

Readers Letters – 11 June 1985

INSULT TO ZIONISM

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post

Sir, – You report (June 3) Dr. Saul Cohen, the executive vice-president of the American Joint Distribution Committee, as saying that his organization maintains Soviet Jews while they “wait in Rome,” organizes and funds their transportation across the Atlantic (to the U.S.) and has supported a “freedom of choice” policy for emigrants.

This is a remarkably disingenuous statement, a small corner of the truth. What the JDC is supporting merits a fuller description.

The Soviet Jews do not start their career, out of the blue, “waiting in Rome.” They have been allowed to leave the Soviet Union and reach Vienna on the strength of an affidavit signed by a relative in Israel and backed by the word of the government of Israel, in order that they proceed to their national homeland (which they and we all tell the Soviets) is Israel.

By their going to the U.S. instead, they dishonour their undertaking, and the integrity of the State of Israel is impugned. As the Soviet government does not, except in the case of a handful of political dissidents, allow its citizens to emigrate to the U.S. or elsewhere, this breach of undertaking by the Soviet “drop-outs” can only encourage the Soviet government to keep the gates all but shut against the emigration of other Jews.

When Dr. Cohen personally signs a cheque or promissory note, does he regard himself as having “freedom of choice” as to whether to honour it or not? Or is the honour of the Israel government worth less than his own?

Not the least disgraceful element in this whole sorry operation is that the Jews with perfectly good visas in their possession – visas to Israel, their national homeland – treat them with contempt and in effect announce to the American representatives in Rome that they are *refugees* – meaning they have nowhere to go.

Perhaps Dr. Cohen knows who taught them to thus disguise themselves. And was it the JDC – or what American organization was it – that persuaded the U.S. government to connive at this lie, which constitutes a public denigration of Israeli sovereignty and a surely not uncalculated insult to Zionism?

Of course, the JDC and the U.S. Government are not the only guilty parties. The Jewish Agency and the Israel Government itself, as a function of long years of kowtowing to Jewish *g'virim* in the U.S. and out of fear of upsetting the paladins of the State Department – where a notable strain of anti-Zionism has persisted for 70 years – have been accomplices throughout.

Yet if, as Dr. Cohen claims, the JDC is the financial mainstay of the operation, then surely the way to ensure that, in future, the Soviet Jews emigrating to their homeland do in fact get to their homeland is for the JDC to give up conniving at the deception and stop spending all that money taking them away from Israel.

SHMUEL KATZ

Tel Aviv.