

Zionism as Racism

BY MUATAZ NOFFEL

In discussion with other students in Dalhousie concerning the current affairs of the Middle East and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process in particular, the notion of Zionism was raised and generated a heated argument. Zionism was defined to me as "a colonial exercise and a national liberation movement, a people returning to an unrelinquished home." The racist element of this definition is yet to penetrate the Western ideals of human rights. Zionism has rationalized the denial of present reality in Palestine with some argument about a "higher" interest, cause, or mission. These "higher" things entitled their proponents to claim that the natives of Palestine are not worth considering and, therefore, nonexistent. Why these natives could not impress the Zionists, much less the rest of the world, with their presence is something I cannot understand, although one can see parallels between Zionism and nineteenth-century European theories of "empty" territory in Asia and Africa.

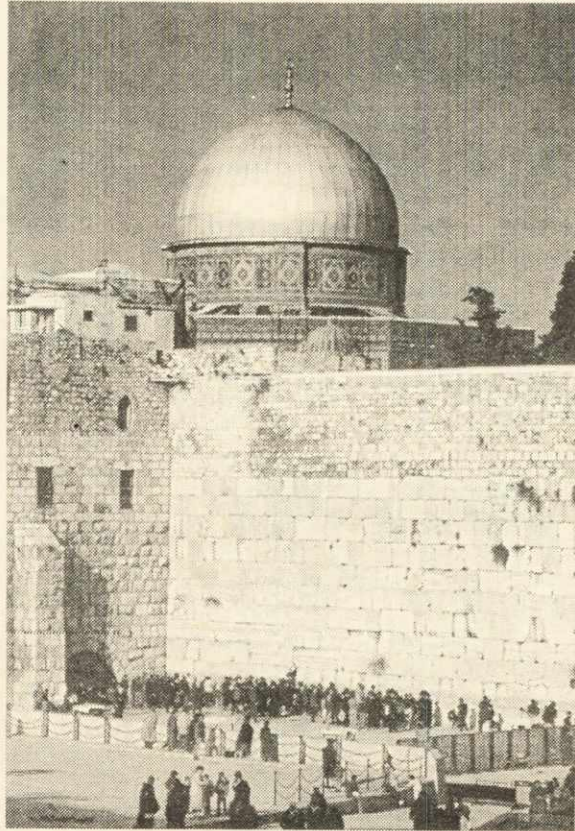
The outcry in the West after the 1975 "Zionism is racism" resolution was passed in the United Nations was doubtless a genuine one. Israel's Jewish achievements stand before the Western world; by most standards they are considerable achievements, and it is right that they are tarnished with the rhetorical denunciation associated with "racism." For myself, a Palestinian Arab who has studied the procedures of Zionism toward him and his land, the predicament is complicated, but not finally unclear. The Palestinian knows that the Law of Return allows a Jew immediate entry into Israel, just as it exactly prevents him from returning to his home. He understands, without perhaps being able to master, the intellectual process by which his violated humanity has been transmuted — unheard and unseen — into praise for the ideology that has all but destroyed him. Racism is too vague a term: Zionism is Zionism. For the Arab Palestinian, this tautology has a sense that is perfectly comparable with, but exactly the opposite of, what it says to Jews.

True to its roots in the culture of European imperialism, Zionism divided reality into a superior "us" and an inferior, degenerate "them." Today if you are an Arab in Israel, you are a third-class person. You cannot ever be equal, so far as landowning and immigration rights, free movement, and state institutions are concerned. Recently, there has been no secret about state sanctioned torture, illegal detention without trial, and occasional murder. Above all, it is religion or race understood in the least universal sense that defines political attitudes.

Zionism and Israel were associated with liberalism, with freedom and democracy, with knowledge and light, with what "we" understand and fight for. By contrast Zionism's enemies did not understand the glorious enterprise that was Zionism, because "they" were hopelessly out of touch with "our" values. It did not seem to matter that the backward Muslim had his own forms of life, to which he was entitled as a human being, or that his attachment to the land on which he lived over centuries was greater than that of the Jew who yearned for Zion in his exile. All that really mattered were ethnocentric ideals appropriated by Zionism, valorizing the white man's superiority and his light over territory believed to be consonant with those ideals.

From the moment that Khomeini returned to Iran, Menachem Begin (Israel's prime minister at that time) was warning the world of this return to the Middle Ages and to religious fanaticism, without so much as a pause in his remarks when he went on to justify holding "Judea" and "Samaria" on the basis of Old Testament promises. What is interesting to note here is how the old Zionist world-drama can no longer hide its less savory accomplishments. After all, Israel is not responsible for settlements in the Gaza and West Bank by chance.

To criticize Zionism now, then, is to criticize not so much an idea or a theory but rather a wall of denials. It is to say firmly that you cannot expect contents of Arab Palestinians to go away, or to be content with an Israeli — or American — idea for their destiny, their "autonomy," or physical location. It is to say that the time has come for Palestinians and Israeli Jews to discuss all the issues outstanding between them. It is time to discuss rights of immigration, compensation for property lost, and so on. It is time to discuss this all in the context of a general discussion of future peace, and all too in the intellectual context of a Zionist acceptance of



the fact that Jewish national liberation (as it is sometimes called) took place upon the ruins of another national existence, not in the abstract. It is finally time to recognize that the question of Palestine is not simply a debate between Zionists as to how Zionism and Israel are to conduct themselves in theory on the land of what was once Palestine, but a vital political matter involving Arabs and Jews, residents in a commonly significant territory.

Perhaps we ought to remember that the artificial tranquillity induced by the Oslo agreement on limited autonomy cannot transform the real conflict between Zionism and Palestinians into simple misunderstanding. The millions of Palestinian men and women in the refugee camps in Lebanon and Jordan, or those in Jerusalem, or in Detroit can, by standing before the world and before Zionism, ask the following question:

Are you going to eradicate me to make way for someone else, and if so what right do you have to do so? Why is it right for a Jew born in Chicago to immigrate to Israel, whereas a Palestinian born in Jaffa is a refugee?

We need to distinguish between surface explanations of the Middle Eastern problems and the underlying realities. In Israel, two generations of men and women have been raised with the ideas of protection against extermination, minority sovereignty, and with an unappeasable need for weapons and their symbolism. Yet unless the pitiless logic of these concerns yields to some understanding of their human origins, the future will be still more murderous.

No clue

BY MARK REYNOLDS

Scene — the afterlife. Nietzsche is sitting in a large leather armchair, smoking a pipe and watching t.v. Suddenly Larry, Nietzsche's assistant bursts into the room.

Larry — Master, it has begun, it has begun! The long wait is over!

Nietzsche — Get a hold of yourself, you blithering idiot! What has begun?

L — Your race of supermen! They will appear master! It has started!

N — What? Where?

L — In Canada master, a place called Dalhousie.

N — Canada? Impossible. Those spineless plebeians believe to much in equal opportunity. Delusionists! They actually believe that the lessers in society deserve some help to better their position.

L — No master, it is true (*hands him recent issues of the Gazette*) Read it here sir...and here...and here...

N — Mmmm...yes, I see... Promising, Larry.

The three faces of Tarantino

BY DANIEL CLARK

He is undoubtedly the hottest director in Hollywood. Every fringe director is scrambling to get him to direct in their movies. His uncredited rewrite of the Gene Hackman/Denzel Washington scenes in the movie *Crimson Tide* are the highlight of an otherwise bland genre film.

These are the Three Faces of Tarantino. This actor/writer/director has an ability to form prose and dialogue that may even give David Mamet a run for his money. His directorial style is vaguely reminiscent of Orson Welles and Martin Scorsese. There is just one small problem...William Shatner is a better actor than he is.

In an extremely egocentric manoeuvre he writes a scene for himself in all of his movies (*True Romance* is the one exception), and continually proves himself to be an absolutely atrocious actor. Like most good directors he has tremendous respect for actors, but in the grand tradition of Spike Lee that respect manifests itself in a desire to become an actor.

Spike Lee may be in no danger of winning an Oscar, but he still has a quirky style that endears him to the camera. Tarantino, on the other hand, is constantly surrounded by better actors, and always appears intimidated by them. The one exception is a scene in *Reservoir Dogs* when he gives an absolutely engrossing interpretation of Madonna's "Like a Virgin".

That performance is one island in a sea of crap. Most of the time he seems to be holding back, or

has absolutely no idea what he is doing. The best example of the latter is in *From Dusk Till Dawn* (a movie he wrote) where he offers Juliette Lewis oral sex.

This scene is so incredibly contrite that it is unbelievable that Tarantino actually wrote it (it seems better suited to the guy who wrote *Showgirls*), but Tarantino acting only makes the bad scene worse. He plays his raving psychotic character like a child who is trying to tell his parents about the strange feelings he's getting from his crotch.

Tarantino has single-handedly revived the careers of Harvey Keitel and Bruce Willis. He has created some of the most memorable characters and most introspective dialogue in recent years. Movies like *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* have added an energy to Hollywood that has been missing for several years.

Quentin Tarantino is an absolutely dreadful actor. Roger Ebert speculated that he has taken all of these acting jobs in the last two years to avoid having to follow up *Pulp Fiction*, and I think this is a valid position. I have a hard time believing that anything he could make could be worse than *From Dusk to Dawn*.

They say the hardest thing to do is to jump back on the horse after you have fallen off, but in actual fact I think its harder to jump back on the horse after an absolutely magnificent ride for fear of not being to repeat.

To quote the sages at Nike — Quentin, just do it.

Must all surf-nazis die?
Do you spank the monkey?
Talk the talk.
Write letters to the Gazette.

but why do you think this is the beginning? This Chris Yorke and Abhi Samant are not advocating societal change, only that education not be wasted on people stupider than themselves...

L — But they are master! Look at Abhi's... If we suddenly were to hold universities up to strict standards of utility, imagine the consequences! Anybody that cannot perform at the highest levels will be denied further education, and will then sink into a morass of poverty, and ignorance!

N — Leaving only a very small group of people to pay for all the labs, computers, libraries and facilities...

L — (with growing excitement) Meaning only the very richest, and brightest could afford to go...

N — And go on to rule the ignorant masses! The superman has arrived!

L — He's already here master!

N — How?

L — Read closely. This article called "From the outside looking in" from Sept. 26th. Obviously a

great mind, crying for help, lost in a world of inferiors.

N — What? What does he say?

L — That University is not enough for him, he seeks a place where "excellence (himself of course) is not buried under the chatter of fools (his plebian fellow students)."

N — The Superman! The Superman has arrived! I must meet him! Where, where is he now!

L — Well, right now he is at a court date in a land called Sackville, but no matter. The locals obviously fear his genius! And there is still Abhi to guide the herds, struggling as they are through Windows, from his throne at his glorified trade school!

N — It is good. Long have I waited for this day...and to be proven right from such an unlikely source. Life is strange, Larry.

L — Yes master, life is strange.