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Omar and Trump

“Send her back! Send her back! Send her back!”

What preceded the now-infamous 13 seconds in which the president, frowning and nodding, listened to the mob chant?

“Ilhan Omar,” Trump had thundered, “has a history of launching vicious anti-Semitic screeds!”

Well, then, thought the North Carolina rabble, Get her out of here! Send her back to her shithole country!

The curious thing is that the issue here is Israel. Not Omar’s criticisms, common to many, of Trump’s administration in general. Not even her vow to “be Trump’s nightmare.” He focused on her challenge to the U.S. relationship with Israel.

Ilhan Omar has not in fact stated anything I’m aware of that I consider anti-Semitic. (Not that it’s relevant, or that Trump would know this, but Somali is a Semitic language.)

Omar has criticized Israel for its occupation of Palestinian land, as any U.S. legislator—to say nothing of the normal human—should. She has noted matter-of-factly that the Israel Lobby has plenty of money, and that that helps to explain the U.S.’s one-sided “Middle East policy.”

Thus Trump (identifying instinctively with the colonizer, settler, oppressor over the shithole colonized, dispossessed and oppressed) pronounces her “viciously” anti-Israel.

Anyone who doesn't think Israel wields extraordinary influence over Washington is not paying attention. At present the relationship is cemented by the Jared Kushner-Binyamin Netanyahu bond; it has yielded the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over Syria's Golan Heights, the (implicit) recognition of Israeli sovereignty over East Jerusalem, the move of the U.S. embassy, the abandonment of the Iran Deal, the designation of part of Iran's military as "terrorists," etc.

Trump is personally enthusiastic about Israel; while utterly ignorant and indifferent religiously, prone to publicly caricature Jews as money-bags (while approving them as such, and boasting of his Jewish family ties), he is aware of the emotional importance of Israel to many of his supporters. (He's also aware of anti-Semitic forces within his base; did he not refer to the neofascists who marched in Charlottesville in August 2017, holding torches and chanting, "Jews will not replace us!" as—at least some of them—"very fine people"?) One should not suppose his indignation at Omar's comments is anything other than opportunism, not rooted in genuine feelings for Jews or the Jewish state.

In any case, in attacking this diminutive, young brown Muslim Congresswoman in a headscarf, Trump spoke from a teleprompter. This was planned. He used words like "launch" and "screed" that are not part of his normal six-grade vocabulary, explaining the real reason he hates this woman so much: she's anti-Israel.

She "has a history of launching vicious anti-Semitic screeds!" Gosh. How awful. One can feel Trump's pain.

Trump thus indicates to his base that Americans—real Americans—are pro-Israel. This is national policy, so accept it, everyone! Ilhan's hostility towards Israel is thus hostility towards America, towards us. She's on the other side. The al-Qaeda side, if you will...

His vitriol works; the crowd wants her gone. How dare she criticize Israel in this Christian country that so graciously allowed her in, only to get repaid by her hatred!

"Send her back! Send her back! Send her back!" bellow even the angelic-looking children in the audience.

Those 13 seconds comprised perhaps the ugliest moment in the history of this hideous administration. But beautiful in its clarity! It showed Trump as a thorough thug, and his supporters as toxic zombies who would have been totally at home in a Nazi Bavarian beer

hall rally in 1933. It was however embarrassing in its Nazi-ness. Ivanka apparently urged her dad to back off, to check the political damage.

Trump has indeed attempted some damage control following those sick moments at his Nuremberg rally in North Carolina. So now he says he didn't agree with the chant, and stopped it by continuing his speech. This of course causes the networks to replay the tape endlessly to show how, once again, the White House is lying. Trump stood at the podium frowning and nodding for 13 seconds while his supporters chorused their hate.

But Trump doubles down on the four congresswomen (the "Squad") for their "vicious" attacks on "our country" and Israel (the two constituting a package). All I did, Trump is saying, is call them out for their hatred of our country and Israel. Why should any real American get upset?

Omar, Trump reminds us, said it "was all about the Benjamins" when it comes to U.S. support for Israel. (This is an illusion to a tweet Ilhan made in response to a query from Glenn Greenwald about U.S. support for Israel. "Benjamins" refers to the image of Benjamin Franklin on the \$100 bill.) "She should never have said that!" Donald sneers, posturing as the champion of world Jewry, hinting that her past statements will be punished.

How dare a Muslim Somali-American Muslim woman elected to the U.S. Congress suggest that money—filthy money—determines votes in Congress, and that the Israel Lobby has lots of Benjamins to throw around! Trump wants to stoke mass indignation at this, while asking the world to forgive his wild accusations, obvious lies, insufferable insults, and threats to annihilate whole countries.

It's sickening of course to watch a man so widely exposed as a racist, misogynist, and bigoted as Trump rail against a woman for criticizing Israel and U.S. support for Israel. And it's shameful that the mainstream media instead of problematizing Trump's accusations against Omar, leaves the viewer with the impression that while her rights need to be respected she must indeed have said some nasty things.

This could be a teaching moment, not about the way Trump uses demagoguery but about how the ruling class in this country tries to impose support for Israel (and indifference to the Palestinians) on the masses. How it tries to depict any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitic, with substantial success. (27 states have taken moves to discourage or

criminalize the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions [BDS] movement designed to pressure Israel to become a normal country and stop oppressing the Palestinian people.)

You don't see CNN's Jake Tapper asking what was wrong with any of Omar's tweets, what statements prompted Trump's broadside public attack. That's not worth asking about. The media simply notes that the four Congresswomen (the Squad) are on the left fringe of the Dems so maybe they and their views on foreign policy aren't that important anyway.

The story in the end is that Trump is engaged in divisive racial politics, the Squad women have said some objectionable things about Israel (that are rarely specified), and the Trump base is racist and bigoted. The only solution, the corporate media suggests, is the most moderate Democrat possible.

The media treatment of Omar has generally been kind; she is a victim of the president that CNN and MSNBC hate and so they have presented her in a positive light, showing heart-warming coverage of her Minnesota welcome home. (Footage of this infuriated Trump, who called the welcome "a tiny staged crowd," denying Omar's popularity.)

This is the moment to ask, and demand that the media ask: Why does Ilhan Omar criticize Israel, and why does her view of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which she understands far better than the moron-president, so upset Trump?

Trump's latest comment on Omar: "She's lucky to be where she is, let me tell you."

Like he's graciously allowing her to live. Like he's keeping his forces—chomping at the bit to smash the anti-Semites—under leash.

So lucky to be where she is—let me tell you!—, targeted by a serial rapist the whole world abhors for the sole crime of criticizing Israel. So lucky to look forward to another Trump disinformation campaign, not about birth this time but marriage.

The president has actually hinted that the Justice Department is looking into charges that Ilhan may have married her brother, as a method for him to acquire a green card. These charges are unfounded and malicious but have we not seen how Trump packages lies and fear to destroy his enemies?

“There’s a lot of talk about the fact that she was married to her brother. I know nothing about it. I hear she was married to her brother.”

He heard that, so it must be true. Expect more Trump vicious screeds against Omar.

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