

To: Brith Sholom Media Watch Subscribers
From: Jerry Verlin, Editor (jverlin1234@comcast.net)
Subj: Brith Sholom Media Watch Alert #375, 3/9/08

This Week In Our Emails: "The Shame Of It All"

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Butzie, and maybe others, did us local Jews a mitzvah this week, emailing around a moving article, "The Shame Of It All," which begins with the poet Bialik's lament over the 1905 Kishinev pogrom. Bialik, the author says, didn't lay the basic blame on the Cossaks – "rape and murder are simply what Cossaks do" –, but on the passively submissive Jews. What Bialik "wants us to know," he says, "is that what is wrong with the Jews is that they have come to accept their victimization as part of nature."

No one alive today remembers the 1905 Kishinev pogrom, but many, like me, can recall what Western publics derisively said (wrongly for what that is worth) in the Holocaust's wake, that Europe's Jews "went like sheep to the slaughter."

The thrust of "The Shame Of It All" is that Israel's rebirth was supposed to change all that – the world's view of the Jews and the Jews of themselves. To those of us old enough to recall 1948 and then May and then June, 1967, it seemed at first that it did. (It's just 54% of American Jews only in their 30's who our Exponent says are even "comfortable with the idea" of a Jewish state.) The Shame Of It All, the article says, is that Israelis' sense of Israel's fundamental meaning is fading. What makes this article so desperately relevant to a diaspora pro-Israel mainstream media watch is that The Shame Of It All is no less all about us.

But I think that the article's author perhaps goes too far. He writes that when "you worry mostly about what the world thinks of you, because more than anything else, you simply want to be 'normal,' indistinguishable, just like everyone else," Jews "come to accept their victimization as part of nature."

QUOTE

"So just like the "men" in Bialik's poem, you don't allow yourself to be horrified by the fact that almost 8,000 rockets have been fired at Sderot, that life there has been transformed into hell.

". . . . you don't allow yourself to stare reality squarely in the face and to wonder what will happen when they get Grads, and then Katyushas, and hit Ashkelon and then Ashdod – until they start. And then, when they do (which they did, this week), you tell yourself that it's 'not so bad.'

UNQUOTE

That's too far. We Jews here in comfortably safe America, unique in history in its reception of us, ARE horrified about Sderot. We DON'T regard rocketing of Ashkelon

and Ashdod as “not so bad.” We’re enraged, we’re angry, we’re outraged that this can happen today in the very homeland of Jews. It’s our reticence to act on our outrage, to STAND UP against our own hometown media’s maltreatment of Israel, perhaps for the reasons the article applies to Israeli Jews, that’s our failing, that’s what our descendants will look back upon as The Shame Of It All.

Take, for instance, our Kishneviaan passiveness in the presence of what passed for Arab-Israeli conflict coverage headlines This Week In The Inq.

This Week In the Inq: Hamas Rocketing of Ashkelon Utterly Ignored In Inq One-Sided Headlining of “Israeli Incursions In Gaza”

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You WOULDN’T KNOW from reading the headlines in the last ten days’ Inqs that Hamas has ESCALATED from launching media-monikered “homemade” rockets each day at Sderot to launching full scale military class Iranian-made Grad (Katyusha) rockets at Ashkelon and Ashdod. Look and see for yourself the Inq headlines oozing moral equivalence between Arabs rocketing Jewish civilians and Israel’s “retaliatory” striking back at the rocketeers, with the Inq’s focus every day upon Gaza and not even once mentioning Ashkelon and Sderot.

Inq headline, Thursday, 2/28/06, A16, AP: “ISRAELIS, GAZANS SWAP FIRE; DEATH ON BOTH SIDES”; sub-head: “The Bloodshed Heightened Fears of a New Wave of Violence. Rice to Visit the Region Next Week.”

Inq headline, Friday, 2/29/08, A16, AP: “VIOLENCE ESCALATES; ISRAELI SAYS GAZA ACTION IS OPTION”; sub-head: “The Defense Chief Hinted at an Invasion as Rocket Attacks and Air Strikes Intensified”

Inq headline, Saturday, 3/1/08, A3, NYTimes: “LESS VIOLENCE IN ISRAELI, GAZA CLASHES”

Inq headline, Sunday, 3/2/08, A1, LATimes: “DOZENS KILLED IN ISRAELI TROOP ACTION IN GAZA”, inset sub-head: “Civilians Also Killed in Hunt for Militants Firing Rockets.”

Inq headline, Monday, 3/3/08, A1, AP: “MIDEAST PEACE TALKS OFF”; sub-head: “Palestinians Suspend Discussions; Israel Vows to Keep Up Gaza Attacks. Condoleeza Rice is Due in the Region This Week.”

Inq headline, Tuesday, 3/4/08, A1, NYTimes: “ISRAELIS EXIT GAZA; HAMAS SEES GAIN”; sub-head: “Amid the Losses, It Claimed a Hezbollah Resistance Model.”

Inq headline, Wednesday, 3/5/08, A3, NYTimes: “ABBAS DECLINES TO SET TIME FOR RESUMING TALKS”; sub-head: “He Met With Rice, Who Pushed for the Resumption of Negotiations Broken Off Over Israel’s Incursion into Gaza.”

Inq headline, Thursday, 3/6/08, A2, LATimes: “MIDEAST TALKS BACK ON TRACK, RICE SAYS IN VISIT TO REGION”; Abbas Had Halted Them After Israel’s Incursion Into Gaza. No Date For a Restart was Announced.”

Inq headline, Friday, 3/7/08, A1, NYTimes: Caption above photo: “Carnage At a Jerusalem Seminary”, headline: GUNMAN OPENS FIRE, KILLS EIGHT STUDENTS.”

[As Dr. Bruce Epstein correctly diagnosed a similar headline in the St. Petersburg (Florida) Times: “Murderer not identified as a Palestinian, Victims not identified as Israeli.”]

Inq headline, Saturday, 3/8/08, A1, AP: “ISRAEL EYES PEACE TALKS DESPITE ATTACK”

Now, let’s look at the place names mentioned in these Israeli-“Gazans” actions headlines.

Did you see the place name ASHKELON mentioned ONCE as an attacked place in these headlines?

Did you see SDEROT mentioned once as a place constantly being attacked?

Did you ANY PLACE IN ISRAEL, even just “ISRAEL,” mentioned as a place where Israeli-“Gazan” action is taking place?

OR DID YOU JUST SEE

*** “ISRAELI Says GAZA Action is Option; The Defense Chief Hinted at an Invasion” (Friday, 2/29)

*** “Dozens Killed in ISRAELI Troop Action IN GAZA” (Sunday, 3/2)

*** “ISRAEL Vows To Keep Up GAZA Attacks” (Monday, 3/3)

*** “ISRAELIS Exit GAZA” (Tuesday, 3/4)

*** “... Negotiations Broken Off Over ISRAEL’S Incursion into GAZA” (Wednesday, 3/5)

*** “Abbas Had Halted [Talks] After ISRAEL’S Incursion into GAZA” (Thursday, 3/6)

Did ASHKELON and SDEROT deserve to be mentioned, along with Gaza, Gaza, Gaza, Gaza, Gaza, Gaza, in these Philadelphia Inquirer headlines? Over these same ten days, I printed out 12 PAGES of news article squibs about Arab rocketing of Ashkelon and Sderot from the Conf. of Presidents' Daily Alerts. Here's few samples.

Thursday, 2/28: "Fifty Palestinian Rockets Bombard Israel, Israeli Killed at Sapir College, Ashkelon Hospital Targeted."

Thursday, 2/28: "Ashkelon Residents Realize: We're Just Like Sderot."

Thursday, 2/28: Editorial in Ha-aretz [sic]: "The dozens of rockets that were fired Wednesday from Gaza – one of which killed Roni Yihye – have placed the IDF on the threshold of a major raid into the Palestinian territory. Responsibility for the escalation lies entirely with the Palestinian side: the Hamas government."

Friday, 2/29 (AP/International Herald Tribune): "The Israeli city of Ashkelon [pop. 120,000], located 17 kilometers (11 miles) from Gaza, was hit by several Iranian-made Grad (Katyusha) rockets on Thursday, fired by Hamas militants in Gaza. One hit an apartment building, slicing through the roof and three floors below, and another landed near a school, wounding a 17-year-old girl."

Friday, 2/29: "Ten Palestinian Rockets Hit Ashkelon"

Monday, 3/3: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "The 122 mm Grad rockets (also known as Katyushas) fired from Hamas-controlled Gaza against the Israeli city of Ashkelon are a standard military artillery weapon, equipped with a weapons-grade high explosive fragmentation warhead. The range of the rockets fired against Ashkelon is over 20 km., an upgraded capability which places about a quarter of a million Israeli civilians in constant danger of Hamas attack."

NONE of this, not the continued daily Arab bombarding of Sderot, not the NEWLY LAUNCHED Arab bombarding of Ashkelon, a civilian city, by standard military artillery shells equipped with weapons-grade high explosive fragmentation warheads, was Headline News to the Inq, just Israel launching Gaza "attacks" and "incursions."

And we do NOTHING. Ask yourself what manner of poem a Bialik would write about us, not a hundred years' ago's shtet Jews preyed upon by marauding Cossacks, but Jews today in America's fourth largest Jewish community.

HERE'S A CHANCE TO STAND UP: With Israel's 60th independence anniversary approaching, unless we act, the "mainstream" western media, including our Inq, will focus its increasingly prominent attention to that milestone by perverting its history – through religious rechristening of Palestine's UN Partition between its Arab and Jewish populations as "the establishment, founding, creation of Israel"; of the multi-nation Arab invasion to undo Partition as "the war that followed Israel's creation," without Partition,

the Arab invasion and the invading Arab states even mentioned; and of that invasion's Arab refugees as "Palestinian refugees who fled or were forced from their homes in the war that followed Israel's creation." That same era's greater number of indigenously Middle Eastern Jewish refugees from vast Muslim lands, the bulk of whom tiny Israel absorbed, won't be mentioned at all.

So far, MORE THAN SEVENTY grassroots community members have signed and sent back to me the 1-page letter appended to this BSMW issue calling upon the Inquirer to cease these perversions of history. Print it out, get your groups to sign copies, and mail them back to me, c/o Brith Sholom, Suite 106, 3939 Conshohocken Ave, Phila PA 19134, before the end of March. Or just have people append their names as signers and email them back. They'll go in a batch to the Inq's bigs, along with the now nearly completed thick tome of Inq quotations committing these very outrages to Israel, to Jews and to history.

Regards,
Jerry

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Mr. Bruce Toll, Chairman
Mr. Brian P. Tierney, Chief Executive Officer
The Philadelphia Inquirer
Box 41705
Philadelphia PA 19101

Dear Mr. Toll and Mr. Tierney:

May 15th, in Western calendar reckoning, will mark the State of Israel's 60th anniversary of its independence, a milestone that the Western media, including the Philadelphia Inquirer, will prominently cover.

I'm gravely concerned, based upon years of quotations from your paper enclosed with this letter, that the Inquirer will portray this milestone occurrence in a manner grossly unfair to Israel and the millions of Jews and Christians who recognize Israel not as a state artificially "created" or "founded in 1948," but as the Jewish people's continuous historical homeland since ancient times.

Specifically:

I object to the Inquirer's insistent substitution of expressions like "Israel's 1948 creation," "establishment," "founding," - i.e., anything abrupt, unilateral and artificial - for what actually historically happened, the UN's Partition of the remaining League of Nations Palestine Mandate between its Arab and Jewish populations, c. a million and six hundred thousand people, respectively.

I object to the Inquirer's religious rechristening of the multi-nation Arab invasion rejecting UN Partition as "the war that followed Israel's creation" without those invading Arab states so much as named.

I object to the Inquirer's adamant attribution of seemingly exclusively Arab refugees to that "war that followed Israel's creation" and not to the multi-nation Arab invasion.

I object to the Inquirer's persistent portrayal of these Arabs as "having fled or been forced from their homes," when many left with the encouragement of the Arab invaders.

I object to the Inquirer's incessant references to these Arab refugees from tiny Israel with virtually no reference whatever to that same era's greater number of indigenously Middle Eastern Jewish refugees from vast Muslim lands, the bulk of whom Israel absorbed.

For years, with as recent an instance as 2007, the Inquirer repeatedly preposterously exaggerated the c. half-million Arabs who left tiny Israel as "millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants," sometimes as "nearly four million Palestinian refugees and their descendants," poisoning Western public perceptions of partitioned Palestine's actual 1947 population, which was less than two million, a good third of it Jews. That the Inquirer has apparently stopped repeating this preposterous exaggeration has not undone the persistent poisoning of public perception it wreaked. Real, if but partial, rectification can come only from the Inquirer ceasing to purvey the remainder of its persistent mis-portrayal of seemingly exclusively Arab (retrospectively called "Palestinian") refugees from a sudden "1948 creation" or "founding of Israel," a mis-portrayal of which these preposterously exaggerated "millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants," still deeply ingrained in public perception, were a key formative part.

Very truly yours,