

The Immense Hunger: US-Israel Joint Obsession to Obliterate the World

By [Edward Curtin](#)

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Like all living creatures, people need to eat to live.

Some people, eaten from within by a demonic force, try to deny others this basic sustenance.

All across the world people are starving because the powerful and wealthy create economic and political conditions that allow their wealth to be built on the backs of the world's poor.

It is an old story, constantly updated. It is one form of official terrorism.

From the Irish famine with its terrible aftermath created by the imperialist British government in the 19th century that caused the death of between **one and two million Irish and the forced emigration of more than a million more between 1846 and 1851 alone, to today's savage Israeli genocide and forced starvation of Palestinians in Gaza**, the stories of politically motivated famine are legion.

The Irish Famine

2 million
Number of people who emigrated
between 1845 and 1850

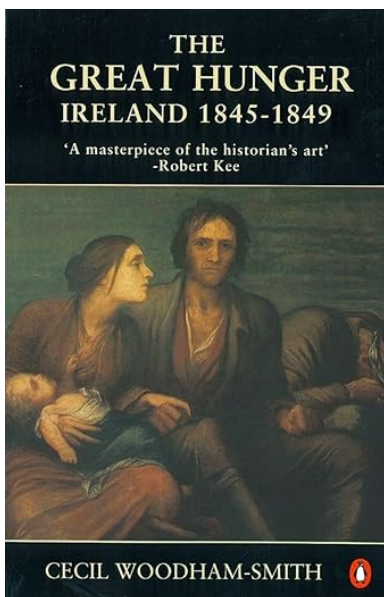
8.2 million
Irish population in 1841

6.6 million
Irish population in 1851

Figures: Public Record Office of Northern Ireland



In their wake, as the historian **Woodham-Smith** [wrote](#) in 1962 of the Irish famine, it **“left hatred behind.**



Between Ireland and England the memory of what was done and endured has lain like a sword.” This Irish bitterness toward the English was strong even in my own Irish-American childhood in the northern Bronx more than a century later. Ethnic cleansing has a way of leaving a livid legacy of rage toward the perpetrators, especially in the Irish case when talk of of one’s ancestors’ perilous forced emigration on the Coffin Ships was ever broached.

Today’s Israeli government leaders must be historically ignorant or suicidal, for the Irish rage at the British led to the Easter Rebellion of 1916 and the eventual establishment of the

Republic of Ireland, where today in Dublin, its capital, huge throngs march in support of the Palestinian people and their fight against Israel.

Do the Israeli leaders think that they can evade the lessons of history, lessons that oppressed people everywhere learned from the irrepressible Irish rebels?

Like their arrogant British imperialist counterparts, they have self-anointed themselves a chosen people so they can inflict death and suffering on the unchosen ones, the animal people, those disgusting creatures not deserving of life, land, or liberty.

But starve, torture, and slaughter people enough and the flaming sword of revenge will exact a heavy price. Dark furies will descend.

Dehumanize people enough, take their land, and the day always comes when the wretched of the earth rise up against their racist colonialist settlers.

Deny the bread of life to people long enough so that they watch their emaciated children die in their arms or search for their body parts beneath the bombed rubble and you will find that the terrified have become terrifying.

Frantz Fanon wrote accurately about the link between bread and land:

“For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”

Without bread to eat, as Marx and Victor Hugo told us in their different ways, the desperate become desperadoes.

The poet Patrick Kavanaugh, in his haunting long poem, “The Great Hunger,” concluded it thus: “The hungry fiend/Screams the apocalypse of clay/In every corner of this land.” Lines that with a slight difference pertain to every land where famine is used as a weapon of war.

But why is this so? What is this demonic force that drives some human animals to oppress others?

I think we can agree that **humans have animal needs of hunger, thirst, sex, etc. that need to be satisfied**, but that we also are symbolic creatures – angels with anuses as Ernest Becker has said so pungently in his classic book, [*The Denial of Death*](#).

We live in a world of symbols, not merely matter.

Unlike other animal species, we have made death conscious and must deal with that consciousness one way or another. We have beliefs, ideas, symbol systems and get our sense of self-worth symbolically. Of course, the anuses are the problem because they remind us that despite all our highfalutin fantasies of omnipotence of the symbolic sort, what goes in one hole comes out the other and like those backdoor hole deposits we too are destined for underground holes in the earth.

But this is unacceptable. The thought of it drives many savagely crazy – individuals, groups, and nations. So, as Becker writes,

“An animal who gets his feeling of worth symbolically has to minutely compare himself

to those around him, to make sure he doesn't come off second best." Herein lies the root of competition and the desire to be successful and hoist the symbolic trophies that declare us winners. And if there are winners, there must be losers. If I win and you lose, then I can feel superior to you and "good about myself,"

at least in the realm where we compete. Equality is a problem for humans, whom Nietzsche termed "the disease called man." This sense of competition can be relatively harmless or deadly.

History is replete with the latter type, where the fear of not being immortal leads to the extermination of others, as if to say: "See, we are number one." You die but we live. This is the case with the present Israeli policy of genocide of the Palestinians through famine, bombs, and guns.



Famine in Gaza, 2023-2024



Famine in Afghanistan in the Wake of the US-NATO's "Just War" (2001)

The chosen enemy is always considered dirt, pigs, reduced to animal status not worthy to exist, and in a transference of existential trepidation emanating from a deep sense of insecurity masked as triumphalism, must be eliminated because their very existence threatens the oppressors God-like sense of themselves.

There is physical hunger and there is symbolic hunger. Each needs satisfaction. In a just and equitable world, the hunger for bread would be easy to satisfy. It is the symbolic hunger for an answer to death that poses the deeper problem and causes the former. For in a world where people could recognize their fears and deep-seated anxieties and stop transferring them to others, the bread of truth might reign. We might stop slaughtering and starving others to purge ourselves of the self-hate and insecurity that drives us to feel the love of our fellow victimizers but the hate of our victims. No one would be Number One. All would be chosen and feast as equals at the table of the bread of life.

If only the Israeli and U.S. government leaders were wise enough to read, they might read Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* and turn from the path of their joint obsession to obliterate the world for a trophy that they will never hoist. Ishmael might reach them with his words: "For there is no folly of the beast of the earth which is not infinitely outdone by the madness of men." And they might seek peace, not an expansion of war.

If only. . . . but I dream, for they have chosen war, and the dark furies lay in wait.

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