

Israel or Palestine? “Israeli genocidal behavior against Palestinian resistance has all the marks of desperation”

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Twelve years ago, I joined an interfaith group on a trip to Israel and Palestine. [My essay about the trip](#) even won the first prize of a contest sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Association (1). Sadly, the escalation of horrors visited on the region today could be anticipated even then: no serious measures were taken to solve the problem.

I would like to offer some comments on what looks like a historical impasse. Although I am not a historian, and not even a journalist, I do have a personal experience in a situation similar to the Israeli-Palestinian contest. It so happens that I lived my formative years – from 1949 to 1958 – in Morocco, an Arab country under French colonial rule at the time.

We had been looking for a safe place while waiting in Displaced Persons Camps in Germany after World War II, and since my Russian-born father was fluent in French, he was offered a job in a mining town in Southern Morocco.

We were neither French nor Moroccan, and this offered a neutral position to observe our new surroundings. Although our own circumstances were modest, the little mining town we inhabited on the Southern slope of the Atlas Mountains had running water and electricity, while the much larger Moroccan development did not. I watched women cook their meals over primitive charcoal pits or wash their clothes in a nearby river. And all the actual miners who went into the underground tunnels were Moroccans.

There was no school in our little town, so my parents sent me to a French boarding school in Marrakech. Marrakech is famous for its exotic tourist attractions, and my trusty bike took me everywhere – from the European section with its nice French restaurants known as the Gueliz, to the Arab section known as the Medina, with its narrow streets crowded with donkeys and vendors.

I picked up French and even some ‘street Arabic’ to barter at the famous Square of Djemaa-el-Fna. I struggled with *Chleuh*, the Berber tongue used in the Atlas Mountains. I was even exposed to the fancy script of classical Arabic used in the Koran – but not well enough to read it in the original, contenting myself with a French translation.

French was, of course, the really practical means of communication in Morocco, and this is why I undertook to teach it to our young ‘boy’ Lahsen. He had walked a hundred kilometers from a distant valley to look for a job in our mine. But he was too young to get a job, and my mom took him in to help out with our household. He was bright and soon became an indispensable member of our family.

But all was not 'happy days.' I remember walking down the main street of Marrakech one day, and startled to see people, evidently strangers, stop and hug each other, and even cry. I heard them refer to Dien Ben Phu. As the headlines explained later, Dien Ben Phu was a spectacular battle the French had - inconceivably - lost in Vietnam. The year was 1954. And even in our sunny Morocco, a sense of disquiet began to be felt. There was news of a bomb exploding on the streets of Casablanca. Apparently, a car had been held up on a mountain road not too far off. And right across the street from our own house, but higher up on a hill, a fairly sizable building went up, and then French soldiers were housed there. It turned out to be a waystation to Algeria, where serious uprisings were taking place.

And then somebody claimed that their hunting rifle had been stolen. A couple of weeks later, and then sometime later again, people's guns or rifles were said to have disappeared. My father poo-pooed the whole thing. His hunting rifle was hanging right there on the wall - and it had not walked away. But then one day two French policemen knocked on our door and asked to search our house. Well, in Lahsen's room they discovered the whole stash of stolen guns and rifles. He was taken to jail in Marrakech, and I went to visit him. I cried, but he did not. He told me that if released, he would do it again. Was it not his job to liberate his country from foreign invaders?

But compared to our situation in Morocco, the events in Algeria were a much closer replica of the current situation in Israel and Palestine. After all, Morocco had been a fairly recent French acquisition, and in time, a reasonably peaceful parting of the ways was negotiated. Algeria, on the other hand, was a real 'settler colony' founded in 1830, and its French *colons* considered themselves 'third generation Algerians.' Had they not turned the land to 'milk and honey' which the primitive Arabs had not known to do?

They were not going to give it up, and the mainland French Army arrived to restore 'law and order.' But the armed resistance in the countryside was not being quelled. The 1966 film *The Battle of Algiers* is a fair replay of what 'law and order' means when a well-armed and well-trained military confronts a restless civilian population. The unthinkable was happening: the civilized French were torturing people?!

France was lucky in the person of General De Gaulle who had the guts to do the unexpected, i.e., call a halt to the hopeless bloodshed on all sides. Subsequently repeated attempts on his life illustrated the controversial nature of his decision. Sadly, I found out later that a French boy I had known in Morocco - and had my first crush on - had died fighting in Algeria.

But even though Morocco transitioned fairly peacefully from colonial to independent status, we still made the decision to leave Morocco in 1958. Clearly the Europeans were no longer welcome in a 'liberated' country. So much so that we resigned ourselves to start all over again as dumb immigrants (we didn't know English) in Australia.

As a descendent of the Russian Diaspora, I understand perfectly the Jewish search for a safe place. However, the dream of the 'promised land' has to be on the right side of history. Colonization, however, let alone some mythical homeland of 3,000 years ago, simply stands on the wrong side of history.

This is why the Israeli genocidal behavior against Palestinian resistance has all the marks of desperation. They could have been more reasonable with their Palestinian 'subjects' when

there was still time – instead of treating them like the proverbial ‘Untermenschen’ of Naziland. But just like the Algerian ‘colons,’ they are not prepared to give up. They are counting on the Big Boys from the Shining City on the Hill, who have promised to stand with them, to come in and help them sweep the place clean. After all, just like the French in their colonial days, don’t the Yankees have a stake in the ‘Rules based Order’?

But the times they are a-changing. My hope for all concerned is that a De Gaulle-like figure would recognize the realities of the situation, and bring peace, however questionable, to the troubled land.

Any such figure rising on the American horizon? I wish.

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Galina De Roeck was born in Bihac, Bosnia, of Russian émigré parents and grew up in Belgrade, Germany, Morocco and Australia. She received her PhD in Comparative Literature at City University of New York. She taught at a number of institutions of higher learning and published in the field literary criticism. Dr. De Roeck has lectured on international affairs in the U.S. and participated in peace delegations to Latin America, Eastern Europe and the Middle-East. Her memoir, *The Door in the Nightmare: from the Russian Revolution to Pax Americana* will be published by PRAV Publishing in May of 2021.

She is a regular contributor to Global Research.

Note

1. <https://galinaderoeck.com/2022/06/15/the-promised-land/>

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