

The Fight for Free Speech, as a Crucial Part of Fighting to Put an End to Terrible Injustice and Atrocity—And to the System That Is the Source of These Outrages

Throughout the country today, there is vicious repression against people protesting the genocidal slaughter of the Palestinian people being perpetrated by Israel, with the full backing of the U.S. Colleges, and in particular elite universities—“Ivy League” schools (such as Columbia and Harvard), the University of California schools, and many others—have especially been hit with this repression: students being harassed, and their future employment threatened, for taking part in protests against this genocide; programs and speeches canceled that would have featured people with pro-Palestinian and anti-genocide positions; university administrators imposing severe restrictions on protests, banning protest organizations, calling in police to arrest and brutalize protesting students, expelling or suspending students, throwing them out of student housing...and on and on.

One of the ways in which this repression is “justified” is the dishonest, anti-scientific claim that opposition to the genocide Israel is carrying out—or opposition to the state of Israel and its apartheid oppression of the Palestinian people overall—is the same as hateful prejudice against Jewish people (anti-Semitism). This lie is often accompanied by the argument that criticizing and protesting against Israel and its actions makes Jewish people uncomfortable (or feel threatened), and therefore this criticism and protest must be prohibited and suppressed.

First of all, there are many Jewish people—including Jewish organizations on campuses—who are playing an important role in *opposing* the genocide Israel is carrying out against the Palestinian people. If opposition to Israel and its genocidal actions makes *some* Jewish people uncomfortable, then they need to examine *why* it makes them uncomfortable. Every decent person who stands for justice should be not just “uncomfortable” but *outraged* by what Israel is doing.

And there is this essential fact: The expression of ideas, in speeches and writings—and, yes, in protests—is supposed to be a “sacred principle” of academia, *including when the expression of those ideas makes some people uncomfortable!* To suppress speeches and protests because they make some people uncomfortable is a blatant violation, and makes a mockery, of supposed “academic freedom” and the right of “free speech.”

This gets to the *real reason* why this speech and protest is being viciously repressed, overall and particularly on college campuses. As I have said previously (in message Number Seventeen) this repression is happening now:

because fundamental interests of U.S. capitalism-imperialism are at stake. Because Israel plays a “special role” as a heavily armed bastion of support for U.S. imperialism in a strategically important part of the world (the “Middle East”). And Israel has been a key force in the commission of atrocities which have helped to maintain the oppressive rule of U.S. imperialism in many other parts of the world.

And this repression is happening because representatives of the ruling class in this country have a definite sense that if youth especially at “elite” universities begin to seriously question and act against what this system is doing—if the system “loses the allegiance” of large numbers of those students—that can be a big factor in creating a real crisis for the system as a whole, as happened in the 1960s: a crisis that, now more than ever, this system really cannot afford, when the whole country is already

being torn apart by deep divisions, with bitter clashes right among the ruling powers. So, at the same time as they are bitterly divided, the ruling powers of this country are firmly united in their determination to punish and intimidate especially students at elite universities who have stepped forward to protest the genocidal slaughter of Palestinians. The ruling class is desperate to prevent opposition to its fundamental interests from spreading and involving masses of people, from all parts of society.

And:

All this reveals, more “nakedly” than in “normal situations,” the actual **dictatorship** behind the outer shell of “democracy” of this country—and it shines a light on the *strategic weakness* of this system, when it does lose the allegiance of major sections of the people and this has the potential to spread to all parts of society, including among the dominant institutions of this system.

All this calls to mind the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at UC Berkeley, back in 1964. *Sixty years ago now*, we students at Berkeley had to wage a massive protest in order to win the right to carry out and organize actions against injustices in the larger society, in particular racial discrimination. That Free Speech Movement also played a big role in the development of massive protests, on college campuses and in the country as a whole, against other howling injustices and crimes against humanity, notably the genocidal war this country was then waging against the people of Vietnam—in which the U.S. slaughtered several million Vietnamese civilians before finally being forced to retreat, in defeat, from Vietnam.

As someone who took part in the FSM and other major protests and rebellions back in the 1960s, I can say that it was tremendously inspiring to be part of something where great numbers of people were motivated, not by narrow personal interests, but by the fight for a more just and far better world. I loved being part of all that—and the principles and spirit of that time have remained an inspiration and crucial guideposts for me as I have developed into a revolutionary and a communist, and have worked, in the time since then, to develop communism on an even more consistently emancipating as well as scientific basis. Those principles and that spirit, going back to the FSM, are crucial elements of the new communism that has resulted from this work, and they are written into and run through the *Constitution for the New Socialist Republic in North America*, which I have authored.

Now, once again, there is a great need for building, in continually growing numbers and more powerful dimensions, protests in opposition to a genocidal war—this time against the people of Palestine—and other profound injustices; and, as a key part of that, there is a crucial need to massively oppose, and defeat, the attempts of the ruling authorities, on college campuses and in the country as a whole, to suppress these protests and viciously punish those carrying them out.

And the fact that, sixty years after the original Free Speech Movement, at UC Berkeley, there is once again a need for this kind of massive opposition to the vicious repression of people protesting profound injustice and horrific, genocidal atrocity—this highlights sharply the fact that **there is the even more fundamental need for a revolution to finally abolish this whole system of capitalism-imperialism, its actual repressive dictatorship over people in this country, and its massive war crimes and crimes against humanity all over the globe!**

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