

Latin-American Terror

The Israeli Connection

Primitivo Solis (David Watson)

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When the founder of organized zionism, Theodore Herzl, proposed to create a European Jewish state in the Middle East as “an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism,” he was acting within a western tradition. It is possible that this tradition has its roots in the rise of the ancient middle eastern civilizations, but it certainly becomes predominant with the rise of capitalism and its expansion first into the heaths of Europe (where “heathens” lived who had to be conquered, christianized and civilized by the developing state powers across the continent) and later to all the continents of the world where these civilized men—explorers, missionaries, marauders, and colonizers—spread their empire.

The enterprise which all of these pyramid builders undertook was and is nothing less than a war upon the wilderness: the conquest of nature and the subjugation of all the “savage” peoples, the proper ordering and quantification of the universe, the victory of production over idleness, the construction of the Perfect State. The attitude of the westerners is always the same, no matter where they find themselves, in the lushest forest or the most arid desert. It is all “wasteland” to be subdued, dominated, transformed into energy and commodities. The Jewish colonists—themselves once among the little tribes slated for extermination by the robot mass men of capitalism—once embarked upon the project, embraced all of its attributes. For the zionist settlers, Palestine—in their mythology a “land without people for a people without land”—was the wasteland and the wilderness to be conquered, and the inhabitants would have to submit, go elsewhere or be pushed aside and killed. The dream demanded it, just as it demanded it of the Spaniards, the Puritans, the Afrikaaners.

In a revealing little essay which introduces the book *Masters of the Desert* (1961) by Yaakov Morris, David Ben Gurion reflects the spirit of this civilization in his discussion of the Negev Desert.

“The reclamation of the Negev Desert,” he writes, “has more than local interest, vital as that interest may be, to the State of Israel itself. Here, man is faced with a fateful and momentous challenge of nature. To conquer the wastelands, all his will and devotion, labor and energy, time-tested as well as newly invented techniques of science, will have to be employed. The experience so far gained in this battle against aridity, in the search for new sources of water and power, and new techniques of human settlement, not to mention the experiences which will undoubtedly be acquired in the future, give to the Negev a universal value. The Negev, in short, is in many respects a small and modest pilot plant in mankind’s over-all battle against the desert regions anywhere.”

Not only does Ben Gurion repeat the rhetoric of the early settlers upon this continent, he repeats the formula for his success by drawing a portrait of capital itself: “The contemporary civilization advancing into the Negev embodies many of the characteristics of those which have appeared in the past. It is based as they were upon a combination of agriculture, industry, mining and international trade, the settlement of large units of population, the combination of settlement and defense. The heritage of the past is her-e being enriched with the conquests of modern science and technology.”

But, the project of Israeli capital—successful settlement and economic development—cannot be achieved “without the transformation of the facts of nature,” he observes. “Science and pioneering will enable us to perform

this miracle." All of the elements are present: science and technology, industrialism and trade, urbanism, defense, all summed up in one word: pioneering. Of course the battle of the pioneer against the wilderness is also a struggle against the human fauna which is inevitably present there, and here too, the Israeli model follows the general rule.

Ben Gurion's plan is in operation today—the Negev is being developed at a rapid pace, and a veritable war has been unleashed against its inhabitants, Bedouin tribespeople who have resided there for millennia. In 1977, under the Labor Party government, the Ministry of Agriculture established the Green Patrol ostensibly to protect the desert from the mistreatment it received at the hands of the people who had wandered it for thousands of years. But security is also a major motive of the Israeli government, which has moved Air Force and Army bases into the region.

According to David K. Shipler of the *New York Times*, "The Green Patrol has launched a silent war of attrition against the Bedouins, swooping down on their encampments in jeeps, firing guns into the air to frighten children, shooting their herding dogs, ripping down their tents, trucking their flocks of goats away to slaughter and forcing the tribes off their ancestral lands into closed zones akin to Indian reservations." Clinton Bailey, an Israeli scholar who studies the Bedouins, told Shipler that some 15,000 of the Negev's 40,000 Bedouins have been resettled on two large tracts of land near Beersheba. Israeli government officials refused to discuss the Green Patrol.

It is not surprising, then, that Israel claims as its allies other reactionary states, such as South Africa, which are engaged in similar crusades against native peoples. One little-known link, however, is the Israeli connection in Latin America. According to a bulletin of the Emergency Response International Network which publishes information and appeals on native and original peoples under attack, Israel is now the third largest supplier of arms to Latin American regimes, behind the U.S. and West Germany. "More than 20 Israeli arms merchants are stationed in Central and South America," they write in the July 9, 1982 bulletin, "or one third of Israel's weapons industry's overseas staff." Customers include El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Haiti, and generate two billion dollars annually.

Israeli aid to Guatemala and El Salvador, countries whose rulers are waging an open war of extermination against Indian and mestizo campesinos, has been particularly extensive. According to the International Institute for the Investigation of Peace, Israel until recently has been the sole provider of weapons to Guatemala since 1976. These weapons include

Arava planes, piloted and maintained by Israeli pilots and technicians; light artillery weapons, including mortars, bazookas and grenade launchers; Galil rifles, for which the U.S. supplied five million cartridges; a tactical communications system; and at the end of 1980, a radar system, installed and controlled by Israeli technicians. According to a recently published four-part booklet on Guatemala edited by Rarihokwats for Four Arrows, *Guatemala! The Horror and the Hope*, Israel also trains the El Salvadoran "ORDEN" death squads on a site in Guatemala.

Israel has also been providing the Guatemalan military with training in political terrorism and counterinsurgency, intelligence and psychological warfare. But by helping the Guatemalan dictatorship to set up a computerized "Regional Telecommunications Center" which is managed by Israeli technicians, the Israeli state has provided the Guatemalan death squads with one of their most formidable weapons. As the Four Arrows booklet explains, "Death lists are drawn up using information from military and police intelligence archives, from trade union files in the Ministry of Labor, and from a businessmen's association which provided names of campesino leaders. All this has now been computerized."

In November of 1981, at the opening of the Army Electronics and Transmission School, General Benedicto Lucas Garcia thanked Israel for its assistance in this advancement made in Guatemalan technology, and Israeli ambassador Moshe Dayan (no relation) replied that "Israel considers Guatemala one of its best friends." Since the late 1960s, twenty to thirty thousand people have been murdered by Guatemalan death squads and military forces, which continue to assassinate approximately a thousand people a month. According to a report published in August by the Detroit Free Press, since last April, the Guatemalan Army has burned at least 35 to 50 communities and sent more than 10,000 Indians and campesinos fleeing into Mexico from the border region. A Central American human rights group declared, "Israel continues to denounce the Nazi genocide of the Second World War, and still, 35 years later, chases Nazis all over the world. But it has no shame whatsoever to cooperate in the genocide of Cen-

tral American campesinos. Now we have the victims of fascism of 1930 through 1945 collaborating with the fascists of 1970 through 1980.” (cited by the Four Arrows pamphlet)

But Israel’s friendships with Central American dictators date back to its inception. When Menachem Begin was criticized for selling arms to the tottering Somoza government before its collapse, he replied, “We have a debt of gratitude with Somoza.” He was referring to an agreement made by the Israeli state in 1948 with Somoza, who for the sum of \$200,000 arranged to have Yehuda Arazi (a member of the Zionist clandestine army, the Haganah) named Extraordinary Ambassador of Nicaragua in Europe, where he then could buy up arms in the name of that government which would not have been sold to Israel. Later, Israel repaid its debt by selling arms to the unpopular regime when it was totally isolated in world opinion.

Some may argue that the vision of the Zionist settlers to carve a modern technological civilization out of the Levantine desert has little or nothing to do with the monstrous ferocity of the “uncivilized” backwater satrapies of Central America. After all, nation states grow older and more pragmatic, and in a world dominated by production and exchange, business is business. But there is a direct link between the idealistic rhetoric of Ben Gurion and the gratuitous crimes of the modern Caligulas. There is an intimate relationship between the slogans of civilization, its thirst for new sources of power, its search for the most advanced techniques of science, and the beheadings, the babes bayoneted in their mothers’ arms, the burning villages, the mass graves, and the “interrogations.” The slogans whitewash the actual crimes with the logic of historical necessity, the scientific methods pinpoint the enemies with increasing efficiency and tally the head-counts more rapidly, and the pioneering spirit strengthens the resolve to continue when even the original purpose seems absurd in the face of interminable massacres.

The methods, once considered to be an unfortunate interlude in humanity’s advance, have become the aim and the final identity of civilization. The project is the same everywhere: the conquest of empires, the domination of nature, and the slaughter of indigenous peoples and creatures. And because civilization is a leveling and obliteration of all diversity, the victims all begin to look the same, as do the perpetrators. The heaps of bloated bodies could be at Wounded Knee, or in Huehuetenango, or My Lai, or at Shatilla and Sabra, or Babii Yar. The victims are “savages,” or “orientals,” or “subhumans,” or simply “refugees.” And scientific progress has not resolved this agony, it has not furnished the promised synthesis. It has perfected the terror, rationalized the procedures of the Green Patrols.

Civilization is a bloody sword, but someone must wield it, even as others sit in warm houses before well-laden tables listening to music and mouthing its platitudes. Its agents are the colonists and the conquerors, the technicians and the mercenaries, the death squads unleashed with money from Washington and electronic equipment from Tel Aviv, and marching orders from some Sharon, or Reagan, or Rios Montt: Kill them all, there is no difference between villager and “terrorist,” even the children are the Enemy. Destroy this forest and these people. You were once one of them, but now you have a uniform, you are the New Man.

Ben Gurion said in his essay, “If the State does not put an end to the desert, the desert is liable to put an end to the State.” But this State devours itself. Its desperation portends its approaching collapse. Can the wilderness prevail?

(Guatemala! The Horror and the Hope is produced by Four Arrows, a communications group of indigenous people of the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Guatemala, and is available for \$6.00 from P.O. Box 3233, York PA 17402. The Emergency Response International Network can be contacted c/o Akwesasne Notes, Mohawk Nation, Via Roosevelttown, NY 13683. Information on Guatemala can be obtained from the Guatemala National Information Bureau, P.O. Box 4126, Berkeley CA 94704, or NISGUA, 930 F. Street N.W., Suite 720, Washington DC 20004.)

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