The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

Palestinan Return Centre

http://www.prc.org.uk/portal/index.php/publications/books/93-the-ethnic-cleansing-of-palestine

Reading about the ethnic cleansing of Palestine from this work is intense and relentless. Geoff Simons' look at the problem in Palestine of the Israeli onslaught against the indigenous population keeps coming at the reader, insistently, imperatively, and almost overwhelming to the point of exhaustion.

Story after story, anecdote after anecdote, irrefutable evidence ongoing with excellent source information from personal diaries of those involved on both sides, government records, and NGO records all contribute to this seemingly never-ending compendium of information. As a reader I ran through a full range of emotions: anger, frustration, hopelessness, rage, sadness, and the unsettling sense in both mind and heart that the cause of these feelings is the brutality and savageness of a society that is - that has - descended into a state of blind immorality.

For all the wonderful words about ‘peace' and ‘democracy' and ‘human rights' and ‘advancement', the actions of the Israelis speak hundreds, thousands of times stronger about terror, murder, massacres, torture, racism, genocide - about the removal of a people from their indigenous land. From the early 19th Century statements about the need to displace Arabs, supported by biblical quotations and interpretations that the difference in the souls of non-Jews are different than those of the Jews is "deeper than the difference between a human soul and the souls of cattle" (although this is a 20th Century reference); that the "souls of non-Jews come entirely from the female satanic sphere...created without [divine] knowledge...an earthly embodiment of Satan;" to the modern development of genetically engineered chemical warfare, searching for a particular ‘Arab' gene (but unfortunately for the Israelis the Palestinians are also a Semitic people): Zionists have consistently displayed a full contempt and racist hatred of the ‘other' that translates into the murder and maiming of children, the constant harassment and torture of the Palestinians, the constant drive to confiscate land by many means - the military, the wall, settlements - and the virtual imprisonment of a whole population in prison-based Bantustans in which the occupants have absolutely no rights.

From these religious rationalizations, from the self-serving belief that they are god's chosen people, the "bland assumption of a divine promise ‘breeds an arrogance which institutionalizes the inferiority of other peoples and generates atrocities against them with alarming regularity." Regular they are. Even before the Jewish people suffered their own holocaust, before they had started emigrating, they were working on the ethnic cleansing of Palestine. In 1895 Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism said, "the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly." Discretion is certainly not in the current Israeli repertoire, as backed by the American empire's power, the actions taken are blatantly obvious and criminal. The old propaganda idea of "a land without people for a people without land" also started early but Palestine in the 1880s "had a population density significantly higher than in Syria, the Lebanon and Asiatic Turkey." The early Jewish settlers knew this but as a more ‘civilized' race, they "embodied a chauvinistic nationalism of racial superiority and imperialistic ambition." The records that Simons accesses indicate that "the doctrine of ethnic cleansing has been central to Zionist thinking since the end of the 19th Century....the doctrine received substantial British and other international approval."

The first part of Simons work provides this overview of the policy of expulsion, of ethnic cleansing base on racist and prophetic beliefs, supported at first by the British, but not long afterwards by the Americans. There is a daunting supply of references, most drawn from Jewish sources, to indicate that ethnic cleansing by coercion or force is a "persistent doctrine" within the Jewish state.

He continues with a look at the concept of terrorism and how it has been applied by the Jewish state, recognizing that "while terrorism in the modern world is of concern in Jewish discourse....There is a violent tradition in Judaism, as there is in Islam and Christianity." Terror against the Palestinian ‘other' is supported by Gush Emunim, a messianic school, that delivers rationalizations such that a Jew who kills non-Jews "has not violated the [religious] prohibition against murder," and for Arabs who throw stones, the death penalty is "not only permitted but mandatory" and even the intent is enough to penalize. This of course can be seen in extension in the disproportionate military responses to Palestinian actions, including the recent Hezbollah attacks, and the combined American-Israeli pre-emptive attitude towards perceived threats and ‘intent'. As for regrets for Israeli massacres both past and present, the Gush Emunim leader said, "I am sorry not only for dead Arabs but also about dead flies."

Jewish terror started with the Haganah against the British, with attacks on infrastructure, with murder and kidnappings. These territorial ambitions through terror "have been well documented," and through the pursuit of war, "terrorism would reach its zenith and ethnic cleansing [could] be prosecuted on a massive scale," explaining in part the perpetual state of war that Israel creates for itself by denying very basic human rights to the Palestinians in defiance of not just human decency but international law. The occupation of the Westbank and Gaza after 1967 brought in a new phase of terrorism and ethnic cleansing. Deportations, especially of societal leaders, became a major component of these actions. Infrastructure destruction continued. Land confiscation under various ruses or outright force continued. Messianic fundamentalists, the core of the settlement policy, seriously aggravated all other actions. There are recognized and verified Jewish terrorist groups and while "the Israeli state has never had a monopoly on....terror...it would be a grave error to deny the historical efficacy of terrorism in furthering Jewish ambitions."

Simons continues with a look at the militarised state that Israel has created, defined by the large purchase of weapons from other countries, the provisioning of a well armed and well trained army, a highly technological arms industry aided by various other states including France, Britain, the U.S., and South Africa, the acquisition and use of chemical weapons and nerve gases, the denial of international treaties banning the latter, nuclear weapons, increasing American complicity and ongoing direct support. From his discussion on the Israeli use of terror and its massive military infrastructure, Simons says, "Until the character of the Israeli military state and its underlying philosophy are properly understood, there will be no route to peace and justice in the Middle East."

Unfortunately, with the immense support of the American empire and its military, economic, political and religious back up, Israel will not surrender what has become for it a slow but successful destruction of the Palestinian people. They exist at the moment in a state of terror, enduring ongoing physical and psychological torture, trapped in a series of open-air prisons, fully denied any human rights. The ongoing actions of the terror war in Israel are created to excuse any pretence of looking for a peaceful solution to the situation.

The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine should serve as an indictment against the Israeli state and the American state that is in a symbiotic relationship with it. This is not a philosophical work as its thesis and summaries are short and succinct, massively supported from a wide variety of sources. It should create outrage at the whole Israeli enterprise of eliminating the Palestinians from their homeland. All the guns, tanks, helicopters, jets, fancy bullets, missiles, and other accoutrements of war do not represent a superior society or people, but one degraded by an immoral militarism to a state of blind obedience to a warped prophetic philosophy and a state of savage primitive cruelty to others.

Geoff Simons‘ work is an enormous contribution to the knowledge base about the actions perpetrated upon the Palestinian people by the Jewish state. The unanswered question is who will hold them responsible for their actions? When two of the largest military powers in the world deny the usefulness of the UN, deny the testament of many, many other countries who have signed various treaties denouncing warfare, terror, chemical, biological and nuclear weapons and deny the notion that international courts can serve any proper function, then who can hold them responsible? I wonder, too, where human compassion has gone in the United States, in Canada (the first to cut off aid to the Palestinians when Hamas won the election), in Britain? No one who has not lived and suffered under conditions as they present themselves in Palestine can truly comprehend the severity and ugliness of life in the occupied land. That compassion, that sense of sharing human emotions, needs to be expressed through local political action, through education, through the awareness of what is happening in the name of violent prophets - and profits. The course of action is much slower than the speed with which military actions can destroy much good, but if the political and moral landscapes can be changed, then in the long perspective, much good can be achieved.

-Jim Miles is a Canadian educator and a regular contributor of opinion pieces and book reviews to Palestine Chronicles. His interest in this topic stems originally from an environmental perspective, which encompasses the militarization and economic subjugation of the global community and its commodification by corporate governance and by the American government.

Book Review: The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine. By Jim Miles The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine. Geoff Simons. London: The Palestinian Return Center. 2006.