

Actually, Israelis are just peachy

Dear Sir:

Re: Thursday, Sept. 17th, 1981 letter titled "The Zionist-media conspiracy," by Mounir Tabet.

I am amazed that the *Gateway* would publish an article such as that which I read by Mounir Tabet. Not only is the article naive and blind to the blatant injustices presently going on in the Arab world as a matter of their own internal policies but it is actually incorrect, historically blind, and clearly borders on the Anti-Semitic.

ANTI-SEMITISM

Much of the Anti-Semitic literature distributed throughout the world in general and North American in particular, freely uses the term "Zionist" interchangeably with the word "Jewish" (doing so with apparent immunity from prosecution), despite the fact that such a term is implicitly associated with the Jewish people as well as the bond which exists between the Jewish people and the State of Israel. It is identical to the technique presently in use in the Soviet Union — whereby the term "Zionist" is used indiscriminately in a blatant and obvious attempt to circumvent the provisions of the Soviet Constitution which makes publication of Anti-Semitic material (i.e.: Anti-Jewish material), illegal.

The missionary character of Soviet Anti-Semitism is shown by the Soviet attempt at the United Nations in 1965 to have Zionism, Nazism, and Neo-Nazism, (grouped together in that order), classified as racial crimes. Although the reaction was one of shock, the Soviet Union pressed on with its intention and finally succeeded in winning a United Nations majority for the decision that Zionism (which, in fact symbolizes the ancient dream of an ancient people to return, once more, to their ancient homeland to thereby control their own destiny) was a form of racism. *That decision has now given license for the dissemination of Anti-Semitism under the cloak of condemnation of racist Zionism by every imaginable group harboring hostility to the Jewish People.*

Tablet's equation that "Jews run Wall Street and most of New York's economy...consequently the country's," is typical of this type of attitude prevalent in Anti-Semitic literature in Canada today. It is therefore the "Zionists" who are "controlling" the media "running an international hate campaign"... "producing the United States docu-drama "Holocaust"..." attacking our German and Japanese allies of today as targets of public hatred,"...not to mention...the

Zionist fund-raising hate campaign" and the "Zionist lies and global blackmail"...and a plethora of assorted other world maladies attributable, beyond a shadow of a doubt, to Zionist Central!!!

Several years ago a Paris Court ruled that Anti-Zionist propaganda disseminated by the French manager of an official Soviet newsletter was, in fact, Anti-Semitic and saw no legal distinction other than the attempted deception of the public.

Furthermore, in the December 21st *Commonweal* (1973), under the headline "The New Anti-Semitism," the Catholic writer Michael Novak, in discussing the manifestations of Anti-Semitic literature today, noted: "surely the groundswell of American Jewish identification with Zion is overwhelming. Zion is home, Zion is roots, Zion is heritage, Zion is identity. To be a Zionist is now virtually identical with being Jewish — and the difference between the two is not for a Christian to adjudicate. There is a tone of voice, 'The Zionists in Our Midst,' which is as ominous as any tone the human voice can utter."

Thank you Mr. Tabet. Your statement "by claiming that they are the chosen people, the Zionists have created a superiority complex and thirst for power," confirms to many minds that Santayana was quite correct — that those who failed to heed the events of the past are forever doomed to repeat them.

THE PALESTINIANS

Mr. Tabet states that "the people of North America do not have a clue about the repression experienced by the Palestinians in Israel." Interesting point. In 1979, the U.S. State Department Human Rights Report stated that "unemployment has nearly disappeared and real per capita income has more than doubled under the Israeli occupation...the gap between income levels in Israel and the Territories has narrowed steadily since 1967."

Some 65,000 West Bank and Gaza Strip Arabs are employed all over Israel. They enjoy equal pay and the same social benefits that the Histadrut (the Israel Labour Federation) has negotiated for Israeli Citizens.

A retail and building boom on the West Bank itself has created a demand for better homes, furnishings, and clothes. The increased income of West Bank workers has resulted in an expansion of local industry. In addition, the agricultural produce of the West Bank has been moving across the bridges into Jordan and beyond into the wider Arab world thereby adding to the per capita income of the Territory. I would challenge Mr. Tabet

to provide statistics to show the treatment of Jews in Arab lands such as Syria where 8,000 Jews are confined to a ghetto and denied the right to emigrate to Israel. It would be appreciated if Mr. Tabet would confine himself to facts and not to rhetoric.

Mr. Tabet has indicated that Israel has mistreated Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza.

Israel had administered the occupied areas with a policy of "non-presence and non-interference." The Arabs assumed that the life of the occupied territories, and particularly on the West Bank, with its 700,000 inhabitants, would be held in a vacuum.

But it is impossible to seal off 2,200 square miles of territory and leave inhabitants and land to stagnate. Israel never contemplated this.

Israeli authorities accepted their responsibility to provide a decent life for the people in the Territories. The military administration was charged with providing for their welfare. Even families of slain Jordanian soldiers and Fatah terrorists receive Israeli welfare assistance. This is fact, not myth.

Furthermore the military could have drawn up an administrative movement for the West Bank, appointing district officers and "collaborationist" local councils to implement it, with penalties for non-compliance. This has been the way of most occupations in history. But Israel did not aspire to a "normal" occupation, aware that an imposed administration would have led to resistance on a considerable scale. Israel realized that it had an opportunity to demonstrate (as it has done within its own borders) that Arabs had nothing to fear from their Jewish neighbors.

Mr. Tabet speaks of "repression,"

As of August, 1978, Israeli jails held about 2,500 Arab prisoners, nearly all of whom were captured while on terrorist missions against Israel or in possession of arms and sabotage plans. Since then, as gestures to President Sadat of Egypt, there have been several instances of groups of prisoners being released before the expiration of their sentences.

Israeli prisons are open to inspection at any time by the Red Cross or any other international body which chooses to investigate them. There is no summary incarceration in Israel, and suspected terrorists are guaranteed trial and right of appeal. J. Moreillon, head of the International Red Cross Committee, sent in June of 1970 to investigate the conditions under which Arab terrorists were living in a Beersheba Prison, concluded:

"If there must be prisons, then may they all be like this one."

The death penalty, which had been used by Jordan, has never been applied, even in the most heinous crimes. Israel has executed only one convicted criminal — Adolph Eichmann.

The U.S. Government has rejected claims of propagandists and of the *London Sunday Times* that Israeli authorities were torturing Arab prisoners as a matter of policy. According to the U.S. State Department's 1978 country reports of human rights practices, there is no evidence to support allegations that Israel follows a consistent practice or policy of using torture during interrogations.

In 1979, despite allegations to the contrary from a former low-level Foreign Service Officer, Alexandra U. Johnson, who had served in the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem, the State Department denied that Israel systematically mistreated Arab prisoners. "Israel is a full-fledged parliamentary democracy with extremely high standards of justice and human rights," a 1979 State Department report commented.

In March, 1979, Leo Nevas, Vice-Chairman of the United Nations Association of America and the Chairman of the American Bar Association's U.N. Committee, toured Israeli prisons and interviewed Arab prisoners.

"If you ask me," he told reporters, "Israelis are more

indulgent over many issues concerned with the rights of the individual than a number of democratic western nations I could name. And that is without taking into account the situation of war and terrorism that Israel has to deal with and the rest do not."

In cases of brutality by individual interrogators, the Israeli Government has punished those responsible. In 1976, for example, when a prisoner was beaten to death, both the officer in charge and the soldiers under his command were convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to prison terms.

Investigations of specific charges have shown that many are fabrications. Other claims have been based on medical illness and injuries suffered years prior to arrest. And in some cases, investigators have discovered that injuries were caused by fellow prisoners who, acting as a "court of enquiry", tortured prisoners severely in an attempt to learn in what way and to what extent they had cooperated with the police.

Mr. Tabet, please save your rhetoric for the classroom. If Jew and Arab are to make peace in the Middle East, as I believe they will in time, it will not come through misrepresentation of fact, lack of trust, or innuendo.

Brian Berkowitz
Grad Studies

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