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European Languages

زبانهای اروپائی

MAY 17, 2018

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18.05.2018

Israel Commemorates Nakba with Mass Murder at the Gaza Fence



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One of the essential features of European colonialism were the boundaries drawn between Europeans and so-called Western civilization and everyone else. Even during the European enlightenment, the accepted philosophical justifications for human inequality in Western liberal thought meant that women, the colonized, the enslaved and non-property holders occupied different rungs on the ladder of humanity and were excluded from demanding same inherent rights as the White, male bourgeoisie.

The “othering” of human beings on the basis of race, gender, religion, class and later nationality was embedded in the collective consciousness of Europe. But in the colonial context, the process of othering wasn’t just psychological but also physical. In that context the stratification of humanity into those categories of people who had rights that were recognized and everyone else, had deadly consequences for those individuals and peoples who fell into the category of “other.”

Barbed wire, apartheid walls, railroad tracks, fences guarded by armed officers of the state, and the reservation system perfected in the United States as part of its conquest and containment of Indigenous nations, were some of the boundaries used to police difference. It is at one of those colonial separations between the “fully human” Israelis and the Palestinians where the latest colonial outrage is taking place. In one day at a fence on a barren strip of land in Gaza that separates “Israel” from the open-air concentration camp where 1.5 million Palestinians are confined known as Gaza, over 50 Palestinians were systematically murdered by heavily armed soldiers positioned elevated on mounds of dirt that turned the unarmed protesters who approached the fence to protest their confinement and occupation into a killing zone. This happened the day before the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, or *catastrophe* in Arabic, when 750,000 Palestinians were displaced and turned into permanent refugees.

While the bodies of men, women and even children were rushed away from the fence after having their bodies torn to shreds by live ammunition, the world’s elites were drinking champagne and celebrating the move of the embassy of one racist, settler-colonial state—the United States—to the conquered capital of another racist, colonial state, Israel.

Watching those scenes of horror, I couldn’t help but wonder about the psychological health of anyone who could find a way to reconcile themselves to that kind of madness. How one could somehow explain away the brutality. How one week you can be prepared to go to war because Syrian President Bashar al-Assad allegedly killed over 40 people with gas, but remain silent while dozens of human beings are systematically murdered right before our eyes. The events in Gaza reminded me once again of the insight James Baldwin provided that has become the recurring theme of my writings, and that is the psychopathology of white supremacy.

“The civilized have created the wretched, quite coldly and deliberately, and do not intend to change the status quo; are responsible for their slaughter and enslavement; rain down bombs on defenseless children whenever and wherever they decide that their ‘vital interests’ are menaced, and think nothing of torturing a man to death; these people are not

to be taken seriously when they speak of the ‘sanctity’ of human life, or the conscience of civilized world.”

One would think tear gas and bullets today would tear away any semblance of civilization that gave cover to the Israeli colonial project. But that pathology is too deeply ingrained in the collective imagination and thinking of the West to be jettisoned by one incident of brutality when the West has been destroying whole nations over the last decade and a half in the Middle East.

On the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, the “catastrophe” that resulted in the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, and the theft of their lands, homes, and even their household possessions, the message today was clear: the Israeli state is prepared to maintain its apartheid state by any means necessary. The catastrophe for the Palestinians was the birth of Israel and was celebrated by the Israeli state with tear gas, bullets and the blood of Palestinians.

For those of us, confined to the zones of non-being with Palestinians and all of the other victims of this 500-year-old nightmare, we have always known what Samuel Huntington openly admitted:

“The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other civilizations were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerners often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do.”

For the de-colonized, we have always understood that simple fact. Our experiences with the horror of European imperialism has steeled us against those same very same horrors.

So, we are not surprised or shocked by the brutality and the moral hypocrisy of Gaza, because we understand Hitler and Nazism. We have had an intimate relationship with Hitler and Nazism for over 500 years.

Hitler came to the Americas in 1492. He traveled with the conquistadors as they destroyed the Aztecs and then the Incas. He oversaw the Transatlantic Slave Trade, then went to the Congo and reduced the population by 5 million. He rode with U.S soldiers at Wounded Knee and advised the French, British and Portuguese to attempt to keep their colonies after the second imperialist war in 1945 no matter how much native blood was shed.

Aime Cesaire captured the historic travels of Hitler and Nazism, the Nazism we see today in Gaza and in the halls of the U.S. Congress.

“They say: ‘How strange! But never mind—it’s Nazism, it will pass!’ And they wait, and they hope; and they hide the truth from themselves, that it is barbarism, the supreme barbarism, the crowning barbarism that sums up all the daily barbarisms; that it is Nazism,

yes, but that before they were its victims, they were its accomplices; that they tolerated that Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then, it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of Western, Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps, and trickles from every crack. Yes, it would be worthwhile to study clinically, in detail, the steps taken by Hitler and Hitlerism and to reveal to the very distinguished, very humanistic, very Christian bourgeois of the twentieth century that without his being aware of it, he has a Hitler inside of him, that Hitler *inhabits* him, that Hitler is his *demon*, that if he rails against him, he is being inconsistent and that, at bottom, what he cannot forgive Hitler for is not *the crime* in itself, *the crime against man*, it is not *the humiliation of man as such*, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man, and the fact that he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved exclusively for the Arabs of Algeria, the ‘coolies’ of India, and the ‘niggers’ of Africa.”)

Zionism aligned itself with the European colonial project and adapted its methods, embraced its white supremacy and in the process has written its future. Zionism is Hitlerism, as is the capitalist European colonial project and so Israel’s fate is sealed as the day of reckoning with the 500-year European project as it faces its inglorious end.