

Nakba Speech, Ian Portman, Palästina-Komitee Stuttgart 02.05.15, Stuttgart, Germany

„**Not one village must be left, not one tribe.** The transfer must be directed at Iraq, Syria, and ... Transjordan. For this goal funds will be found . . . Only after this transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers and the Jewish problem will cease to exist. There is no other solution.“ Yosef Weitz, Tagebuch, 1940

„**Not one village must be left, not one tribe**“

Yosef Weitz was the architect of the transfer policy, head of the third Transfer committee, instrumental in the wholesale eviction of Palestinian people during the 1948 war and later head of the Jewish National Fund of JNF.

Over the last decade or so, the need to remember and to warn has become an indispensable part of the political scene in Western Europe.

As soon as an anniversary arrives, the usual statesmen and women gather together before this or that monument with appropriately sober expressions to warn us of the lessons of history.

Remembering the brutality and stupidity of our forefathers is of course a good idea. Especially when such an act is coupled with a promise to learn the lessons of the past and to be better in future.

Unfortunately, just as with individual people, politics has a tendency to forget the past when the lessons one might learn from it are unpalatable to the current generation.

The Serbian government objects to the massacre at Srebrenica being called genocide.

Leading Sri-Lankan politicians still maintain that no mass killings of civilians took place in the war against the Tamil Tigers.

Most of the political class in Turkey, objects violently to the mass murder of Armenians in 1915 being described as a genocide.

Remembering a conflict and still being able to forget what happened is not however a speciality of countries just emerging from conflict.

Last week, **one hundred years** after the event, a German President finally described the Expulsion and mass killing of Armenians as a Genocide. The federal government hoping to preserve a lucrative trade relationship with Turkey, couldn't however quite bring itself to be so direct. Politics is after all a delicate balancing act.

At any rate, the cat is now out of the bag.

For good measure, President Gauck regretted German acquiescence in the war crime of 1915. When hundreds of Armenian corpses were discovered in the Euphrates, the German marine attaché in Istanbul noted the action was "hard but useful – *hart, aber nützlich*." The Turks, German allies in WWI, were after all merely seeking to ethnically cleanse their country

of non-Turks and non-Muslim elements. Absolutely normal nationalist racism for the period but for our sensibilities today absolutely unacceptable.

So it took 100 years for official Germany to face the facts.

Today as we remember the Nakba, we are seeking to remedy another curious hole in the political memory of ruling politicians in this country. Wake up Angela Merkel. Open your eyes, Sigmar Gabriel. Hallo Joachim Gauck!

67 years ago Palestine witnessed the mass ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. And no leading politician in Germany has the guts to say that out loud. It's just too inconvenient.

67 years. Must we wait another 43 years before the German powers that be can bring themselves to admit what happened in Palestine in 1948?

We have all seen images of the massacre in Deir al Yassin which Menachim Begin called "as splendid act of conquest"; we all know how battle-hardened European Zionist militias rounded up and executed villagers in deliberate terror actions designed to drive out the Palestinian people who had lived there for centuries.

Menachim Begin noted:

A legend of terror spread amongst Arabs who were seized with panic at the mention of our Irgun soldiers. It was worth half a dozen battalions to the forces of Israel. Arabs throughout the country ... were seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives. This mass flight soon developed into a maddened, uncontrollable stampede. Of the 800,000 Arabs who lived on the present territory of the state of Israel, only some 165,000 are still there. The political and economic significance of this development can hardly be overestimated.

That the expulsion took place is a historical fact. Anyone who takes the trouble to read the sources can see that.

Shabtai Kaplan, a member of the Zionist MAPAM party, witnessed the massacre at al Dawamiya near Hebron:

The children they killed by breaking their heads with sticks. There was not a house without dead," Kaplan wrote. The Arab men and women who remained were then closed off in the houses "without food and water." Sappers arrived to blow up the houses. "One commander ordered a sapper to put two old women in a certain house . . . and to blow up the house with them. The sapper refused . . . The commander then ordered his men to put in the old women and the evil deed was done. One soldier boasted that he had raped a [Palestinian] woman and then shot her. One woman, with a newborn baby in her arms, was employed to clean the courtyard where the soldiers ate. She worked a day or two. In the end they shot her and her baby."

The horror was justified by the usual national-religious claims.

Josef Weitz again:

..the transfer of Arab population from the area of the Jewish state does not serve only one aim – to diminish the Arab population. It also serves a second, no less important, aim which is to [secure]... land presently held and cultivated by the Arabs and thus to release it for Jewish inhabitants.

But the issue was crystal clear:

Menachem Ussishkin, chairman of the Jewish National Fund:

[Land is acquired] by force --- that is, by conquest in war, or in other words, by robbing land from its owner. [...] We must take over the land. We have a great and nobler ideal than preserving several hundred thousands of [Palestinian] .. fellahin.

Chaim Weizmann, first president of Israel:

the native population are like the rocks of Judea – obstacles that had to be cleared on a difficult path.

Historical documents: historical facts. Ignored by official Germany.

So why does the German government remain so pig headed? And it's not just the government. Political parties of all shades shy away from calling a spade a spade.

I said earlier that politics is a delicate balancing act. That means politics is a dirty business.

To preserve battleship Israel, Western powers are prepared to go the extra mile:

Last month the fifth German-developed and partially financed submarine, designed and equipped to carry nuclear missiles was delivered to Israel (as Der Spiegel reports). This means that "using German marine technology, Israel has created a floating nuclear arsenal in the Middle East."

Germany, which supposedly restricts the export of arms into crisis areas and always preaches peace and reconciliation. As Economy Minister Sigmar Gabriel said recently: "Deutschland dürfe kein Geschäft mit dem Tod machen." But Germany has continually flouted this rule when it comes to helping Israel maintain its military superiority. That means ensuring by all means possible that a state built on racism and religious nationalism, a state practising apartheid and continually robbing land from a defenceless subject population, must survive and prosper.

What kind of foreign policy is that. What kind of principles is the German government defending here?

While the European Union quibbles about how to label products from illegal Israeli settlements (by the way German diplomats are always working away in the background to protect Israel in this regard), Israel continues to flout international law, to imprison and torture and bomb and maim Palestinians.

And German politicians remain silent. After all, the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians was for the West *hart aber nützlich*.

Today I want to address those hypocrites in the West, in Berlin and throughout Germany who prefer to consign Palestinians to the dustbin of history:

These people are not going away!

They remain to remind you of a very uncomfortable fact: Israel was founded on ethnic cleansing; with your support the Israeli state continues to oppress and murder those whose land they robbed. Is that your idea of justice? Is that how you hope to convince the Arab and Muslim people of the world that you have friendly intentions towards them? Well think again.