

FORUM

Israeli/Palestinian peace both probable, necessary

By Phil Zuckerman

Peace is possible. American soldiers may be filling up the sand dunes of the Persian Gulf waiting to attack, and the animosity between Jews and Arabs may be escalating, but peace is still possible. It is not only possible, but necessary.

Commentary

It was with this hope and conviction that students from all over Western North America met for a regional conference of the Progressive Zionist Caucus held at Mills College Nov. 9-11.

The PZC is a grassroots Jewish student organization whose issues of concern range from peaceful co-existence between Jews and Arabs to gay and lesbian support.

As a member of Hillel and the Jewish Student Union, I represented the University at the conference. Other representatives came from as far away as British Columbia University, Evergreen State College, and nearly all the University of California campuses to take part in the weekend seminar.

The two main topics of the

workshops and discussions revolved around two pressing issues: Israeli/Palestinian peace (along with the threat of Saddam Hussein) and what it means to call oneself a Progressive Zionist.

The issue of Israeli/Palestinian peace is pretty clear: Israel must get out of the occupied territories and allow for a Palestinian nation. In turn, Palestinians must prove that such a move would not pose a threat to Israeli security.

To call oneself a progressive Zionist means that we are Zionists in that we believe Jews should have a country to call their own — we never question Israel's fundamental existence. Yet we are progressive in that we have a moral obligation to voice our objection to the injustice of current Israeli policy.

The possibility of war is staring the world in the face. For Jews, even if the Israeli/Palestinian conflict were solved, the immediate threat to the existence of Israel may hinge upon Iraq.

Unlike the United States, Israel has everything to lose when it goes to war. If American lives are lost, it would be a tragedy. But it would not mean

the end of the United States.

For Israel, this is not the case — if Israel loses a war, it loses Israel. And Hussein has already threatened to incinerate Israel on numerous occasions.

In attending this conference, my confidence in a progressive Jewish/Zionist voice was confirmed. Jews can believe in Israel and still criticize its oppressive policies. But the conference also built up my fears that a war with Iraq is a strong possibility, one which could spell out a second Jewish holocaust.

So as a progressive Jew I want to do my share for the cause of peace. And right here on our own campus I experienced how hard that can be.

This past Monday I approached the Muslim Student Union to see if they would co-sponsor a day dedicated to Jewish/Arab peace. The response I got was a slap in the face of reality: I was told that the Muslim Student Union will never have anything to do with Jews.

Not only must the occupied territories be given up, but Israel must cease to exist. Only the followers of Islam have a right to exist in the Middle East; they will not even consider a coal-

ition with anyone other than Muslims.

Although I left their office feeling offended and humiliated, it was a good lesson for me: Israel can look to no one for support. I really felt the true meaning of Zionism — if we are not for ourselves, no one will be for us.

But at the same time my progressive spirit held strong: The Muslim Student Union does not speak for all Arabs. There are Arabs out there who acknowledge Israel. There are Palestinians who simply want their own homeland and have

no intention of aligning themselves with Hussein's destructive objectives.

As a progressive Jew, I have faith that Palestinians will win their independence. Yet their cause may be moot if the whole area goes up in a puff of Iraqi chemical warfare.

If Americans invade Iraq, Israel will be the first to feel Hussein's wrath. Thus as American Jews, our immediate commitment toward peace can wait no longer.

We have everything to lose.
Phil Zuckerman is a member of the Jewish Student Union

LETTERS

Emotion check

People like me will come and go throughout your life. A strong test of your character will come in the manner in which you deal with my intrusions. If you take exception to comments fashioned in your direction — do not take it as a personal attack. Keep your emotions in check — they will only eclipse any rational discourse you might wish to provide. You do yourself and your cause a disservice by whining, slapping me or calling me "...the embodiment of evil."

Instead, glean from the remarks, however strident, what you may improve your lot. In your attempt to find some truth in me you can begin to find the truth within yourself.

Rise above your detractors. In this way you can show me the errors of my ways and means. I will not, nor have any desire, to retract any of my flippant, thoughtless and hypercritical tirades — people like me seldom do.

However, I do sincerely believe that you have the ability (or anger) to overcome any and all obstacles to make the team, the University, the state —

heck, even the nation proud at the Freedom Bowl.

Who knows, you might, one day, thank me for my misguided

ed efforts. If I live to see the day,

Kawika Holbrook
Eugene

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



"They're Neanderthals, Loona. . . . Every one of them."

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