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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Our Readers

Posted Nov 01 2006

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Offensive Parade

It's gratifying to hear that the planned gay parade in Israel will meet with massive resistance from Jews, Muslims and Christians (news story, Oct. 27).

It took a lot of nerve, though, for gay activist Noa Satat to chastise the opposition to the parade with words from, of all places, the Torah: Love thy brother as thyself.

What happened to the part of the Torah that condemns the gay lifestyle as an abomination?

What's really ironic is that with an overwhelming majority of Israelis - Jews, Muslims and Christians - opposing the gay parade, "brotherly love" would call for canceling the parade so as not to offend so many people. To so selfishly proceed with plans for the parade and chide others with words like "Love thy brother as thyself" is the height of hypocrisy.

Josh Greenberger

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Brooklyn, NY

Equal Assistance

In an October 20 letter, reader Ken Abrams expressed dismay that UJA Federation is distributing aid to all the residents of war-torn Northern Israel and not discriminating against Arab residents.

I think what Mr. Abrams is promoting is discrimination, pure and simple. Let's put this into proper perspective. Let's say the KKK distributed aid to Katrina evacuees in New Orleans but only if they were white and

Gentile. That would be blatant racism and no American would stand for it. I don't see how that's any different than a Jewish organization only helping Jews in Northern Israel and leaving everyone else who was affected by the war in the dark.

During this time of calamity people need to work across ethnic and cultural lines and put aside their differences in order to help one another. Arabs and Jews in Israel were equally affected by the war, and they are both equally deserving of assistance in rebuilding their communities.

*Oren Balaban**Brooklyn, NY*

Sages Opposed Discrimination

The view expressed by reader Ken Abrams probably reflected the reaction of many Jews to the news that money raised by Jewish organizations ostensibly to help Jewish victims of the recent war with Hizbullah is, in fact, being directed to Arab families as well.

I think it's important to point out, however, that our Sages seem to have had a different viewpoint. The Gemara records: "Our rabbis have taught: 'We support the poor of the heathen along with the poor of Israel, and visit the sick of the heathen along with the sick of Israel, and bury the dead of the heathen along with the dead of Israel, in the interests of peace.'"

*Gilbert Braverman**Jerusalem*

Frum Vs. Ehrlich (I)

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Dr. Yitzchok Levine's excellent Oct. 20 front-page essay "*Frum or Ehrlich?*" reminded me of a statement made by Rav Ahron Soloveichik, *zt"l*, at a Rabbinical Council of America convention some years ago:

"Don't tell me about *frum* Jews. *Frum* Jews you find in jail. Tell me about *ehrlischer Yidden*."

Rabbi Howard Finkelstein
Ottawa, Canada

Frum Vs. Ehrlich (II)

"*Frum or Ehrlich?*" was especially timely to me as I was recently acquainted with a *frum* family who were so focused on the external aspects of their observance that they neglected the observance of the foundations of Judaism. And in doing so, they were clearly anything but *ehrllich*.

I liken it to a house that may look beautiful on the outside and magnificently decorated on the inside - but of what value is that house if it rests on a weak and eroded foundation?

Laurie Tansman
New York, NY

FDR: Hero Or Villain? Readers Respond To Robert Rosen

Incomplete Picture

Robert N. Rosen claims he is trying to set the record straight in his book *Saving The Jews* ("FDR Was a Hero, Not a Villain," op-ed, Oct. 27). However, he omits that portion of the record where FDR's secretary of the treasury and confidant, Henry Morgenthau, late in the war presented him with a report entitled "The Acquiescence of the United States Government in the Murder of the Jews of Europe."

It was only at that late point that FDR finally permitted some real action to save the Jews of Europe by creation of the War Refugee Board, which enabled true heroes like Raoul Wallenberg to rescue some of our people at the end of the war.

Mr. Rosen is a clever attorney, but a more accurate picture of FDR can be seen from cabinet member Morgenthau, an eyewitness to the appalling indifference of FDR's administration to the plight of the six million martyrs.

Harvey Herbert
(Via E-Mail)

Conflicting Accounts

I am currently reading *Stella* by Peter Wyden, a book on the life of Stella Goldschlag that details her complicity with the SS. The book is quite specific concerning the plight of the St. Louis and differs considerably from the account offered by Robert Rosen.

According to Wyden (pp. 86, 87), "The remaining 200-plus, unacceptable to the various governments for one bureaucratic reason or another, were returned to Hamburg and the mercies of the Nazis." Rosen claims nobody was returned to Germany.

Which account is accurate?

Shelly Chasan
(Via E-Mail)

Improper Context

Robert Rosen quotes me as having written that during World War II, "the American Jew ... could not stand up proudly ... his natural posture was bowed and bent," and Rosen implies that I portrayed American Jews as "cowards."

In fact, I never referred to them as "cowards," and the phrase "bowed and bent" was used in the context of discussing statements on the subject that were made by Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and Justice Louis D. Brandeis.

As quoted on pp. 79-80 of my book *Were We Our Brothers' Keepers? The Public Response of American Jews to the Holocaust, 1938-1944*, Ickes wrote in a 1938 diary entry: "I spoke to him [Brandeis] of the cowardice on the part of the rich Jews of America. I said that I would like to get two or three hundred of them together in a room and tell them that they couldn't hope to save their money by meekly accepting whatever humiliations others chose to impose upon them. [Ickes added that they must be more aggressive and active in defense of Jews as the Catholics were.] Justice Brandeis agreed with me completely. He said there was a certain type of rich Jew who was a coward. According to him, these are German Jews and he spoke of them with the same contempt that I feel for them."

Every serious historian of twentieth-century American Jewry has taken note of the atmosphere of rising anti-Semitism in the United States in the 1930's, which intimidated many American Jews and made them reluctant to speak out forcefully for the Jews in Hitler Germany. The words of Ickes and Brandeis may have been jarring in tone, but they raised important questions about a well-known phenomenon of American Jewish life.

Rosen's real quarrel is with Ickes and Brandeis, not me.

(Rabbi) Haskel Lookstein
New York, NY

'Severe Misrepresentations'

Robert Rosen severely misrepresents the positions taken by Jewish leaders in the 1940's concerning the idea of bombing Auschwitz.

Rosen writes that in June 1944, "the Jewish Agency Executive in Palestine [including David Ben-Gurion] voted 11-1 against asking the Allies to bomb Auschwitz."

If Rosen had bothered to read the transcript of that Jewish Agency meeting, he would know that they voted against bombing Auschwitz only because they believed that it was "a labor camp," not a death camp.

But later that month, Richard Lichtheim, in the Agency's Geneva office, sent the Agency

leadership in Jerusalem the first eyewitness account of the mass-murder process in Auschwitz. In response, Agency representatives in various countries repeatedly urged Allied officials to bomb Auschwitz.

Chaim Weizmann and Moshe Shertok, in London, lobbied the British. Also lobbying for bombing were Moshe Krausz, the Agency's representative in Budapest; Richard Lichtheim, in Geneva; Yitzhak Greenbaum, chairman of the Agency's Rescue Committee, in Jerusalem; and Eliahu Epstein, chief of the Jewish Agency's Middle and Near East Division, who lobbied Soviet officials in Cairo. Epstein reported on his efforts to Ben-Gurion.

Rosen writes: "The World Jewish Congress consistently told the Department of War and the War Refugee Board that it was opposed to bombing ..."

Wrong again.

Only one official of the WJC Congress, A. Leon Kubowitzki, said that the Allies should attack the camp with paratroopers rather than bombing from the air. But Kubowitzki's WJC colleague, Maurice Perlzweig, sent U.S. officials requests to bomb the camps. Their boss, World Jewish Congress co-chair Nahum Goldmann, lobbied U.S., British and Soviet officials to bomb Auschwitz. On p. 614 of Rosen's own book, he mentions a July 3, 1944 letter from Goldmann to exiled Czech leader Jan Masaryk.

What Rosen did not tell his readers is that Goldmann wrote: "We have discussed with the War Refugee Board [a U.S. government agency] the idea that the Russian and American Governments be asked to look for a way to destroy these camps by bombing or any other means. This would certainly stop or at least hold up the massacres since all the infernal instruments used, such as gas chambers, vans, etc., would have to be rebuilt."

Rosen claims: "Very few Jewish leaders asked the British and American governments to bomb the camps ... Most Jewish groups and leaders opposed the bombing of Auschwitz ..."

Wrong yet again. Bombing was advocated not only by the Jewish Agency and World Jewish Congress, but also the Labor Zionists of America; the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe (the Bergson Group); Slovak Jewish leaders Gisi Fleischmann and Rabbi Michael Dov Weissmandel; Czech Jewish leader Ernest Frischer; and Swiss Jewish businessman and rescue activist Robert Goldschmidt. The American Jewish Conference, a coalition of all major U.S. Jewish organizations, called for "all measures" to be taken by the Allies to destroy the death camps—clearly not ruling out bombing.

The editors of the Independent Jewish Press Service urged bombing the camps, as did columnists for Opinion (the magazine edited by Stephen Wise) and the Yiddish daily Morgen Zhurnal. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported sympathetically on the bombing idea, as did the National Jewish Ledger. The aforementioned A. Leon Kubowitzki was the only official of any Jewish organization who is known to have expressed opposition to the idea of bombing.

Yes, Jewish leaders were too quick to accept the Roosevelt administration's rejections of their bombing requests. They should not have so readily taken "no" for an answer when twelve thousand Jews were being murdered in Auschwitz every day. But timidity is not the same as opposition. And the Jewish leadership's timidity did not absolve the Roosevelt administration of its own moral responsibility to make at least some minimal effort to save innocent lives.

Rafael Medoff, Director

The David S. Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies

Washington, D.C.

Editor's Note: Mr. Rosen will reply in next week's issue.

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