

Just in Time for Hanukkah, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Remembers Her Jewish Roots (Part One)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the much-ballyhooed new – and at 29, the youngest ever – member of the House of Representatives, recently announced, at a celebration in Queens on the last day of Hanukkah, that she has Jewish – Sephardic – ancestry. She claims that she is a descendant of Sephardic Jews who fled Spain during the Inquisition, and made it to Puerto Rico. How many Sephardic Jews there are in her family tree, and what percentage of her ancestry, is “Sephardic Jewish,” she did not make public. Only she and ancestry.com – or some similar group – know for sure.

Why, one wonders, did she raise this only now? Why not have mentioned it when running for Congress from New York, to

appeal to some Jewish voters, and to try to immunize herself from criticism for the ill-informed remarks about Israel that she made during an interview with Margaret Hoover of Firing Line on July 18?

For let us remember what Ocasio-Cortez, a self-styled “progressive” – a word which nowadays, alas, often suggests a palpable want of sympathy for Israel – said in that interview on July 18. She described Israel’s presence in the West Bank as an “occupation.” That word implies that Israel has no claim to the West Bank, save as a military occupier. This would put the West Bank on the same level as Occupied Japan (to which the United States made no permanent claim), Occupied France (to which Nazi Germany had only the claim of military conqueror), or Occupied Berlin, divided into four sectors under the control of the United States, Britain, France, and the Soviet Union, with all four countries seen as temporary military occupiers, having no permanent claim on Berlin.

But Israel’s claim to the West Bank is not solely, or even mainly, that of a military occupier. It has two separate and very strong claims to all of the land on the west side of the Jordan River.. The first claim is based on the Mandate for Palestine itself. The entire territory of the West Bank (as the Jordanians deliberately renamed those parts of Judea and Samaria that they held at the end of the 1948-49 war) was originally included in the territory allocated to the Mandate for Palestine, which had been created for the sole purpose of establishing the Jewish National Home. It was well understood that eventually that Jewish National Home would become the Jewish state. The only reason the entire West Bank was not originally included in the new state of Israel is that the Jordanian army managed to hold onto part of it when hostilities ended in 1949. Had Israel been in possession of all of the West Bank at the end of those hostilities, that would have been the end of the matter. The Jordanian claim, unlike that of Israel, was based only on it being a military

occupier of part of the West Bank from 1949 to 1967. By their military victory in 1967, the Israelis were at long last able to enforce their pre-existing legal claim, which had been established in 1922, by the provisions of the Mandate itself.

A second, and independent claim, to the West Bank by Israel is that which arises out of the language of U.N. Security Council Resolution 242. That resolution, as its author Lord Caradon, the British ambassador to the U.N., repeatedly made clear, did not require Israel to return all of the territory it had won in the "recent conflict" (the Six-Day War of June 1967). Lord Caradon described Israel's pre-1967 lines as impermanent armistice lines, reflecting only where the Israeli and Arab troops were located at that moment when the armistice went into effect. He further described those lines as "a rotten border," and for good measure added "you couldn't have a worse line for a permanent international boundary." In other words, there should be no forcing Israel back into the 1949 armistice lines. Despite Lord Cardamon's insistence on the meaning of the resolution, the Arab states kept trying to claim that Resolution 242 required Israel to withdraw "from all the territories" it had just seized. Lord Cardamon said, heatedly, that the Resolution most definitely did not mean that; if he had intended to mean that he would have written it that way; he deliberately wrote instead "from territories" taken in the recent conflict.

Furthermore, Israel was entitled to withdraw to "secure and recognized boundaries." And who would decide what constituted "secure" boundaries? That could only be Israel itself. During the Johnson administration, a group of high-ranking American officers, asked to study the military significance of the territories Israel had won in the war, concluded that for the security of the state, given its tiny size, and its 8-mile-wide waist from Qalqilya to the sea, certain changes were indispensable, including Israel's military control of the Judean hills, and permanent retention of the West Bank.

I am convinced that Ocasio-Cortez has not studied either the Mandate for Palestine or Resolution 242, as elucidated by its author Lord Caradon. Nor has she studied the topography of the West Bank. She admitted at the end of her interview with Martha Hoover that she was “not the expert on geopolitics on this issue.”

That was clear. For after mentioning the “occupation of Palestine,” she delivered herself of judgments about “an increasing crisis of humanitarian condition.” [sic] What crisis is that? Was she referring to the “crisis” in “Palestinian” civil society because all of the leaders, whether of Hamas or of the Palestinian Authority, have helped themselves to billions of dollars in diverted aid? Mahmoud Abbas and his two sons have accumulated a family fortune of at least \$400 million. Recently Abbas used \$50 million in aid money – while “Palestinian” propaganda proclaims the dire condition of the “Palestinian people” – to buy himself a private jet. Abu Marzook, one of the main leaders of Hamas, has accumulated a private fortune of \$2.5 billion. Khaled Meshaal, the recently “retired” leader of Hamas’s political wing, has outdone even that, with a fortune, according to Arab sources, of from \$2.5 to \$5 billion. He doesn’t bother to live in Gaza; his longest visit there lasted four days. This “Palestinian” leader prefers his cosseted existence in a mansion in Qatar. Mohammed Rashid, the financial advisor to the late Yasser Arafat, has a fortune of \$500 million. Arafat himself had at one time a fortune of \$3 billion; at his death, billions seem to have disappeared. Does Ocasio-Cortez know about any of that? Someone should let her know.

Does Ocasio-Cortez know that Israeli hospitals treat “Palestinian” and other Arab patients with the best possible medical care, often for free? She might want to see the Arabs filling the charity wards at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. Does she know about the hundreds of Muslim Arabs from Syria who have been treated for free in Israeli hospitals? Or the

humanitarian aid sent by Israel to civilians in Syria? Is she aware of the truckloads of medical supplies that Israel attempted to send to Gaza last May, but Hamas prevented those trucks from entering the Kerem Shalom crossing, preferring that ordinary Gazans suffer rather than be helped by aid from Israel? Hamas benefits by the suffering of the very people it claims to lead; such suffering provides good copy for anti-Israel propaganda. Few in the international media report on Israel's attempt to supply, and Hamas's preventing, such aid from reaching Gazans.

In her PBS interview, Ocasio-Cortez said that "what people are starting to see, at least in the occupation of Palestine, is just an increasing crisis of humanitarian condition. That, to me, is just where I tend to come from on this issue." I don't quite know what she means here. Does she mean that she can't be bothered to read up on this matter, on what the Mandate for Palestine was intended to achieve, or what Resolution 242 was all about? All she knows is that she's been told that people – "Palestinians" – are suffering from a "humanitarian" crisis. She doesn't know how that "crisis" began, but a little googling would tell her that Hamas whips up civilians to protest, to riot, and to throw Molotov cocktails and other explosives into Israel, and to let loose incendiary kites that have already burned up thousands of acres in Israel, all part of an attempt to breach Israel's security fence. She does not know, and has not tried to find out, that Israel tries to supply humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza, but Hamas, wanting that "humanitarian crisis," blocks that aid.

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