

## **Two wrongs Do Not Make A Right Ukraine & the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**

By Mike Curtis

What about Ukraine? Making war on another country is mass murder, which includes conscripted soldiers who are killed on both sides.

By the end of WWII, Russia (AKA The Soviet Union) had the world's largest army. Ever since they have been in a contest with the United States over who would dominate the world, you may remember, in the 1950s, Russia sent weapons to North Korea, and in the 60s, to North Vietnam to fight the Americans. In the 80s, the United States sent weapons to Afghanistan to fight the Russians. Now, the US is sending weapons to Ukraine. It's not equal to 10% of the money that goes to the annual US military budget, but it has killed and ruined the lives of countless people and significantly increased the profits for the weapons makers.

I'm reminded of Tennyson's Charge of the Light Brigade: "Theirs is not to make a reply. Theirs is not to reason why. Theirs is but to do and die." It was written during the Crimean War in 1854 when Britain came in on the side of the Ottoman Turks. Why? To weaken Russia and maintain Britain as the world's biggest superpower. "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

The Ukrainian government says it is fighting for its sovereign right to exist as a nation and the freedom of its people. Yet, they are enslaving all men from 18 to 60 in order to achieve that freedom. And, if Ukraine wins, the landless soldiers, who are still alive, will likely go right back to working for and paying rent to the same landlords as before.

Twelve hundred miles to the south, Israel has just suffered the largest terrorist attack on record. That is an attack against unarmed civilians in which more than a thousand people were killed and more than a hundred were taken hostage. Terrorists would use airplanes, bombs, and every other weapon of modern warfare if they had them, but they don't. They kill innocent unarmed civilians, most cruelly and savagely imaginable because terror is the weapon they can deliver with the greatest effect. They are often misguided and fanatical, like many suicide bombers. They are not cowards as they are often labeled; they commit acts of terror believing it will defend or liberate the homeland of their people against foreign occupation and exploitation, displacement, or extermination. The anti-terrorists drop bombs and use tanks to kill and level buildings. They inflict far greater terror — fear and death upon innocent civilians than the people they are reacting to — because they can.

It is fully predictable. In the years after the World Trade Center attack, the United States caused the death of far more innocent people than the terrorists did on 9/11.

I am reminded of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's slogan: "If you want peace, work for justice." It is a simple idea, but what, exactly, constitutes justice?

The Israeli conflict, like the Ukrainian war and all other armed conflicts, is fought over land control. The history of the world is marked by one conquest after another. It is a contest between the right of self-determination and the opportunity for imperial domination and exploitation.

In the case of Israel, it is displacement — the migration of landless people in an attempt to recapture an ancient homeland so they may exercise their right to self-determination, denied them in much of the world. The forced displacement of the current residents is rationalized and asserted using many legal and historical references. One was the purchase from titleholders who did not live in the houses and farms (lands) that were purchased. The Palestinian tenants who lived on and worked the land since time immemorial have been evicted and ordered to leave what they believed was really their land. So, for this and many other considerations, both parties believe they have a moral right to the land.

From the perspective of ethnic proportionality, many Americans are anxious about 12 million undocumented Hispanic immigrants who came across the southern border and are still coming. That's about 3.5% of the population. In what is now Israel and Palestine, the population went from a small minority of Jews in 1900 to a nearly equal number of Israelis and Palestinians today. Both peoples feel the land is theirs by virtue of their historical occupation. In the case of the Palestinians, they never left. In the case of the Israelis, their ancestors were forcibly dispossessed.

Looking at the history of the Middle East, and particularly what is now Gaza, it is not only one of the oldest communities in the world, but it has been fought over, conquered, destroyed, and rebuilt so many times it would be easy to imagine there is no solution. History is so full of migrations, conquests, resistance, displacements, and exterminations that one might suppose in the long arc of history, this conflict is just one more.

The United Nations has gotten a lot further than the League of Nations, but they aren't even debating the all important question: What gives any nation the right to exist as a nation and secure its borders — let alone expand them.

How much effort has gone into "The right of self-determination" or "the right of every ethnic group to occupy a sovereign territory and practice its culture and traditions? It is unlikely that any nation-state exists today where the ancestors of its present population found the land uninhabited. But if they did, would that give them a divine right to occupy it and exclude all others? Do not the Palestinians have a moral right to life and an equal right to the natural opportunities in the land of their birth? This is the immediate problem that needs to be addressed.

The United Nations is a forum. It has no sway over the superpowers, but it can facilitate a consensus of mutual benefits. The United Nations is where they could have negotiated the removal of the Russian Missiles in Cuba and the American missiles in Turkey. They could negotiate NATO's encirclement of Russia and the Palestinian's right to a homeland. But, right

now, it might still be correct. And that is exactly how the United States experienced Manifest Destiny — all the way from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. For 50 years, it included the Philippines, which had 17 million people.

Right Now, a hundred million people are suffering from wars, and Hundreds of millions more are hungry. But, there is no evidence that the natural world has not provided ample resources, and then some, for all the people who are on this earth right now. It is on the earth that we are born; from it, we live and produce all that we consume; to it again, we return. The earth is our common heritage, and each and every person has an equal right to the bounty of nature.

The nation-state (control of territory) is necessary for ethnic groupings to facilitate cooperation, infrastructure, the preservation of order, and the administration of justice. And within each nation title to land (exclusive possession) is necessary to individuals and corporations who make improvements (buildings etc) and conduct business.

In both cases, exclusive use also confers an advantage. Therefore, the value of the advantage should be paid to all others in order to satisfy their equal right to the same portion of the earth. If that payment was required, hoarding would stop, and there would be plenty of land to go around. Free migration would ensure that no country increased in population beyond the point of diminishing returns from productive endeavor, and no country would remain so sparsely populated that it was deprived of the synergy that comes with the increase in population. Free trade would enable the vast diversity of nature to be enjoyed equally by all the people of this earth — maximizing the potential of the resources and the benefits of cooperation. Finally, this arrangement would increase human efficiency so that we could live and produce without degrading the earth and its environment for future generations.