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GOLDA MEIR – ISRAELI ICON?

By Jim O'Connell

In a new film about Golda Meir, veteran actor Helen Mirren may be unrecognisable as herself in the role. The make-up artists have arguably done a great job in recreating the physical appearance of Israel's first and to date, only female Prime Minister.

But apart from being female, what else, if anything, made Meir stand out from other Israeli leaders?

In typical Hollywood fashion the advertising for the film production features highly dramatic music backgrounding video clips of tense scenes depicting Israel facing being wiped off the map in the days and weeks surrounding the Yom Kippur war of 1973. This was a time when the Jewish state was undoubtedly facing into grave danger. The clips portray a people in danger of possible annihilation and their country being wiped off the map.

The terms "wiped off the map" and "possible annihilation of a people" are ones that are very relevant to the history and current status of the state of Israel and its successive racist leaders, *including* Golda Meir who, despite her status high on the US 'most admired women' table and being lauded as a 'feminist icon', was actually a typical member of that set of leaders.

The drive to fully ethnically cleanse the "promised land" of Palestinians that had begun in earnest in the late nineteen forties and continues up to this day had a very staunch supporter in Meir.

Her statement: "There were no such thing as Palestinians...they did not exist", succinctly portrays her racist attitude to the people displaced, persecuted and murdered by the drive to establish a homeland for a group of people who themselves experienced countless years of similar and worse treatment. This type of tactical statement is a well-used method aimed at creating belief of false narratives in order to justify sectarian aims. From the date of declaration of the Israeli state there was never any serious intention on the part of the Zionist establishment to accommodate "others" within the 'new' country.

While some commentators may argue that it was a fact that Meir was at one stage open to the possibility of the establishment of a separate Palestinian state, in fact her actual words were: "It will be necessary to leave the Arabs of Judea and Samaria an option to earn self-determination at a later stage, **if and when it suits us**", and it is widely acknowledged by even Zionists that she considered any such state to be incompatible with the existence of Israel.

During Meir's tenure as Prime Minister it was not only Palestinians who experienced discrimination within the Zionist state. Racist attitudes toward Jews of African origin led to the formation of the Black Panthers in Israel, a group modelled on its namesake in the US that worked to counter discrimination against African Americans. After a demonstration against racist attitudes that drew more than 6,000 people in Jerusalem, Meir was quoted as saying: The Panthers are not "nice people". This dismissive attitude was widely accepted by the Zionist establishment where the elitism of Mizrahi Jews was also tolerated.

Today in Israel the oppression of the Palestinian people at the hands of Zionism continues. So does the discrimination against even some Jews such as the Falsha - Ethiopian Jews who are used to pack out illegal settlements in the occupied territories but treated as second class citizens when it comes to other public services such as education and employment.

The overarching attitude of the Israeli government is one bent on total eradication of the Palestinians, in order to create a complete ethnically cleansed state. This has been the main aim of all leaders of Zionism and all Prime Ministers since Ben Gurion declared statehood in 1948 following on from the initiation of the murderous actions of the Nakba and it continues to this day.

Golda Meir was no exception to this lineage.

The RED Network (incorporating Rebel Telly) are a network of radical socialists within the political party People Before Profit, a 32-county people power movement on the island of Ireland.

www.rednetwork.ie