

The Policies of Anti-Semitism

By Harris O. Schoenberg

(Editor's note: Harris O. Schoenberg is the director of United Nations Affairs of the International Council of B'nai B'rith. This analysis is based, in part, on reporting by B'nai B'rith representatives in Paris and Geneva.)

Not since the days of Adolf Hitler have the anti-Semitic themes of the genocidal Nazi propaganda machine been aired in the West with such impunity. And, of all places, they are being aired in the public forums of the organizations created to overcome the Nazi legacy — the United Nations.

There are very few states, no more than about 10 out of 158 UN members, that are involved in the perpetration of anti-Semitism. In fact, in 1984 this evil, which the UN was designed to combat, is largely the work of just two states — the Soviet Union and Libya. But a shocking complacency among the representatives of Western European, Commonwealth and other democracies permit the bigots to deliver their incitements to hatred in one forum after another without interruption or objection.

The result has been pointed out in a letter to UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar by Israel's Permanent Representative to the UN, Yehuda Blum, "There can be little doubt," wrote Ambassador Blum, "that the escalation of anti-Semitic rhetoric at the United Nations...has been largely responsible for the recrudescence of anti-Semitism worldwide and for the resulting numerous acts of anti-Jewish violence in recent years."

Anti-Semitism has been around the UN for years. But it was not until the adoption on Nov. 10, 1975 of the infamous General Assembly Resolution 3379 that the UN gave official sanction to anti-Semitism, as the great Soviet human rights champion Andrei Sakharov noted at the time. Since that period, the problem has grown dramatically.

It is well-known by now that Ambassador Ali Treiki of Libya accused Jews as a group in the General Assembly on Dec. 8, 1983 of owning the pornographic operations of New York, "exploiting the American people and trying to debase them. If we succeed in eliminating that entity," the former Libyan foreign minister concluded, "we shall by the same token save the American and European peoples."

Among the assembled dele-

gates, only Ambassador Blum and Constantin Dombalis, representing the U.S. bothered to protest. To his credit, Secretary-General de Cuellar issued a statement the next day in which he regretted "the use in the General Assembly of epithets and slurs of a racial, religious or personal nature, even in the heat of the debate." The Secretary-General appeals to members "to refrain from language unbecoming to serious international debate."

But his appeal went unheeded. At the Feb.-Mar. '84 session on the UN's Commission on Human Rights, the Soviet and Libyan delegates engaged again in racist rhetoric under the agenda item entitled "Measures to be taken against all totalitarian...ideologies..."

After alleging at length common features of Zionism and Nazism, the Ukrainian delegates stated that whereas South Africa's white majority used apartheid to dominate the Blacks, Israel with its theory of the "chosen people" adopted a policy by which those "belonging to the Jewish race" dominated the Arabs.

V.A. Zorin, the chief Soviet delegate, whose speeches are usually fine tuned to the Communist Party line, repeatedly stated that Zionism is related to Nazism. He claimed Zionists dwell at length on the victimization of the Jews during the Holocaust to obtain support and to win sympathy.

The Libyan representative, who spoke after Zorin, described Zionism as a philosophy in which the Jews claim to be the chosen people of God.

The Byelorussian's speech was similar to those of his Soviet colleagues.

Responding to these "monstrous statements," the B'nai B'rith representative at the Commission session observed on February 23, 1984 that they "reveal the torturous thinking inspiring such demented slanders."

Challenged by Israel's Ambassador in Geneva, Ephraim Dowek, Zorin was at pains to stress that his attacks on Zionism were in keeping with the General Assembly resolution on the subject.

Once again, only the United States joined Israel in condemning these attacks on the Jewish religion and on the movement of Jews to live free in their own land. U.S. Ambassador Richard Schifter noted that "anti-Semitism has now become one of the established elements of Soviet policy..."

He referred very pointedly to the anti-Semitic remarks in the Commission by the Soviet and Libyan delegates, dif-

ferentiating between opposition to the political philosophy of Zionism and attacks on the rights of Jews, like everyone else, to believe in and promote a liberating political philosophy of their own. Cataloging the various aspects of officially sponsored Soviet anti-Semitism, Schifter concluded that "there is no doubt that Jews are today an outcast people in the Soviet Union for no reason other than that they were born Jews."

Returning to the subject of Zionism and Judaism during the religious intolerance debate in the Human Rights Commission, the Libyan delegate asserted that Israel and the Zionists are distorting the principles of Judaism as part of a conspiracy against the Moslem and Arab world. He repeatedly cited passages from the Bible, claiming that sacred texts were used to spread "racist Zionism." He alleged that Jews treat each other better than Gentiles. And he made obscure allusions to usurious practices.

Why these extremists of the left and right use racist anti-Semitic rhetoric is relatively easy to explain. More than anything else the UN is the leading agent for legitimizing and delegitimizing political authorities in contemporary international affairs. Attacks on Israel degenerate into gutter anti-Semitism as part of the process of and a cheap shortcut to the delegitimization of Israel. Thus, anti-Semitic bigotry is used to deny Israel's legitimacy and these attacks are repeated so often that the outrageous comes to be accepted.

What it is harder to explain is the silence of most of the democracies. I, among others, talking with a variety of UN diplomats after the Treiki affair to learn why they fail to respond to such incitement to racial hatred. I encountered a variety of excuses even among the envoys representing democracies.

One representative said that his delegation does not take seriously such nonsense. Another said the debates are too boring to pay attention to what is said. One said that his junior officer on duty had no instructions to respond. Another said he would reply only if his own country were attacked. One differentiated between the Security Council,

which he took seriously, and the General Assembly, which he labelled "a circus". Another said anti-Semitism is deplorable, but his delegation cannot allow itself to get involved in polemics. Someone suggested that bigotry is allowed under the rules of procedure, and someone else shrugged and said everyone is attacked at the UN.

I came away feeling that these stalwarts of Western democracy, outside the United States, were intimidated by the anti-Semites and preferred to ignore their vicious attacks on Jews. Whether it was the fear of terrorism or petropower that motivated them, or something else, it is hard to say. But they spoke of crude anti-Semitism as if it were merely a diplomatic discourtesy.

During the annual debate in

the Human Rights Commission on alleged Israeli violations of human rights, many commission members spoke against Israel. The last of this group, the representative of East Germany, Herman Klenner, proposed that the Security Council invoke sanctions. This ultimate enforcement action has never been invoked against states practicing genocide. Exercising his right of reply, Ambassador Dowek of Israel questioned the propriety of allowing Klenner to speak on human rights. In support of his challenge, Ambassador Dowek offered the Commission the number 9756141. It was the number of the Nazi Party membership card issued to Klenner in 1944. Jews know only too well that the Holocaust did not begin with the building of crematoria. It began with words.

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