

Israel and Iran: A Response to James Petras

Written by Benny Morris

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BENNY MORRIS, JUL 31 2008

Prof. James Petras's response to my article in the New York Times of 18 July 2008 (which, incidentally, was also published in the International Herald Tribune, Die Welt am Sonntag, and Corriere della Sera) is truly contemptible, and makes one wonder about the guidelines of admission to professorships. Practically every sentence in his piece contains an error or dishonesty.

I have never advocated a genocidal attack on Iran with the aim of killing "70 million Iranians". I have advocated curbing Iran's nuclear program – which clearly aims at the production of nuclear weapons – by economic and diplomatic sanctions; failing the efficacy of these, I believe the West will have no choice but to destroy the Iranian nuclear project by air assault. It is preferable that the Americans, who have the capability, carry out the campaign. If they don't, Israel – which has repeatedly been threatened by Iran with destruction, and the Iranian nuclear project appears to have Israel as its target – will have to do the work. I added that if the Israeli air strikes, using conventional means, fail, Israel may be faced – in the absence of international action – with carrying out limited nuclear strikes against the Iranian Bomb project, or itself face destruction by Iranian nuclear bombs down the road. I have never advocated destroying "Iran" or its population centers. But an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities would be a legitimate act of self-defence, indeed, a supremely moral self-defence against Iran's planned genocidal assault on Israel (just listen to what their president, Ahmedinejad, says about his aims, the destiny of Israel, and the Holocaust, which he denies happened).

I have never supported the "brutal expulsion of all Palestinians". This is a simply lie. I have said that had the 1948 war – which the Palestinians unleashed with the aim of destroying the Jewish community in Palestine – ended with the Palestinians fleeing or being driven eastward across the Jordan, both the Palestinian people and the Jews of Israel would have had a happier destiny and the Middle East in general a far more pacific history since 1948. As to the present, I have said, repeatedly, that the expulsion of the Palestinians is immoral and impracticable.

I am not a "consultant" to "the Israeli political and military establishment" and never have been, not once. And I have no access at all to "Israeli strategic military planners". This is all nonsense, a figment of Petras's febrile imagination. How do "professors" invent such nonsense?

Petras's use of the term "Zionofascism", for any sensible reader, really gives the game away – after all, it was the Jewish people who were slaughtered by the Fascists of the 1940s (who were, incidentally, cheered on by the likes of Haj Amin al Hussein, the leader of the Palestinian Arab national movement, who sat out the war years in Berlin, working for the Nazi regime), not the other way round.

I have been a student of Zionism for several decades now but am completely unaware that Zionism ever aimed to "rule the Middle East", as Petras alleges. As I understand it, Zionism simply wanted to establish and maintain a (minuscule) Jewish state in the Land of Israel/Palestine, the patrimony of the Jews, a very small corner of the Middle East (8,000 square miles) conquered by savage Muslim Arab invaders – in Arabia, they put whole tribes to the sword, enslaved and raped their women and children, etc. (it's all in the Quran; I wish that Westerners would actually take the time to read what that book tells us about Muhammad, Islam and the Arabs who adopted the religion)—back in the 7th Century.

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Petras is profligate with the use of the term “lunacy” (though he seems to have credentials in sociology, not psychiatry). The only “lunacy” I can see here is allowing the Muslim fanatics who rule Teheran to possess atomic bombs; to stop them from doing so would be supremely sane.

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Professor Petras has replied to this piece. It can be read [here](#)