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24.04.10

In the Name of Zionism

ISRAEL IS a Zionist State. Everybody knows that.

There is no (Jewish) politician in Israel who misses an opportunity to repeat this.

Last week, when we celebrated the 62nd Independence Day, we were flooded by a deluge of patriotic speeches. Each of the Ciceros, without exception, declared his total commitment to Zionism.

By the way, when it comes to the Zionist character of Israel, there is complete agreement on this between the leaders of Israel and their enemies. The Iranian big-mouth declares at every opportunity his conviction that the "Zionist regime" will disappear. Arabs who refuse to utter the name of Israel speak about the "Zionist entity". Hamas and Hizbullah condemn the "Zionist enemy".

But no one of them – friends and enemies alike – spells out what it means. What makes the state into a "Zionist" one?

FOR ME, this is Chinese. I mean, everybody knows that China is a "communist" country. Friends and enemies speak about "Communist China" as something that is self-evident.

But what does this mean? What makes it communist?

When I was young, I learned that communism means the nationalization (or "socialization") of the means of production. Does this describe the reality in China? Or rather the exact opposite?

Communism aimed at creating a classless society, leading in the end to the "withering away" of the state altogether. Is that happening in China? Or is a new class of capitalist tycoons coming into being, while hundreds of millions vegetate in utter poverty?

The Communist Manifesto declared that the proletariat has no fatherland. But China is as nationalistic as any country on the globe.

So what remains of communism in China? Only the name, which serves as a cover for a group of powerful rulers who use the communist party as a means for maintaining a despotic regime.

And, of course – the ceremonies, symbols and banners. Karl Marx would have called them "opium of the people".

AND BACK from the Manifesto of Marx and Engels to the "Jewish State" of Theodor Herzl, the official "Visionary of the State".

Herzl's Zionist vision was quite simple: the Jews, all the Jews, must go to the Jewish State. Those who do not will be Germans, Britons, Americans or members of any other nation, but definitely not Jews.

In the Zionist school in Palestine we were taught that the essence of Zionism is the negation of the Diaspora (called Exile in Hebrew). Not just the physical negation, but the mental, too. Not only the demand that every single Jew come to the Land of Israel, but also a total repudiation of all forms of Jewish life in Exile, their culture and their language (Yiddish/Jewish). The absolutely worst thing we could say about anybody was to call them an "Exile Jew". Herzl's own writings exude, in places, a strongly anti-Semitic odor.

And lo and behold, "Zionist" Israel is embracing the Diaspora, loving the Diaspora, kissing the Diaspora. The Zionist Executive is sending emissaries to the Jewish communities throughout the world in order to reinforce their "Jewish culture".

The leaders of the "Zionist State" depend to a large extent upon the Diaspora and use it for their own purposes. The Exile-Jewish AIPAC ensures the subjection of the US Congress to the will of the Israeli government. The "Anti-Defamation League" (which should more properly be called the "Defamation League") is terrorizing the American media in order to prevent any criticism of Israeli policy. In the past, the United Jewish Appeal was essential for the economic wellbeing of Israel.

For years, the foreign policy of Israel has been based upon the power of the Jewish "exile" community in the US. Every country, from Egypt to Uzbekistan, knew that if it wanted aid from the American Congress, it had first of all to acquire the support of Israel. In order to get access to the American Sultan, they first had to get past the Israeli gate-keeper.

WHAT HAS all this to do with Zionism? What has remained of Zionism, except the historical fact that the Zionist movement has given birth to Israel? Empty platitudes, and an instrument for achieving quite different objectives.

Inside our political system, Zionism serves various and contradictory aims.

If one speaks in Israel of "Zionism", one means "not Arab". A "Zionist" state means a state in which non-Jewish citizens cannot be full partners. Eighty percent of Israel's citizens (the Jews) are telling the other twenty percent (the Arabs): the state belongs to us, not to you.

The state constructs settlements in the occupied territories because it is Zionist. It builds in East Jerusalem because it is Zionist. It discriminates against its Arab citizens in almost every field because it is Zionist. It mistreats African refugees who manage to reach its borders because it is Zionist. There is no dastardly act that cannot be wrapped in the Zionist

flag. If Dr. Samuel Johnson were living in Israel today, he would say "Zionism is the last refuge of a scoundrel".

THE "ZIONIST Left" is also waving this flag in order to show how patriotic it is. In the past, it used it mainly to keep its distance from the radical left, which was fighting against the occupation and for the two-state solution. Nowadays, after the "Zionist Left" has itself adopted this program, it continues to wave the Zionist flag in order to differentiate itself from the "Arab" parties (including the Communist Party, 90% of whose voters are Arab).

In the name of Zionism, the "Zionist Left" continues to reject any possibility of including the Arab parties in a future government coalition. This is an act of self-mutilation, since it prevents in advance any possibility of the "Left" returning to power. That's simple arithmetic. As a result, the "Zionist Left" has practically disappeared.

THE WAY the Israeli Right is using the Zionist flag is far more dangerous. In their hands, it has turned into a banner of pure hate.

For years now, the plague of "talkbackists" has been spreading. Unidentified persons are filling cyberspace with their outpourings. Here and there a liberal citizen posts some interesting remarks. But the immense majority of the talkbackists belong to the extreme Right and express themselves in a style reminiscent of the darkest periods of the last century. The appellation "traitor" for leftists is the most moderate in this lexicon, and the demand for their execution has become quite commonplace.

(When my name happens to be mentioned on one of the websites, it routinely draws behind it a train of dozens, and sometimes more than a hundred talkback epithets spewing pure hatred. All this in the name of Zionism.)

The public has become accustomed to this phenomenon and tends to ignore it or to shrug it off. They think that the talkbackists belong to the political underworld, together with the fanatical settlers and assorted marginal rightist groups.

But are they still "marginal"? Or are they closing in on the center of the stage?

RECENTLY, THE public has been exposed to a song that lit red lights all over the place.

A popular singer by the name of Amir Banyon has

permlink: <http://zope.gush-shalom.org/home/en/channels/avnery/1272099579>

decided to tell those Leftists exactly what he thinks of them. Here are some choice samples:

"I defend the children / I risk my life for your family / And you spit in my face. / After the enemies outside did not succeed in killing me / You are killing me from the inside."

"I am storming the enemy lines / With my back exposed to you / And you sharpen the knife."

"I am your brother, you are the enemy ... When I weep, you laugh behind my back ... You are handing me over to the foreigner ... You are killing me!"

By the way, those who distributed this masterpiece forgot to mention that the author, he who "risks his life" and "always storms forwards", has never served in a combat unit. Actually, he was released from the army after three days (!) because of drug problems. Later he became a pious Jew and joined Chabad, the sect of the ultra-nationalist Lubavitcher rabbi who never visited Israel.

THE WORDS "handing me over to the foreigner" are the most serious accusation in Jewish tradition. "The moser" (he who hands over) was a Jew who betrayed another Jew to the gentile authorities and deserved death. It was precisely this accusation that sealed the fate of Yitzhak Rabin.

Lately, this has become the main accusation hurled by Israeli fascists against the Left. Recently, an extreme campaign of incitement was launched against the New Israel Fund, a US-based institution that supports many leftist NGOs in Israel. The fund is accused of financing organizations that "helped Judge Goldstone", the "anti-Semitic Jew" who is spreading despicable lies against the Zionist State. (Disclosure: the organization I am active in, Gush Shalom, which is also uncovering war crimes, never received a dime.)

Anat Kam, a soldier who "stole" secret documents from the army command and helped Haaretz to disclose a war crime, was also accused of "serving the enemy". She has been indicted for "aggravated espionage", a crime bearing a life sentence.

"Traitors", "Enemy Agents", "Destroyers of the Fatherland", "Knife in the back" – these epithets are becoming part of the mainstream discourse in Israel. One should not dismiss them.

Not so long ago, just such language led to historic tragedies in Europe.