

Established in 1965 by Jack Tell

LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE

(USPS)(305-220) of Nevada

The Only English-Jewish Newspaper in Nevada
P.O. Box 14096 Las Vegas, Nevada 89114
Published Bi-Weekly in Las Vegas, Nevada
Price per copy 15¢ — Per year \$12 — 2 years \$20
PHONE 702/876-1255

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PUBLICATION NUMBER 305220
2nd Class Postage Paid in Las Vegas, Nevada
4167 Tara, Las Vegas, Nevada 89102
POSTMASTER, send change of address orders to
P.O. Box 14096, Las Vegas, Nev. 89114
Member of World-Union Press
Member of American Jewish Press Association
Member of Worldwide News Service
Now in 19th Year of Continuous Publication
Serving the Jewish Community of Nevada

A Moral Landmark

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

Whatever you think of the political outcome of the Israeli inquiry commission's report on the Palestinian massacre, one conclusion seems inescapable: it is a spectacular demonstration of Israeli democracy in action.

The irony is that this morality play should have been taking place before the eyes of the world in Beirut, rather than in Jerusalem. For it was clearly Lebanese Phalangists who carried out the massacres of Palestinians. They had direct responsibility for the murders, while the few Israeli officials had only indirect responsibility. Yet Beirut remains thunderously silent on the moral issues while the Israelis have faced these agonizing questions, regardless of political costs.

In all this turmoil about Sharon and the future of the Begin government, we should not lose sight of the fact that the report of the Israeli inquiry commission is one of the most remarkable ethical documents of our times. It condemns the combat morality of the various militias in Lebanon that belittles the value of human life. It tells the Israelis that there are obligations that apply to every civilized nation and ethical rules which apply to those who could have prevented the atrocities.

This document reads like the classic Jewish teachings of the righteous, the Mishnat Chassidim, which demands higher moral standards than simply fulfilling the law.

It is heartening to experience this moral and democratic strength in embattled Israel, at a time when most other nations would have evaded these tough questions and run for cover.

Behind The Scenes

At The United Nations

By David Horowitz

A World-Union Press Feature

Inquiry. Overlooking PLO Role. Provides Israel's Enemies With New Ammunition

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- The eagerly-awaited Report by the three-member Israeli Commission of Inquiry has given Israel's enemies around the world and here at the UN new ammunition with which to embolden their onslaughts against the Jewish State. Indeed, the Arab delegates now believe they can justify the series of one-sided anti-Israeli resolutions including the infamous one "equating Zionism with racism."

Gloating over the Commission's findings, PLO Observer to the UN Zehdi Terzi told Ra-
(Continued on Page 12)

TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth
Constitutes A Majority"

(Continued from page 1)

while fighting for its very survival? Where is the expression of outrage against the Christian Phalangists who actually murdered the Palestinians? Or are the Christians exempt from responsibility for murder? Where is the condemnation for the shelling, killing, maiming of Israeli men, women and children before the incursion into Lebanon? How long would America wait if Terrorists were using Canada or Mexico as sanctuary while they shelled and murdered our population?

In private conversation with the Review-Journal, they once spoke to me of the necessity to present both sides of any given issue, of the need for editorial freedom. My people would be the first to agree; we are commanded to recognize the humanity of even our enemies. At the drowning of the Egyptians, our G-d admonished us not to glory in the death of His children. More recently, the late Golda Meir said, "We'll ultimately forgive the Palestinians for killing our men, women, and children; we will never forgive them for making us kill them."

So, although they must present both sides, they must do so fairly and allow those analogies which have some basis in fact. They owe an apology to Sharon, Israel, and the memory of all those slaughtered by the true butchers of this world. They're free to agree or disagree on any given issue. But the inclusion of that cartoon represents the height of editorial irresponsibility and license. I'm left with the feeling that they are either extremely limited in their world view or extreme anti-Semites hiding behind the facade of providing a public service - or - perhaps, a little of both.

Rabbi Mel Hecht
Congregation Ner Tamid

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The Review-Journal, on Sunday, February 20th, printed the following retraction.)

GOOD TASTE AND CARTOONS: HOW A FLAP AROSE

By TOM KEEVIL
REVIEW-JOURNAL

An editorial cartoonist is given a rectangle of white, a pen, and told to express an opinion. The product may be a powerful commentary, a savage criticism -- or a gentle commentary on a topic of the day.

Whatever comes out won't tell both sides of an issue. The form, unlike a column or an editorial, simply doesn't permit another side of the issue to be explored. It's one opinion, usually the personal opinion of the cartoonist himself.

King of One Liners



HENNY YOUNGMAN

...Man of Many Talents.

WHEN MY WIFE WAS PREGNANT SHE ASKED ME TO BEAR WITH HER.

Cartoonists have a rich history in American newspapering. Thomas Nast, for example, is credited with driving Boss William Tweed out of power with his unrelenting attacks on the New York political machine back in the 1870s. From his pen came the Democratic party's donkey, the Republican party's elephant and Tammany Hall's tiger.

Today's newspaper cartoonists are a varied and rich source of commentary. The Review-Journal alone offers the work of Pulitzer winners Pat Oliphant, Don Wright and Jeff MacNelly, not to mention recognized talents such as Ranan Lurie of the Asahi Shimbun, Mike Peters of the Dayton Dailey News, Bill Schorr of the Los Angeles Herald, and seven others across the country.

Like Nast and all those before them, every one of them has one goal in mind when he (there are virtually no female cartoonists) sits down at his drawing board: he hopes to strike a nerve, he wants to provoke, he wants to stir opinion.

The editorial page of Last Sunday's Review-Journal carried a cartoon that did all three in a spectacular fashion. It was the work of Steve Benson, resident cartoonist of the Arizona Republic. Two butcher shops were shown side by side. One was labeled "Butcher of Lyon, Klaus Barbie manager," and the other "Butcher of Beirut, Ariel Sharon manager." Sharon was depicted with cleaver in hand, hacking on "Today's Special, Rump of Refugee." Barbie's shop window sign reads, "Closed, New Location: French Prison."

Benson's point was clear. Barbie, the "Butcher of Lyon," had been deported from Bolivia to France to be tried for the 1940-44 disappearance of some 75,000 French Jews sent to Nazi death camps. Defense Minister Sharon, a hero of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, had been found by a special Israeli commission to be personally responsible for last September's massacres in Beirut refugee camps at the hands of Christian right-wing Phalangists.

Many members of the Las Vegas Jewish community felt the comparison odious, unfair, repugnant, gross and in some viewpoints, anti-Semitic.

And they told us so. There were angry phone calls, angry messages, threats of subscription cancellation and advertising withdrawal and demands for an apology.

Harvey Schechter, western director of B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League and a friend of many years, called from Los Angeles to tell me he felt the cartoon was "an obscenity" and suggested we consider apologizing for running it.

So we re-examined the cartoon and how it got into print.

I talked first with cartoonist Benson in Phoenix. He's taken heavy heat, he acknowledged, and even as I called was writing a letter explaining why he'd drawn the cartoon. He understood the complaints but was vigorous in defending his right of expression.

"The cartoon was symbolic," he said. "Literally, I was not comparing Sharon with Barbie."

Benson strongly denounced any idea he was anti-Semitic and pointed out that 400,000 Israelis had demonstrated in favor of the Sharon investigation. His criticism, he said, "is with Begin and Sharon, not with the Israeli people."

Benson's editor, Pat Murphy, also defended the cartoon, but Bill Dickenson, the editor of the Washington syndicate that distributes it, said he felt it was "pretty heavy handed." Dickenson hadn't seen the cartoon before it was sent out.

Here at the R-J, the responsibility for selecting the cartoon rested with Dennis Baughman, our editorial page editor, and ultimately, with me. Following normal procedures, Dennis sifted through the daily pile of cartoons on his desk and selected two that he felt best expressed viewpoints of the day for publication last Sunday.

Did he weigh the possibility that the Benson cartoon might be considered offensive?

"Frankly, no," he replies. "It was strong, but I felt it was a legitimate, personal comment about a specific world event. I did not think people would take the cartoon literally -- that Sharon actually killed the refugees -- but rather symbolically, that it was a view based on the findings of the special Israeli

(Continued on Page 5)