning the battle, but losing the war” (the war, that is, for world opinion), subtitled “For all its military might, Israel faces a grim future unless it can secure peace”. Yet the Israeli regime does not want a negotiated peace. Indeed Netanyahu has recently said that there is no way that Israel can relinquish security on the West Bank for fear of Islamist attack. The Palestinian people cannot be trusted with self-rule. As the Economist says, that implies an intention *to consolidate the occupation*. Netanyahu stated that any “peace agreement” would have to include Israeli military control of the West Bank “for a very long time”. At a Hebrew language press conference on July 11th, not widely reported in the English media, he clarified that: “There cannot be a situation, *under any agreement*, in which we relinquish security control of the territory west of the River Jordan”. In other words any 'sovereign' Palestinian state would not be allowed sovereignty over its territory.

The picture that Israel paints of “defending itself” against Hamas's rockets is sheer propaganda. What precipitated the latest war against Gaza was ostensibly the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli youths near Hebron. Netanyahu declared that Hamas was responsible, and rounded up “the usual suspects”, rearresting Palestinians who had been released in 2011 as part of a deal for the release of an Israeli soldier. This precipitated Hamas rockets which Netanyahu used as a pretext for his action. It later transpired that an Israeli police spokesman admitted that Hamas was not responsible for the killing of three students in the West Bank, around Hebron.

The essential myth on which Israel's never ending military action is painted as “self-defence” is that it faces an existential threat, that is, it is fighting for its survival. This is risible. It has an overwhelming preponderance of force. But it is losing support because it is prepared to butcher the civilian population of Gaza in order “to get at the militants”. Its government knows full well that it cannot blast Gaza's streets without killing women and children. What is taking place is what the American military liked to call “a turkey shoot”. It is destroying the infrastructure of life in Gaza. If its real target was “terror tunnels” why did it destroy the only power plant in Gaza? Why does it destroy hospitals and mosques and universities? It is simply operating *a policy of collective punishment*. Gaza's population has barely any water, power or sanitation. The UN has just warned that Gaza's medical system is breaking down and it faces “a health disaster of widespread proportions.”

The famous Hamas “coup” – after the election

When Hamas was elected in 2006 the Israeli government boycotted it because it was a “terrorist” organisation. In this it was supported not only the USA but by the European Union. The Gazans voted for the wrong people so they were made to pay. We hear much about the Hamas 'coup' in Gaza, but there was no coup. The Bush administration backed

an attempted military seizure by Mohammed Dahlan. Hamas won that battle¹. Whatever we think of it, it was elected in Gaza.

A prominent US Jewish leader recently said that there are no innocent civilians in Gaza because they voted for Hamas. What about the 55% who didn't vote for Hamas? Are they "collateral damage"? Hamas won not because the Gazans wanted to destroy Israel but because of the corruption of the Palestinian authority.

The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza was not a move towards a "two-state solution". The Israeli regime maintained total control of the air, the sea and the border crossings. It has carried out on a regular basis extra-judicial killings in which it has killed the families of various Hamas activists and leaders, with impunity. Essentially it has used economic strangulation as a means of punishing the people of Gaza in its quest to defeat Hamas (see "[The Gaza Economic Crunch](#)"² and "[Economic Warfare in Gaza](#)"³).

The occupation - 47 years and counting

The root of the conflict remains the occupation, 47 years old. For all the apparent promise of the Oslo peace accords, Israeli governments have shown their real intent by building more and more settlements on the West Bank, such that around half a million Israelis now live there, with the IDF present to ensure not only their 'security' but their domination. There are Jews only roads from which the Arabs are banned. The "security wall" snakes its way through the land, splitting Arab communities down the middle at some points. Indeed the West Bank constitutes a patchwork quilt of settlements which makes the formation of a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank impossible so long as the settlements remain. For some Israeli leaders the settlements were a pragmatic means of maintaining control, for others they are the result of the God-given right of the Jews to "their" land. How can you have a rational debate with someone who thinks that God gave them the right to "Eretz Israel"?

For all the military power that Israel has and their ability to enter and leave Gaza when they please, the occupation, however, corrupts Israeli society, dehumanises its citizens, both those who carry out the operations of the IDF and those whose hatred of the Palestinians grows like a cancer in the body politic. This is becoming increasingly clear as rabid forms of racism proliferate, not just on the fringes of society but in the mainstream. When we hear Jewish crowds chanting 'death to Arabs', 'death to leftists' we hear echoes of 1930's Germany, before the 'final solution'. When we hear mobs chanting 'there are no more schools in Gaza because there are no more children', when we read posts on Facebook pages applauding the death of Arab children, we hear the same echoes. Likewise when we hear Knesset members demanding the killing of Gaza's women as the ultimate solution

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- 1 See this article in Vanity Fair by David Rose. "After failing to anticipate Hamas's victory over Fatah in the 2006 Palestinian election, the White House cooked up yet another scandalously covert and self-defeating Middle East debacle: part-Iran-contra, part Bay of Pigs. With confidential documents , corroborated by outraged former and current officials, the author reveals that President Bush, Condoleeza Rice, and Deputy National Security Adviser Elliot Abrahams backed an armed force under fatah strongman Mohammed Dahlan, touching off a bloody civil war in Gaza and leaving Hamas stronger than ever. <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804>
 - 2 http://www.challenge-mag.com/en/article_146/the_gaza_economic_crunch
 - 3 http://www.challenge-mag.com/en/article_196/economic_warfare_in_gaza

which will prevent them giving birth to “little snakes”.

Comparisons with Nazism produce howls of outrage from supporters of Israel. Of course, there is no comparison, as yet, with the industrialised slaughter of the Nazi's. Yet there *are* parallels with Germany in the 1930's. The Israeli regime has borrowed some of their methods, especially collective punishment. Indeed there are sectors of Israeli society who would like to drive the Palestinians into the sea, or possibly Sinai, if not slaughter them. Are not mobs running around beating up Arabs or Africans (called 'infiltrators' in media discourse) acting like Brown-shirts?

As Israeli society has moved further to the right the hysteria has grown. Here's an example as reported by the Economist. Moshe Feiglin a Likud member of the Knesset and its Deputy Speaker, explained to a meeting recently that “Within 50 years, Europe's lingua franca will be Arabic, and Britain will have a Muslim majority.”

Mr Feiglin's final solution

Mr Feiglin, writing in Aretz Shiva has offered this 'solution' to the conflict.

“**Ultimatum** – one warning from the Prime Minister of Israel to the enemy population (does that include the children?), in which he announces that Israel is about to attack military targets in their area and urges those who are not involved and do not wish to be harmed leave immediately. Sinai is not far from Gaza and they can leave. This will be the limit of Israel's humanitarian efforts. Hamas may unconditionally surrender and prevent the attack.”

In addition he wants to attack the entire 'target bank' with maximum force. All the “military and infrastructural targets will be attacked with no consideration for 'human shields' or 'environmental damage’” (in other words kill whoever is there). Add “a total siege of Gaza”. Nothing will enter though Israel will allow exit from Gaza; civilians can go to Sinai.

After the “softening” of the targets, the IDF “will conquer the entire Gaza, using all the means necessary to minimise harm to our soldiers, with no other considerations”. Then the IDF will “eliminate all armed enemies” from Gaza. Finally, “The enemy population that is innocent of wrong-doing and separated itself from the armed terrorists will be treated in accordance with international law and will be allowed to leave”.

The beneficence of Israel knows no bounds. Israel will “generously aid” those who wish to leave, no doubt encouraged by the tender ministrations of the IDF.

For Feiglin “Gaza is part of our land and we remain there for ever”. It will become part of sovereign Israel and will be populated by Jews. This will help to ease the housing crisis in Israel”. (Yes, they can move into ex-Arab homes.) He reckons that “most” Arabs want to leave Gaza. There was once a poll which showed a third of them did. Perhaps the numbers have been increased by the latest act of 'self-defence'. Those not involved in “anti-Israeli activity” (he doesn't define what this means) will be offered a generous emigration package.

“Those who choose to remain will receive permanent resident status. After a number of years of living in Israel and becoming used to it, contingent on appropriate legislation in the Knesset and the authorisation of the Minister of Interior, those who personally accept upon themselves Israel's rule, substance and way of life of the Jewish State in its land will be offered Israeli citizenship”.

After driving the population into Sinai, killing or (charitably) gaoling the “terrorists”, no doubt Arabs will be queuing up for such a pleasant prospect, just so long as they “accept upon themselves” Israeli rule; that is rule *over* them. I suspect that Mr Feiglin is not expecting many to take up the offer.

Mr Feiglin advocates the same fate for the West Bank. He leads a faction in Likud, and has received 23% of the votes in a leadership contest. For him only Jews can be citizens of Israel. He wants to offer them money to leave. In 2004 he told the New Yorker Magazine:

“Why should non-Jews have a say in the policy of a Jewish State?...You can't teach a monkey to speak and you can't teach an Arab to be democratic. You're dealing with a culture of thieves and robbers. The Arab destroys everything he touches.”

Does this not sound like Germans talking about Jews in the 1930's?

A “humanitarian” version of Feiglin's 'solution'

Feiglin's plan is far from being an idea cherished by a small minority. We have just seen a “humanitarian” version courtesy of Martin Sherman, the Director of the Israeli Institute for Strategic Studies. Writing in the Jerusalem Post Mr Sherman said:

“The only durable solution requires dismantling Gaza, humanitarian relocation of the non-belligerent Arab population, and extension of Israeli sovereignty over the region....This is the only way to eliminate the threat to Israel.”

That's quite a concept, *enforced* “humanitarian relocation”. Mind you, it's for their own good. It is apparently the only way to “extricate the non-belligerent Palestinians from the clutches of the cruel, corrupt cliques who led them astray for decades.” This will save the Israelis the need to “rule over another people”. They just expel them from their land and rule over it instead. Sadly Mr Sherman didn't explain precisely where the entire population of Gaza, some 1.8 million people would be relocated, and who would pay for. Surely, even Israel's new-found friend, the strongman in Cairo might balk at taking all these people into the Sinai.

Not quite as disliked as North Korea

The Economist reports that in a poll published in June, *before* the destruction visited on Gaza, the citizens of 23 countries put the balance of those who think Israel is a good or bad influence on the world as minus 26%, ranking it below Russia and only above North Korea, Pakistan and Iran! Even in America there is a shift taking place where the number

of people who think that Israel's actions against Palestine are unjustified has risen to 39%. Amongst 18-29 year olds Israel is backed by just a quarter.

As western supporters of Israel are pointing out, the action against Gaza can only have the affect of deepening the rage of Palestinians and driving up support for Hamas. The fundamental fact is this: *so long as the occupation continues then Israel can have no security*. It is a militarised society like no other, which is breeding an attitude which looks at Palestinians as less than human beings. If it continues to dehumanise Palestinians, even when it is not killing them, it will create a well of hatred which will ensure attacks against it continue. The dehumanisation of its own population is the corollary of that.

One of the consequences of the Israeli state's behaviour is that its murderous action in Gaza is likely to fuel the growth of anti-semitism. The echo of 'kill the Arabs' is heard in chants in a recent demonstration in Europe was the chant of 'gas the Jews'. One of the overheads of the polarisation around the conflict is the promulgation of the idea that it is simply a conflict behind Jews and Arabs. It is nothing of the sort. It is a conflict between supporters of the Zionist state and its dispossession of the Palestinian people and opponents of that state. The barbarism of "the most moral army in the world" is based on a rejection of the humanity of Palestinians and the righteous superiority of Israeli Jews. It is guaranteed to create its mirror image amongst Palestinians – people who hate Jews rather than Zionism.

Of course, despite the wartime hysteria which is being whipped up, there are Israeli Jews who are opposed to the actions of the regime, even if the poisonous nationalistic atmosphere has currently rendered them a small minority. There is even opposition from within the military as the example of the statement by army reservists in the New York Times shows⁴. These people are allies of the Palestinian struggle against their oppression. An Hamas spokesperson interviewed by Channel 4's Paul Mason, said that the rockets were a means of forcing Israel into giving Palestinians their rights. It will do nothing of the sort, of course. Rockets directed indiscriminately at the Israeli population achieve nothing else but providing a pretext for the Israeli government and promote 'national unity' behind the government.

Ultimately, there can be no solution to the conflict without Jews and Arabs living together, whatever state forms this might take. Killing Israelis because they are Israelis is no more progressive than killing Palestinians because they are Palestinians. That's why opponents of Israeli Zionism must oppose outbreaks of anti-semitism wherever they raise their head.

The USA and its pathetic client state

One final thing. Israel could not continue as it is without the support of the US state, financial, political and military. The hypocrisy of the US rulers, even with the useless 'liberal' Obama at its head, is beyond compare. At the very same time as the US administration was saying that the level of civilian deaths in Gaza was unacceptable (one wonders what an acceptable level would be), the US government answered the Israelis,

⁴<http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/07/23/we-are-israeli-reservists-we-refuse-to-serve/>

who were using up all their ammunition, by opening up the US stockpile which they hold in Israel. In this they are supported by their pathetic client state in the UK, which sells the Israelis all manner of materials for policing and killing Palestinians. If the US ended this support the Israeli regime could not continue as it is, committing one pogrom after another. That's why the campaign against US and UK support for Israel must be stepped up.

Israel's Strategy?

So what were the aims of the Israeli operation? There is a debate in Israel about whether or not their aims are clear. Likud MK Danny Danon, former Defence Minister, has criticised the cabinet's decision to start withdrawing troops. "You need to fight terrorism, not hesitate against it", he said. At the time of writing the IDF has announced that they are expecting to finish destroying all the tunnels soon. It appears, however, that the IDF has formed a 3 kilometre 'buffer zone' from the Israeli border into Gaza and has told the population of this area to leave.

The problem for the Netanyahu government is that it cannot please everybody. If it exits Gaza and rocket attacks continue there will be a furore on the right from those who want to "finish the job". If it maintains its 'buffer zone' there will be an international outcry since it will exacerbate the humanitarian catastrophe, adding to the numbers of displaced Palestinians which is approaching half a million. So long as the occupation continues then neither Palestinians nor Israelis can have peace. Israel cannot win in the long run despite its overwhelming firepower, because it is becoming ever more obvious that behind the facade of its "self-defence" is the cruel oppression of another people. Even in America the attempt to label all opposition to Israel as "anti-semitism" is beginning to lose its resonance even amongst US Jews. As a bard once said, a people that oppresses another people cannot itself be free.

Martin Wicks

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Postscript

Ed Miliband has criticised Cameron for not saying that Israeli action in Gaza is unacceptable. This is woeful. We need to concentrate not just on the weasel words of Cameron but on the government's action. We want the UK government to end all arms exports, and any materials used in support of the occupation. Will Miliband promise to do that if elected? Will he demand an end to the occupation?

