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Israel's Reversion to Old Colonial Tactics

The Demonization of Gaza

by JAMES ABOUREZK

8/5/2014

It is amazing how quickly Israel has learned the elements of colonial staying power. It is even more amazing how the American media has taken up the cause of racism against the Palestinians.

We can start with how the Israelis, and their lobby headquartered in Washington, have managed to demonize Palestinians, with the result that Israel can undertake a massive slaughter and be barely criticized for it both by our media. We can begin with Israel's request to the US government a couple of decades ago to label Hamas as a "Terrorist Group," which our government happily agreed to do. Other people in other parts of the world have tried this tactic, with some success, but for the most part such rebels are labeled "insurgents."

Demonization of those you occupy is an essential first step to allow a colonial power to do what it wishes with the people being occupied. How else can one explain the lack of meaningful protests by Americans, who have furnished the money and the weapons to the maiming and the slaughter by Israel of thousands of Palestinians in the many wars its Army has conducted against the Palestinians.

It is useful to look back at our own colonial experience to understand what our government is doing to abet this slaughter of innocents.

Our government, back in the early days of our country, made it a point to come to the aid of settlers who wanted to steal land from American Indians. The government would send soldiers to any area where Indians fought against the settlers. In fact, the Wounded Knee massacre came about when President Harrison, in 1889, sent troops to South Dakota to “protect” white settlers from Ghost Dancing Indians. The government assisted in the scare tactics that had already been used by certain merchants and others by sending more soldiers to our State to calm the fears of white settlers who believed ghost dancers were a major threat to them. The Republican party was intent on electing two US Senators from South Dakota, so the fears of Indian massacres became an effective tool for the Republican Party to make that come about.

The extra soldiers then set about hunting down Indians who the army believed were ghost dancing and ultimately “threatening” the lives of white settlers. The troops ordered to gather up Chief Big Foot’s band of Minneconjou Sioux, who were on a mission to Pine Ridge to offer help to the Oglalas based there. A devastating mistake while trying to disarm the Indians resulted in a massacre of nearly all of Big Foot’s band at a small village called Wounded Knee, the last massacre of Indians in the state’s history.

Lewis Lapham, interviewed by Bloomberg News, said, in January of this year, that following the Wounded Knee Massacre, General Miles investigated the shooting. In response to allegations that it was a massacre, soldiers came to the defense of the commander of the unit that had been in charge of guarding the Indians, Col. James Forsyth, saying “they couldn’t tell the men from the women since all were wearing blankets, and that in any case, “A Sioux squaw is as an enemy as a man.”

When the investigation report was sent to the Secretary of War, General John Schofield, who was commander of the Army, attached a note saying the troops had clearly bent over backwards to avoid killing women and children, while also denying that any troops had died in friendly fire.

The final report exonerated the US soldiers and blamed the massacre on the Sioux themselves, with many of the dead women and children supposedly killed by other Indians.

I have been watching Mark Regev, Netanyahu’s spokesman, tell lies for the last three weeks, saying Hamas is the culprit shelling the hospitals and civilians gathered at markets, buying food.

But the demonization of the Indians in general and ghost dancers in particular enabled the Army to do what they did, much as Israel is demonizing Palestinians today, seeking to characterize Hamas as the cause of the fighting, and the culprit in the destruction of institutions and of countless numbers of women and children.

The demonization has been so effective, assisted by our media, that no media person, and certainly no national politician, has hardly raised an eyebrow at the mass slaughter of Palestinians by Israel during the Gaza campaign. At the time of this writing Israel has deliberately shelled and bombed Palestinian hospitals, UN shelters where Palestinians run to

what they believe is a safe haven. The photos we see of Gaza cities on television show nothing more than a huge pile of rubble. It is not clear where those Palestinians will live after Israel has finished its dirty work and leaves Gaza.

It is all part of Israel's strategy of bombing Gaza's Palestinians into submission—to show them who is boss, and to prevent any Palestinian from raising his or her hand in protest of the eight year blockade of the strip. Not even the most greedy and cruel Israelis believe they can kill all the Gazans, so they must satisfy themselves that it is necessary to control them. There is no thought of ending the occupation. That is the lesson the Israeli government has learned from other colonial powers around the world. The other lesson, that of the Warsaw Ghetto, quite obviously has been forgotten, except for that part that has shown Israel how to control those they occupy.

We have to be doubly sad by watching our President, Barack Obama, who should know better, continue to send weapons, ammunition and money to Israel during this time of mass bloodshed on Israel's part.