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The Anti-Empire Report

by William Blum

May 2nd, 2012

What you need to succeed is sincerity, and if you can fake sincerity you've got it made. (Old Hollywood axiom)

"A few months ago I told the American people that I did not trade arms for hostages. My heart and my best intentions still tell me that is true, but the facts and evidence tell me it is not." —

President Ronald Reagan, 1987 1

On April 23, speaking at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, President Barack Obama told his assembled audience that as president "I've done my utmost ... to prevent and end atrocities".

Do the facts and evidence tell him that his words are not true?

Well, let's see ... There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Iraq by American forces under President Obama. There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Afghanistan by American forces under Obama. There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Pakistan by American forces under Obama. There's the multiple atrocities carried out in Libya by American/NATO forces under Obama. There are also the hundreds of American drone attacks against people and homes in Somalia and in Yemen (including against American citizens in the latter). Might the friends and families of these victims regard the murder of their loved ones and the loss of their homes as atrocities?

Ronald Reagan was pre-Alzheimer's when he uttered the above. What excuse can be made for Barack Obama?

The president then continued in the same fashion by saying: "We possess many tools ... and using these tools over the past three years, I believe — I know — that we have saved countless lives." Obama pointed out that this includes Libya, where the United States, in conjunction with NATO, took part in seven months of almost daily bombing missions. We may never learn from the new pro-NATO Libyan government how many the bombs killed, or the extent of the damage to homes and infrastructure. But the President of the United States assured his Holocaust Museum audience that "today, the Libyan people are forging their own future, and the world can take pride in the innocent lives that we saved." (As I described in last month's report, Libya could now qualify as a failed state.)

Language is an invention that makes it possible for a person to deny what he is doing even as he does it.

Mr. Obama closed with these stirring words; "It can be tempting to throw up our hands and resign ourselves to man's endless capacity for cruelty. It's tempting sometimes to believe that there is nothing we can do." But Barack Obama is not one of those doubters. He knows there is something he can do about man's endless capacity for cruelty. He can add to it. Greatly. And yet, I am certain that, with exceedingly few exceptions, those in his Holocaust audience left with no doubt that this was a man wholly deserving of his Nobel Peace Prize.

And future American history books may well certify the president's words as factual, his motivation sincere, for his talk indeed possessed the quality needed for schoolbooks.

The Israeli-American-Iranian-Holocaust-NobelPeacePrize Circus

It's a textbook case of how the American media is at its worst when it comes to US foreign policy and particularly when an Officially Designated Enemy (ODE) is involved. I've discussed this case several times in this report in recent years. The ODE is Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The accusation has been that he had threatened violence against Israel, based on his 2005 remark calling for "wiping Israel off the map". Who can count the number of times this has been repeated in every kind of media, in every country of the world, without questioning the accuracy of what was reported? A Lexis-Nexis search of "All News (English)" for <Iran and Israel and "off the map"> for the past seven years produced the message: "This search has been interrupted because it will return more than 3000 results."

As I've pointed out, Ahmadinejad's "threat of violence" was a serious misinterpretation, one piece of evidence being that the following year he declared: "The Zionist regime will be wiped out soon, the same way the Soviet Union was, and humanity will achieve freedom." 2 Obviously, he was not calling for any kind of violent attack upon Israel, for the dissolution of the Soviet Union took place remarkably peacefully. But the myth of course continued.

Now, finally, we have the following exchange from the radio-TV simulcast, Democracy Now!, of April 19:

A top Israeli official has acknowledged that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad never said that Iran seeks to "wipe Israel off the face of the map." The falsely translated statement has been widely attributed to Ahmadinejad and used repeatedly by U.S. and Israeli government officials to back military action and sanctions against Iran. But speaking to Teymoor Nabili of the network Al Jazeera, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor admitted Ahmadinejad had been misquoted.

Teymoor Nabili: "As we know, Ahmadinejad didn't say that he plans to exterminate Israel, nor did he say that Iran policy is to exterminate Israel. Ahmadinejad's position and Iran's position always has been, and they've made this — they've said this as many times as Ahmadinejad has criticized Israel, he has said as many times that he has no plans to attack Israel. ..."

Dan Meridor: "Well, I have to disagree, with all due respect. You speak of Ahmadinejad. I speak of Khamenei, Ahmadinejad, Rafsanjani, Shamkhani. I give the names of all these people. They all come, basically ideologically, religiously, with the statement that Israel is an unnatural creature, it will not survive. They didn't say, 'We'll wipe it out,' you're right. But 'It will not survive, it is a cancerous tumor that should be removed,' was said just two weeks ago again."

Teymoor Nabili: "Well, I'm glad you've acknowledged that they didn't say they will wipe it out."

So that's that. Right? Of course not. Fox News, NPR, CNN, NBC, et al. will likely continue to claim that Ahmadinejad threatened violence against Israel, threatened to "wipe it off the map".

And that's only Ahmadinejad the Israeli Killer. There's still Ahmadinejad the Holocaust Denier. So until a high Israeli official finally admits that that too is a lie, keep in mind that Ahmadinejad has never said simply, clearly, unambiguously, and unequivocally that he thinks that what we historically know as the Holocaust never happened. He has instead commented about the peculiarity and injustice of a Holocaust which took place in Europe resulting in a state for the Jews in the Middle East instead of in Europe. Why are the Palestinians paying a price for a German crime? he asks. And he has questioned the figure of six million Jews killed by Nazi Germany, as have many other people of various political stripes. In a speech at Columbia University on September 24, 2007, in reply to a question about the Holocaust, the Iranian president declared: "I'm not saying that it didn't happen at all. This is not the judgment that I'm passing here." 3

Let us now listen to Elie Wiesel, the simplistic, reactionary man who's built a career around being a Holocaust survivor, introducing President Obama at the Holocaust Museum for the talk referred to above, some five days after the statement made by the Israeli Deputy Prime Minister:

"How is it that the Holocaust's No. 1 denier, Ahmadinejad, is still a president? He who threatens to use nuclear weapons — to use nuclear weapons — to destroy the Jewish state. Have we not learned? We must. We must know that when evil has power, it is almost too late."

"Nuclear weapons" is of course adding a new myth on the back of the old myth.

Wiesel, like Obama, is a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. As is Henry Kissinger and Menachim

Begin. And several other such war-loving beauties. When will that monumental farce of a prize be put to sleep?

For the record, let it be noted that on March 4, speaking before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Obama said: "Let's begin with a basic truth that you all understand: No Israeli government can tolerate a nuclear weapon in the hands of a regime that denies the Holocaust, threatens to wipe Israel off the map, and sponsors terrorist groups committed to Israel's destruction." 4

Postscript: Each time I strongly criticize Barack Obama a few of my readers ask to unsubscribe. I'm really sorry to lose them but it's important that those on the left rid themselves of their attachment to the Democratic Party. I'm not certain how best to institute revolutionary change in the United States, but I do know that it will not happen through the Democratic Party, and the sooner those on the left cut their umbilical cord to the Democrats, the sooner we can start to get more serious about this thing called revolution.

Written on Earth Day, Sunday, April 22, 2012

Two simple suggestions as part of a plan to save the planet.

1. Population control: limit families to two children

All else being equal, a markedly reduced population count would have a markedly beneficial effect upon global warming, air pollution, and food and water availability; as well as finding a parking spot, getting a seat on the subway, getting on the flight you prefer, and much, much more. Some favor limiting families to one child. Still others, who spend a major part of each day digesting the awful news of the world, are calling for a limit of zero. (The Chinese government announced in 2008 that the country would have about 400 million more people if it wasn't for its limit of one or two children per couple. 5

But, within the environmental movement, there is still significant opposition to this. Part of the reason is fear of ethnic criticism inasmuch as population programs have traditionally been aimed at — or seen to be aimed at — primarily the poor, the weak, and various "outsiders". There is also the fear of the religious right and its medieval views on birth control.

2. Eliminate the greatest consumer of energy in the world: The United States military.

Here's Michael Klare, professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College, Mass. in 2007:

Sixteen gallons of oil. That's how much the average American soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan consumes on a daily basis — either directly, through the use of Humvees, tanks, trucks, and helicopters, or indirectly, by calling in air strikes. Multiply this figure by 162,000 soldiers in Iraq, 24,000 in Afghanistan, and 30,000 in the surrounding region (including sailors aboard U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf) and you arrive at approximately 3.5 million gallons of oil: the daily petroleum tab for U.S. combat operations in the Middle East war zone. Multiply that daily tab by

365 and you get 1.3 billion gallons: the estimated annual oil expenditure for U.S. combat operations in Southwest Asia. That's greater than the total annual oil usage of Bangladesh, population 150 million — and yet it's a gross underestimate of the Pentagon's wartime consumption. 6

The United States military, for decades, with its legion of bases and its numerous wars has also produced and left behind a deadly toxic legacy. From the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam in the 1960s to the open-air burn pits on US bases in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 21st century, countless local people have been sickened and killed; and in between those two periods we could read things such as this from a lengthy article on the subject in the Los Angeles Times in 1990:

U.S. military installations have polluted the drinking water of the Pacific island of Guam, poured tons of toxic chemicals into Subic Bay in the Philippines, leaked carcinogens into the water source of a German spa, spewed tons of sulfurous coal smoke into the skies of Central Europe and pumped millions of gallons of raw sewage into the oceans. 7

The military has caused similar harm to the environment in the United States at a number of its installations. (Do a Google search for <"U.S. military bases" toxic>)

When I suggest eliminating the military I am usually rebuked for leaving "a defenseless America open to foreign military invasion". And I usually reply:

"Tell me who would invade us? Which country?"

"What do you mean which country? It could be any country."

"So then it should be easy to name one."

"Okay, any of the 200 members of the United Nations!"

"No, I'd like you to name a specific country that you think would invade the United States. Name just one."

"Okay, Paraguay. You happy now?"

"No, you have to tell me why Paraguay would invade the United States."

"How would I know?"

Etc., etc., and if this charming dialogue continues, I ask the person to tell me how many troops the invading country would have to have to occupy a country of more than 300 million people.

Yankee karma

The questions concerning immigration into the United States from south of the border go on year after year, with the same issues argued back and forth: What's the best way to block the flow into

the country? How shall we punish those caught here illegally? Should we separate families, which happens when parents are deported but their American-born children remain? Should the police and various other institutions have the right to ask for proof of legal residence from anyone they suspect of being here illegally? Should we punish employers who hire illegal immigrants? Should we grant amnesty to at least some of the immigrants already here for years? ... on and on, round and round it goes, for decades. Every once in a while someone opposed to immigration will make it a point to declare that the United States does not have any moral obligation to take in these Latino immigrants.

But the counter-argument to the last is almost never mentioned: Yes, the United States does have a moral obligation because so many of the immigrants are escaping situations in their homelands made hopeless by American interventions and policy. In Guatemala and Nicaragua Washington overthrew progressive governments which were sincerely committed to fighting poverty. In El Salvador the US played a major role in suppressing a movement striving to install such a government, and to a lesser extent played such a role in Honduras. And in Mexico, although Washington has not intervened militarily in Mexico since 1919, over the years the US has been providing training, arms, and surveillance technology to Mexico's police and armed forces to better their ability to suppress their own people's aspirations, as in Chiapas, and this has added to the influx of the impoverished to the United States. Moreover, Washington's North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has brought a flood of cheap, subsidized US agricultural products into Mexico and driven many Mexican farmers off the land.

The end result of all these policies has been an army of migrants heading north in search of a better life. It's not that these people prefer to live in the United States. They'd much rather remain with their families and friends, be able to speak their native language at all times, and avoid the hardships imposed on them by American police and right-wingers.

Notes

Washington Post, March 5, 1987 ↩

Associated Press, December 12, 2006 ↩

President Ahmadinejad Delivers Remarks at Columbia University, Transcript, Washington Post, September 24, 2007 ↩

Remarks by the President at AIPAC Policy Conference, White House Office of the Press Secretary, March 4, 2012↩

Washington Post, March 3, 2008 ↩

The Pentagon v. Peak Oil, TomDispatch.com, June 14, 2007 ↩

Los Angeles Times, June 18, 1990 ↩