

The founding of Israel wasn't a colonial act – a refugee isn't a colonist

It's understandable that Palestinians have been indoctrinated with Jew hate, but there is no such excuse for Western students.

[Howard Jacobson](#)



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Let's not beat about the bush. I am afraid and furious. I did

not expect to see a day when the slaughter of Jews would again be a matter for celebration. Do leftist intellectuals who have the hots for terrorists weep remorseful tears? No – I thought not.

I am of the left only to the degree that I am not of the right. These are categories that have rarely explained anything to me, other than the fatal inadequacy of all belief systems to the complexity of experience. To cross a busy road, you need to look left and right.

“We won’t ever be forgiven for this,” my then father-in-law said after [Israel](#) won the Six-Day War, “the left hates a winner.” He knew about the left. He had been a leftist himself and fought against Franco in Spain. “Even a Jew?” I asked. He patted my golden curls. “Especially a Jew,” he said.

And he was right. Overnight, the six-stone bookish weakling became the muscled Zionist bully boy. On the say-so of Moscow, the left abandoned its support, denouncing Israel in language that was part Soviet propaganda, part superstitious libel lifted from medieval Jew-hate. So good a job did it make of changing the very music of the word Zionism, that Jews themselves began to flinch from it.

Well, Judaism is a guilt culture. Tell us we’ve done something wrong and we’ll believe it. Ere the blood was dry on 7 October, some were signing ashamed “Not-in-

my-name" anti-Zionist letters, as though Jews had massacred themselves.

I don't call for supine obedience to Zionism from Jews, only that they get their own history right in a matter of such importance. Zionism wasn't a colonial enterprise, they should know that. In fact, Zionism wasn't any one thing. There were many Zionisms, some more idealistic than others, but the founding of Israel wasn't an act of colonial depredation. Fleeing from pogroms isn't colonising. Returning to one's old home, as Jews had been returning to it for centuries, isn't colonising. A refugee isn't a colonist.

The building of settlements on the West Bank is indefensible. But as António Guterres, the director-general of the [UN](#), likes telling us, things don't happen in a vacuum. If something hard entered the Israeli soul, it was not unconnected to the seeming promise of an eternal war with a Palestinian people for whom co-existence with Jews appeared all but unthinkable. Hateful as they are, the settlements were not written into the small print of Zionism. They belong to history, not principle.

Another of humanity's shattered dreams.

It can be no new experience to the left to see causes it once championed fail to live up to their promise. So why does this failure, above all others, absorb so much of its time?

Jew-hating and the left is too big a subject for this small piece, so let's not waste space denying it. The left likes change and the Jews are old. The left mistrusts finance and the Jews, with most other avenues closed to them, became good at it. Judaism is a patriarchal faith and I've yet to meet a socialist who doesn't hate his father.

Anti-Zionists routinely deny the anti-Semitism charge. "You only say that to stop legitimate criticism of Israel," they cry, though it's their illegitimate criticism of Israel – the confetti accusations of ethnic cleansing one minute, genocide the next – that proves their bad faith. And on 7 October, the biggest lie of all – that anti-Zionism is about a country not a people – blew up in their faces.

"Kill the Jews!" the shout went out, all pretence of distinction gone in the carnival of hate. After years of obfuscating jargon, we were down to the simple cry of the mob – "Kill the Jews". So, like most Jews on whom this *fatwa* of the educated has gone out, I am afraid and furious. Of what value a degree in diversity, solicitude and respect when the professors choose whom to respect and whom not? And what price feminism when the infractions to which no woman must be subjected don't apply if the woman happens to be Jewish and the infraction happens to be rape?

Dehumanise your enemies and there is no horror even those who can't bear to read past Scene One of *King Lear* won't gloatingly wish upon them. That many Palestinians

have been indoctrinated into the grossest forms of Jew hate is – let us say, so as not to have a fight – understandable. That students at elite Western universities should submit without a whimper to the same indoctrination is not. Either way, the consequence is obvious: those you are taught to see as sub-human you treat as sub-human.

And now the brain-snatching of the young is beginning right here. Schoolchildren – some of primary school age – march with impunity through the streets of London chanting, “Israel is a terror state!” Let’s not pretend that they reached that judgement after years of independent research. We who have memories know what comes next when the most impressionable among us are pumped with hate.

So the millennia-long goading of the Jews goes on. Lured into the Gazan quagmire, we confirm at last what Christianity could never quite pin on us – that we kill children for our sport. The blood libel was right all along.

I am more than furious and afraid. I am defiled.

This article is part of the series [What It Means to Be Jewish Now](#).

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