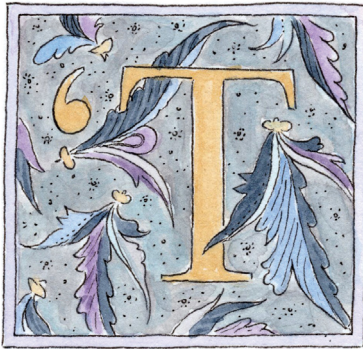


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# Western Guilt

*The beleaguered State of Israel has become the scapegoat that must bear the sins of the West—imperialism, colonialism, and oppression*



HE GERMANS will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz,” runs a bizarre quip ascribed to the Israeli psychiatrist Zvi Rex. To deconstruct it, consult Dr. Freud. “A convenient way to dispatch guilt,” he might expound, “is to project it onto your victim”—like a schoolyard bully who

huffs that the fight started when the other guy hit back.

Guilt-swapping is precisely what Hamas’s cheerleaders around the world did even before Israel struck back after October 7. Hamas had tortured, raped, and murdered 1,200 Israelis. Instead of condolences, Israel reaped a global orgy of antisemitism, be it masked or overt, that also engulfed Jews everywhere, especially university students (demonstrating that higher education is no antidote for frenzy). It was a perfect reversal of cause and effect.

To plumb the Freudian mechanism, go back to postwar Germany, whose Nazi precursor had committed the crime of all crimes. After total defeat and “reeducation,” antisemitism was out. Democracy

established strong roots, and philosemitism became the creed of the land. The government paid billions in restitution to the survivors of the Holocaust and the young state of Israel. At Yad Vashem, German officials from the president down would bow their head to the 6 million dead. The arms trade flourished; German-made U-boats are now one leg of Israel's nuclear triad.

Yet the moral burden stuck, and so *Schuldabwehr*—“repelling guilt”—crept into contrition and atonement. By the first intifada, in 1987, Germans were telling themselves: “Israel is doing to the Palestinians what we did to the Jews.” “They are conducting a *Ver-nichtungskrieg*”—Nazispeak for a war of annihilation. “Gaza is like the Warsaw Ghetto.” “Haven't the Jews learned from the past?” Auschwitz, then, was a kind of reform school.

Freud might muse: “Such parallels betray projection. Culpability continued to chafe, and, eventually, Germans sought relief by shifting it onto the victims.” Steeped in the Torah, Freud would add: “Three thousand years before I set up my couch, the Jews invented the scapegoat in Leviticus who ‘shall bear all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.’” But he would explain: “Such displacement, as I call it, spelled vast moral progress — no more human sacrifice to appease the Gods.”



There is no such advance in our days as we run through the third iteration of Jew-hatred.

The first chapter was written by Christianity. Jews were charged with killing God's son, desecrating the Host, and committing ritual murder. A bitter Jewish joke makes the point. When a little girl was killed just before Passover, the shtetl's Jews cowered in the shul awaiting an imminent massacre. Suddenly, the rabbi barges in, jubilant-

ing, “I have wonderful news. The girl was not Christian, but Jewish.”

The second chapter was authored by Hitler, who went from faith to race, fingering Jews as cosmic enemies of Germany and the world. Once, Jews poisoned the wells; now it is the bloodstream of the Aryans. They had to be quashed like super-deadly bugs.

Chapter 3 unfolds as we speak. “From the river to the sea,” a classic Palestinian refrain, sounds like a geographic reference, but its thrust is ethnic cleansing and extinction. Chanting this mantra, the crowds on Western campuses and squares haven’t read the 1988 charter of its leading exponent, Hamas, which in the name of Allah orders Muslims to kill Jews wherever they hide. Nor do the infuriated know the venom continually oozing from the language of Hamas, Hezbollah, and Tehran. “Israel remains a foreign body,” thundered Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah years ago, as if cribbing from *Mein Kampf*. Before the International Criminal Court, Israel stands accused of Nazi-like “genocide.” Hamas official Ghazi Hamad: “We must remove that country, because it constitutes a . . . catastrophe for the Arab and Islamic nation.” As for the October 7 massacre, we will do it “again and again.” And “everything is justified.”

Prefaced by the 1975 UN General Assembly “Zionism is racism” resolution, the new chapter lays out the rage across the West. A picture, they say, is worth a thousand words. So behold a poster held up at a rally outside the CUNY chancellor’s office on December 5, 2023. It screams: “Call It What It Is: Genocide, Occupation, Imperialism, White Supremacy, Ethnic Cleansing!” It condenses a standard litany into 12 words. Apropos of “genocide”: How did the 750,000 Palestinians fleeing the 1948 Arab–Israel war grow into 5.3 millions today?



These privileged alumni and undereducated students were spewing

what they had learned in school for a generation before October 7. The short take: The West is the root of all evil, and racist Israel is its spearhead.

Back in the classroom, students had been taught a hoary amalgam of 20th-century German critical theory and French deconstructionism, spruced up by American critical race theory. Taught from Stockton, Calif., to Stockholm, Sweden, the doctrine has at its core white supremacy, which must be crushed. The gist is Western guilt, and it must be exorcised by laying it first and foremost on the colonialist state of Israel, i.e., the Jews.

This is history as agenda. Yet imperialism is as old as mankind, not a matter of pigmentation or faith. The chariot preceded the tank, and the scimitar the machine gun. Here is a short list of history's neglected culprits: Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia in antiquity, conquerors all. The Arabs grabbed North Africa and Iberia. The Mongols built a murderous empire ranging from the Danube to the Pacific. The Aztec version antedates Spain's conquistadors. China ruled Vietnam for a thousand years. The Turks oppressed the Arabs (who practiced the same faith) for 400 years, bringing down a towering culture that ranged from Baghdad to Alexandria.

The West got into the act only in the 16th century. Since then, it has had a lot to atone for. How to expiate these sins, which are not the White Man's monopoly? It cannot be done by expelling him from the Americas and Oceania by the tens of million. But Israel makes for a nice whipping boy. As to the United States, give back the Southwest to Mexico, including progressive Hollywood? God forbid! Depopulate woke Portland and Seattle where Native Americans once roamed? That would be "ethnic self-cleansing," wouldn't it? When thought through, such is the gruesome logic of rehabilitation with its unbearable price.

Real absolution would entail a *mea maxima culpa* and astronomic amends. It is a thousand times more economical to heap guilt on a

handy scapegoat. This is a faraway small country peopled by the heirs of those slaughtered in the Holocaust and driven from their ancestral homes in the Islamic world. By “redirection,” a Freudian defense mechanism, progressives can keep what their ancestors took — dare we say “colonized?” — and still shine forth as chastened sinners.



Where slavery and Jim Crow once ruled, penance now comes with bargain-basement price tags. Topple Columbus and Jefferson statues. Adorn university buildings with plaques ruefully commemorating the expropriation of the Indigenous. Blot out the name of racist Woodrow Wilson at Princeton’s School of Public and International Affairs. Ban native garb from Halloween parties. Rewrite American classics such as *Huckleberry Finn*. Pursue affirmative action, which discriminates against high-performing Asian Americans for being white-adjacent. In class, sort by race and make the “oppressors” fess up to their “privilege.” If they don’t, an army of DEI bureaucrats will set them straight.

Dr. Freud would spear ersatz contrition on the cheap. For an illustration, let’s steer him to the current course catalogue of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Search for “colonialism“ with prefixes such as “neo-” and “post-,” plus such neologisms as “decoloniality.” That yields three-score hits, not counting the professional schools. Then multiply by a thousand lesser institutions, which tout indoctrination as scholarship. For a typical example, see the University of Washington, where students are exhorted to learn about “racism, imperialism, and settler colonialism.”



So much for the agitprop. Now to the real thing. The Middle East

game is not about truth, but power, and hence from the darkened halls of academia to realpolitik. Previous generations of the Enlightened might be forgiven for extolling the totalitarians of the 20th century, communist and fascist. Think Jean-Paul Sartre or George Bernard Shaw. But present-day intellectuals and pundits, who have seen the consequences, should know better. They denounce Israel as racist colonizer and paint Harvard's defrocked president Claudine Gay as a victim of Jewish money and Republican machinations. They do not fathom the real stakes.

Hamas knew that mass murder would bring down dreadful retaliation — indeed, they *wanted* it. Not to worry. Gazan dead were worth a hundred times more on the world's screens than slain Israelis. Gaza's dead would bring down the world's wrath on the "Zionist entity" and soon haul in billions meant for Gaza's reconstruction, but destined for tunnels and rockets. The more corpses, the better. "We are proud to sacrifice martyrs," Hamas politburo member Ghazi Hamad trumpeted.

Keep dissecting the strategic calculus. Hezbollah in the north and Houthis way down south would open up two more fronts — as they did. The third front is the West Bank, where Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad mastermind the violence. Farther afield, dismantle the Abraham Accords, designed to broaden Israel's peace with Arab states.

*Cui bono?* the Romans asked. It is Iran. Pursuing cold-eyed interest, these saintly revolutionaries have trained and equipped their surrogates in Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen. The real mark is the United States, the region's guardian and Israel's only ally of weight. Target the "Little Satan" to avoid direct confrontation with the superpower "Great Satan." That story is too complicated to be taught in U.S. humanities and social science departments — and in European schools as well. Far worse, it would demolish the postcolonialist narrative of exclusive Western and Israeli guilt.

So what looks like a morality play is like *Richard III* or *Macbeth*:

a deadly drama about power, ambition, and greed. Israel and Jewish billionaires star on the new stage. Yet this is but chapter 3 in the annals of anti-Judaism, with Israel and Jewish students serving as targets of guilt projection.



Israel is not blameless, as states never are. Nasties like Security Minister Ben-Gvir despise what is best in the Jewish tradition, which teaches to “love thy neighbor,” as copy-catted by Christianity. So Gvir proposes ethnic cleansing: Out with the Gazans, in with Israeli settlers! That is just one disheartening example among many. They do not make Israel “a light unto the nations.”

Yet when everything is tallied, a moral chasm continues to yawn. Israel does not deliberately kill civilians serving as human shields, which is proscribed by the Geneva Conventions. Nor does the IDF mutilate women. Hamas celebrates such mayhem. The SS hid mass murder in faraway Eastern Europe, demolishing the gas chambers before they retreated. Hamas broadcast slaughter and rape for the world to see.

Still, it is not Hamas that must defend itself against the charge of genocide before the International Criminal Court. Accordingly, the IDF is far worse than the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, as the pandemic of Jew-bashing illustrates. How come? Cynically put, the moral capital generated by million-fold slaughter in the Shoah has been used up. It was only two parts compassion and eight parts guilt from the start.

Now, total culpability has shifted to yesteryear’s victims. For all the hand-wringing, do not ignore a reassuring difference between then and now. Israel can fight and win against Hamas and its enablers and obliterate Iran. But the downside is not pretty. Israel is now the Universal Jew. *Plus ça change.* \*