

Sadat and after: Egypt's nouveaux riches and the Palestinians

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The beneficiaries of post-Sadat financial success continue to sell out Egypt and the Palestinians.

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Since Sadat's selling out of Egypt to American and Israeli interests in the second half of the 1970s, the Sadatist official press and a whole new class of *nouveaux riches* Egyptians began a sustained campaign against the Palestinian people. This new class, enriched by their active selling of their country off to the highest bidders, targeted the Palestinians in order to delegitimize their cause in the eyes of millions of Egyptians who have supported them since before 1948 and who opposed the Sadatist sell-out. This campaign was and is part and parcel of the campaign to de-Arabise Egypt so that it, or its *nouveaux riches*, could join the anti-Arab bloc of Israel and the United States of which this class is a main beneficiary. Mubarak continued the same policies, though his anti-Palestinian press campaigns would be deployed intermittently on a need-to-defame basis.

The Sadatist and *nouveaux riches'* campaigns would invent stories about Palestinians having lost their country because they themselves were "sell-outs" and had "sold their country to the Jews". These rumours continue to be widespread in Egyptian society, at all levels, till this very day, sustained as they are by the utter chauvinist hatred engendered by this petty uneducated class, who under Mubarak continued to rob the country clean and impoverish vast sectors of its population, in the process accumulating billions of dollars. The anti-Palestinian campaign was central to the Sadatist project of instituting an anti-Arab chauvinist Egyptian nationalism in place of Egyptian Arab nationalism. The charge that Palestinians sold their country is of course a distracting tactic used by an Egyptian *comprador* class which, in fact, did sell Egypt to the highest bidders (in addition to Americans and Israelis, Saudis have also been favourite buyers) since the 1970s and is fighting the current transformation of the country in order to be able to sell whatever is left of the country unhindered.

The anti-Palestinian rumour mill during the Mubarak years stretched from the horrific to the outright absurd, reflecting the lack of sophistication and knowledge of this embarrassingly ignorant class and its press agents. The rumours extended from blaming Hamas for the Alexandria Church bombing in January 2011, propagated by the regime, to rumours that the dearth of diabetes and blood pressure medicines in Egyptian pharmacies three years ago, which led to a strike by pharmacists, was on account of the medicines being allegedly shipped to Gaza at the expense of Egyptians. That Gaza needed antibiotics, bandages, anesthetics, surgical equipment and blood to save its injured from Israeli bombings seemed immaterial to these vicious rumours, nor was the argument that the supply of diabetes and blood pressure medications planned for a population of 80 million Egyptians would not have been much affected, had some of it been shipped for use among a

population of one and a half million people in Gaza (which at any rate did not happen). As the uprising raged in January 2011, the Mubarak propaganda machine and his *nouveaux riches* supporters began to spread the rumours that the demonstrators in Tahrir Square were in fact Hamas agents and other Palestinians and not real Egyptians.

Cosmopolitan friendships and ties

This class' enamourment of Americans and Israelis, to whom they were in the process of selling their country, had and has no limits. Some even went as far as justifying their love for Israeli Jews by claiming that they miss the "cosmopolitanism" of Egypt, including Egyptian Jews with whom their parents were allegedly friends, which is why they are today friends and business-partners with Israeli Jews - indeed that it was the Palestinian people who disrupted these cosmopolitan friendships and ties and not the Israeli terrorist and spy operation known as the Lavon Affair in 1954 and the Israeli invasion of Egypt in 1956, which led to the exodus of Egypt's Jewish communities in the 1950s. That these Egyptian *compradors* have been doing business with European Jewish colonial settlers (with no connection to Egypt) who in fact oppress Arab - including Egyptian - Jews in Israel, and not with Egyptian Jews, escapes their *jejune* arguments that present themselves as cunningly clever.

The point, however, is that despite the hateful and vapid rhetoric of this *parvenu* class, which constitutes but a miniscule minority of Egyptians, the majority of Egyptians have remained steadfastly anti-Israel and pro-Palestinian. During the attack and subsequent siege of Gaza, in which the Mubarak regime and Mubarak's top military brass were involved, ordinary and poor Egyptians, not only from the cities but from the countryside as well, generously sent whatever food and supplies they could muster to the struggling Palestinians. Egyptians formed all kinds of solidarity groups with the Palestinians and held numerous demonstrations against Israeli aggressions, Mubarak's policies, and in support of the plight of Palestinians in Gaza. The expression of popular love and solidarity for the Palestinian people since the Egyptian uprising started in January 2011 has not wavered. Indeed the popular Egyptian siege of the Israeli embassy, to the horror of this class of sell-out Egyptians (the irrepressible and buffoonish Naguib Sawires, at a New York fundraising dinner for his party Al-Misriyyun al-Ahrar - Liberal Egyptians - a few months ago, would identify the siege of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo as the work, not of the anti-Israeli Egyptian people, but of the Al Jazeera television station), was further proof of the undying hatred of the Egyptian people for the evil deeds of the Jewish settler-colony against Palestinians and Egyptians alike.

Still this increasingly contemptible class does not let up. In the last few weeks, they, Mubarak's Islamophobic class of intellectuals and analysts, and the Islamophobic "liberal" intellectuals who present themselves as "revolutionary", began to spread rumours on Facebook that the Palestinians want to take over and occupy the Sinai Peninsula! This was followed by racist rumours that the new Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil has a Palestinian mother and wife and that he is the brother-in-law of Ismail Haniyya, and hence a Hamas agent, in order to delegitimise him (Saudi-owned Al-Arabiyya TV website recently made a similar "discovery" about Jamal 'Abd al-Nasir's wife being an "Iranian Shiite"). Qandil was impelled to announce in a press conference on August 8 refuting these rumours that: "My wife is Egyptian and my mother is Egyptian... [and] rumours are not true." As Facebook is another new instrument of this class of the uneducated and their mediocre liberal publicists, their shrill postings, which spread like wild fire among middle class liberal activists, have the same function as Fox News propaganda in the US in spreading xenophobic hatred among Americans.

Attack on Egyptian border guards

Once the horrific and cowardly attack on the Egyptian border guards that murdered 16 of them in cold blood took place a few days ago, this anti-Palestinian bloc of the hateful had a real event to exploit. They began to target both the new Egyptian president and the Palestinians in one swoop, rather than Jihadist groups, who have also attacked Hamas for years, and which are most likely behind the attack with possible tacit Israeli sponsorship (as many Egyptian analysts and ordinary Egyptians have in fact already recognised), or the Egyptian top military brass which failed to defend the country's borders on account of being too busy taking over the political process. The Israelis, who spectacularly killed eight Egyptian soldiers last year on Egyptian soil and have refused to apologise for their crimes, are the main beneficiaries of this most recent attack on Egyptian soldiers. This was hardly the first time Israelis killed Egyptian soldiers in an unprovoked raid. In February 1955, Israel raided Gaza and killed 39 Egyptian soldiers in cold blood, a massacre the Egyptian *nouveaux riches* do not like to remember, any more than they like to remember the long list of Israeli massacres of Egyptians, soldiers and civilians alike, that followed over the decades.

The pernicious and contemptible anti-Palestinian campaign of the Egyptian *nouveaux riches*, parading as news analysis on Satellite TV talk shows, however, attributes the attack to a recent decision by President Morsi to open the Rafah borders with Gaza and end the siege, a decision reversed by the Egyptian military within a few hours of it being issued, on the orders of Hillary Clinton. Yet the Palestinians are blamed for so-called benefits that did not accrue to them, while remaining victims of Mubarak's military generals who continue to rule Egypt at the behest of the Americans, Israel, and the Saudis. The Islamophobic Egyptian liberal-*comprador* intellectuals, like those hosted on Lamis Hadidi's talk show "Min al-'Asimah," broadcast on CBC television on Monday, August 6, as well as the talk show hostess herself have now joined Israel in calling for the destruction of the Gaza tunnels, which during the past years of Israeli-Mubarakist siege saved Gaza's population from starvation. It bears noting here that Hadidi is a former propagandist for the Mubarak regime with ties to his ruling National Democratic Party (NDP). Indeed she was one of the election campaign managers of the NDP in 2005. As for the CBC station where her show broadcasts, it is a new television station launched less than a year ago and owned by businessman Muhammad Amin, a business partner with Mansur 'Amer, one of the major funders of Mubarak's NDP, who is said to be the real funder of the station, though Amin denies it. CBC and Hadidi are not alone in their Islamophobic attacks on the Morsi presidency. Sawires's ON TV is another prominent member of the club as are other stations and TV hosts and hostesses who push the Sadatist-Mubarakist agenda.

It is with this background of anti-Palestinian rumours, that Defence Minister Tantawi has launched his recent Sadatist accusations against the Palestinians as being behind the attacks on Egypt's border checkpoint. That the Egyptian Military Council has continued Mubarak's policies of humiliating the Palestinians during the last year and a half, and one of its members tried to delegitimise Egyptian-Palestinian activist poet Tamim Barghuthi as "not Egyptian", to the delight of this boisterous class, was part of this sustained Sadatist legacy.

The recent attack on the Egyptian soldiers is indeed a necessary pre-requisite for the Israelis and the Americans to impose their will and to ensure that the Camp David Accords are not in any way imperiled by the new Egyptian government. This aside, most Egyptians have remained and will remain steadfast in their support of their Palestinian neighbours, and in their renewed sense of belonging to the Arab world which Sadat and his cronies of Egypt-sellers and sellouts have tried to strip them. Hard as they try to keep the anti-Palestinian rumour mill going, Egypt's *comprador* class of sellouts and their liberal press agents will continue to lose ground, as they are now recognised plainly for what they are and what they have been for the last four decades, enemies of the majority

of Egyptians.

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