

3 June 1984

REACTIONARY COALITION

By REUVEN ALBERG

MANY COUNTRIES have known the unholy alliance of the right-wing and reactionary elements in society and the fanatical religious elements. Now we are seeing such a combination in Israel, in an active and strident form.

Those Israelis who care little for democratic social values and are not averse to having a state with first- and second-class citizens have joined forces with religious extremists who thirst for a theocratic racist country based on the messianic promises of enlarged Israel boundaries.

Shmuel Katz is a good example of the “secular” side of this unholy combination. In a recent article in *The Jerusalem Post* (April 27) he presents us with many of the “arguments” incessantly repeated by the ultra-conservative propagandists.

He wants the Alignment to “see the light and abandon its opposition to the settlement of Jews throughout Western Eretz Yisrael.” He does not call the territories Judea and Samaria or the West Bank. He calls them western Israel.

In other words, both sides of the Jordan River are rightly Israel, just as our messianic religionists proclaim, because they were Israel in the days of King David. That is to say, after we have “absorbed” the West Bank, with its million Arabs, we should rightly take over the east bank – that is, the present country of Jordan. Never mind that there are three million Arabs living there. Never mind that the annexation of even the West Bank would soon make this country a land with more Arabs than Jews.

THERE ARE WAYS of “solving” the demographic problem, say many of our annexationists – by making things “unpleasant” for the Arabs here so they will emigrate. Such, for example, as planting bombs on Arab buses. Katz wants the Alignment to see the light and come out for annexation.

Then Katz says two amazing things: He says that Shimon Peres declared that “most of the 40,000 Jews living in Judea and Samaria and Gaza were settled there by the Alignment government.” Most of us know that the largest part of the settlement in the territories was made in the last seven years under Likud auspices. I asked Yossi Beilin, the spokesman of the Labour Party, about this assertion, and he said that Peres could not have said such a thing.

Secondly, Shmuel Katz says that government expenditures on the West Bank settlements are “relatively insignificant.” He says that Meron Benvenisti, the universally recognized authority on the West Bank, has declared that these expenditures constitute only one half of 1 per cent of the national budget. In other words, \$100 million out of a total budget of \$20 billion.

I spoke to Mr. Benvenisti about this, and he told me that he had calculated the expenditures to be 1 per cent of the national budget, and not one half of 1 per cent. That is, not \$100 million but \$200 million. Katz had been “off” by only \$100 million. And \$200 million is not an “insignificant” sum in anybody’s country.

This does not, of course, include the huge sums needed to police and “pacify” these areas. And it does not include the enormous amounts granted to the “settlers” in subsidized mortgages.

In these days, when our hospitals and schools and social welfare institutions are being starved of funds, just think what such huge sums could accomplish. Also in these days the pleas for settlements in the Galilee, the Negev and the Arava are being turned down, for all the funds must go to the West Bank. Just think what part of these huge sums could do for advancing much-needed scientific research in industry.

THE GREATEST absurdity here, the greatest scandal, is that a large part of the houses built on the West Bank are standing empty. There just aren't enough wild-eyed "pioneers" to occupy them.

In 1983, our annexationists predicted that in 1985 there would be 100,000 Jews in the West Bank (*Ma'ariv*, January 11, 1983). Here it is almost 1985, and there are much fewer than that number there. But they keep on building.

Our ultra-conservatives do not seem to care at all what they do with our money. They don't seem to care that our economic catastrophe is helping to destroy our social fabric. With the second group in the above-mentioned coalition, the fanatical religious, it is the same thing. They also show a cavalier attitude to our economic substance.

Besides wasting billions on the West Bank, we must add the billions of shekels in hand-outs to "eternal" yeshiva students.

Katz speaks of Lebanon. Of course there is no easy formula for dragging ourselves out of the morass that is our occupation of Southern Lebanon, but what our ultra-conservatives do not admit is that we should never have invaded Lebanon in the first place.

For a year or more before June 1982, there were hardly any Katyushas launched from Lebanon. We had reached an undeclared understanding with the Syrians and the terrorists about various "red lines," and the area was quieter than it had been in a long time. Even now, our military leaders warn us that we can never be sure that we will be 100 per cent free of Katyusha attacks.

In the long term, there will be only one answer to terrorist attacks. If we can come to an equitable agreement with the Arabs over the West Bank and make peace with them – then, and only then, will we be free from terrorist attacks. There are now no terrorist attacks from Egypt.

SHMUEL KATZ wants us to have compulsory arbitration in labour disputes in essential services. This, again, is one of the perennial darlings of the ultra-conservatives. This means that judges would decide who is right in a labour dispute, and it would be a criminal offence to strike.

Right-wing elements in many countries have advocated such a procedure, but it has been rejected in all democratic countries, with one or two exceptions. The countries that have been noteworthy for introducing compulsory arbitration have been some reactionary regimes in Africa and South America and, above all, fascist Italy.

See Shmuel Katz's reply on next page

29 June 1984

BIG-LIE TECHNIQUE

By Shmuel Katz

A MOTLEY CREW of self-hating Jewish bigots who maybe even believe that what goes on in their heads is liberal thinking, have long found it convenient to prop up their posturings as “liberals” by adopting the semantics of the Arabs and their friends. One of their essential pretences is that restored Jewish rule to Judea and Samaria (which they call “the West Bank”) would be an act of “annexation.” Sometimes they call it “imperialism.”

They thus bolster Jordan’s claim to ownership of the areas in Western Palestine which it overran in 1948; and they lend credence to the Arabs’ monstrous historic lie that Eretz Yisrael is an Arab country to which the Jewish people have no claim, and on which “Western imperialism” imposed the “Zionist entity.”

To encourage credibility they often drape themselves in the Zionist flag and pretend that they are in the mainstream of Jewish and Zionist thought. They evidently believe in the now classic principle that the bigger the lie the more readily will it be believed, and the more lies you tell the harder it will be for anybody to catch up with them.

IN A RECENT interview in *Ma’ariv*, Labour leader Shimon Peres suggested that Likud claims about the volume of its settlement policy in Judea and Samaria were exaggerated.

“When we analyse the map,” he said, “it transpires that the headlines are larger than the settlements. Altogether there are in Judea and Samaria today some 30,000 residents. Of these nearly 4,000 are in the Jordan Valley, where we have supported and support settlement. There are about 4,000 additional in the Etzion bloc which too we have always regarded as part of the State of Israel, and about 11,000 in Ma’ale Adumim, a community whose planning and establishment was started by us. Thus nearly 20,000 are to be found in places that we ourselves initiated and planned.

This statement is substantially true. It recalls the part played by Labour governments in the Jewish resettlement of Judea and Samaria after 1967. It was to this statement that I referred in my article “Room to Cooperate” (*The Jerusalem Post*, April 27).

But Peres’ assertion that territory previously ruled by Jordan is seen by the Labour party as part of the State of Israel, and that Jews had been settled there under Labour governments, apparently shocked the bigoted know-nothings. It means, after all, that the Labour Party was also “annexationist,” differing from the Likud only in the *amount* of territory to be “annexed.”

Here indeed was a dilemma. But one of them found a typical solution. *Pravda* could not have improved on it. What Peres had said must be stifled, my reference to it denounced as a lie. And so we find a Mr. Reuven Alberg writing brazenly that Peres had said no such thing (*The Jerusalem Post*, June 3, 1984).

This man also attacks me for my reference to Meron Benvenisti’s memorandum on the settlements policy. There, Benvenisti urges opponents of that policy to concentrate on its political implications, not on its financial cost – which Benvenisti shows is relatively insignificant.

The figure that emerges from Benvenisti's analysis is \$100 million, that is about half a per cent of the national budget. Alberg obviously did not examine Benvenisti's memorandum, but for his malicious purpose that was not necessary. He charges me with misrepresenting Benvenisti's figures.

He claims that Benvenisti himself told him the figure was \$200 million. If this is true (which I doubt), Benvenisti should clear up the discrepancy. The figure of \$100 million has been quoted by other writers, for example Danny Rubinstein (*Davar*, Nov. 25, 1983) and Avraham Tal (*Ha'aretz*, April 24, 1984).

THESE ARE mild samples of the vicious personal attack on me which constitutes the sum and the thrust of Alberg's article. In this space I can deal with only a few gems. He makes the following statement about me: "He does not call the territories Judea and Samaria or the West Bank. He calls them Western Israel."

There is method in his fabrication – which he elaborates. If I use "Western Israel" for Judea and Samaria this implies that there is an "eastern Israel" – across the Jordan. Hence it follows that I have "annexationist" designs on Jordan.

This balderdash could be amusing. It is, after all, common knowledge that I have been an unremitting campaigner for years in Israel and abroad for calling Judea and Samaria by their proper names and against calling them "the West Bank." I have pointed out, year after year, in articles, in lectures and media interviews that while Judea and Samaria are indeed their biblical names, and thereby emphasize their Jewish origin and identity, these have remained their names throughout history; and that "the West Bank" (for which the Arabs have no proper name of their own) is a purely political term, designed precisely to erase their Jewish identity.

As for Jordan, what could be more explicit than what I have said and written on the subject? The British in 1922, in an act of perfidy, excluded "the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine" from the projected Jewish National Home, and fostered and forced its emergence in 1946 as an Arab State. The Transjordanian Kingdom, thus occupying three-quarters of the territory of Palestine, did in fact become a Palestinian Arab State. This concession was forced on the Jewish people at the time, but it is a fact of life which we have had to accept.

The Jordan River as the border between Israel and the Kingdom of Jordan is the only reasonable and acceptable basis for peace between us. This view has been articulated by me – and the school of thought I represent – time out of number (since 1967). There is no reason for misunderstanding.

If therefore Reuven Alberg was a pupil of mine I would set him the task of making him read all the articles and books I have written until he can point to one in which I have written "Western Israel."

Alberg's vilification goes further. He describes me as "a good example of the secular side of a coalition of people who care little for democratic social values and are not averse to being a state with first- and second-class citizens." How does one answer such abuse? After all this man would not be able to produce a single sentence from anything I have said or written, that would support this impudent, slanderous statement.

ALBERG UNWITTINGLY adds to his brew a striking illustration of the true quality of his (and his ilk's) pretensions to social and democratic values. He attacks me for my

proposal of obligatory arbitration by an objective judicial body, in order to eliminate the strike weapon in essential services. Here too he cannot deny himself the descent into factual untruth. He claims it has been tried in only two democratic countries – Australia and New Zealand – and that in both it has been a complete failure. In fact it was applied successfully in Great Britain throughout World War II and for seven years thereafter.

Of course this was made possible by the cooperation of workers and employers; and it was applied in periods of emergency, first of the war and then of economic crisis, when all in Britain realized the tremendous harm to the nation caused by strikes.

This cooperation is precisely what I believe we are entitled to demand in Israel, whose emergency is continuous, whose economy is hobbled by the allocation of one-third of the national budget to defence and whose every able-bodied adult male is absent from the economy for weeks every year – doing military reserve duty.

More to the point: My proposal is specifically directed not at strikes in private enterprise but in essential services. These descend upon us in bitter unending succession month after month, year after year. These strikes bear no relation, socially or ideologically, to the classic workers' struggle against rapacious exploitative employers which in days gone by gave birth to and justified the right to strike. Those strikes attacked and hurt the interests of the persons who were responsible for the workers' condition.

Our strikers direct their attack at the nation or sections of its citizens, all innocent of any responsibility. They deny succour to the sick, they deny teaching to the children, they close down radio and television services, disrupt air services, they close down ports, they shut off electricity. They hold a pistol to the nation's head.

Strikes, then, are settled in Israel not according to the measure of justice in the workers' demands but according to the measure of suffering they impose on the public, or the degree of loss they can cause the national economy, or the damage they can inflict on the national prestige.

There is no reason, in morality or ethics, in social harmony or democratic values, why these disputes should not be resolved like every other dispute in our society – by the judicial process. Why are judges who are deemed capable – and are capable – of sorting out and deciding on the most complicated cases, not deemed able to solve labour disputes?

THE DECLARED opponents of arbitration have no answer to these questions, except the reactionary argument that what has been must be, or hypocritical and irrelevant babble about the sanctity of the worker's (any worker's) "right to strike," and therefore his right to deprive the rest of the public (including all other workers) of *their* elementary civic and human rights.

They prefer and defend the holding-to-ransom method of settling labour disputes; and (as in the case of Mr. Alberg) heap abuse freely on whoever exposes their naked bigotry.

See Reuven Alberg and Shmuel Katz's Letters To the Editor on following pages

Reader's letter, 5 July 1984

SETTLING THE WEST BANK

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post

Sir, – On April 27, Shmuel Katz printed an article in this paper, and on June 3, I printed an article criticizing it. As a result, Mr. Katz subjected me to extreme and unrestrained invective (June 29). I have never before had such derogatory epithets hurled at me.

I want to say clearly and forcefully that I am not a “self-hating Jew,” nor a “bit,” nor a “naked bigot,” nor a “bigoted know-nothing,” nor a “posturing liberal” (but a real one), nor a “Pravda-type journalist,” and I do not have a “malicious purpose,” do not “babble hypocritically” and am not a “reactionary.”

I cannot understand why Mr. Katz showered me with so many uncomplimentary expressions. I have read many of his articles, and respect some of his views, but I would have thought that such an experienced journalist would not use such intemperate language in print. Especially when in the points in which we disagree I still feel that I am right and Shmuel Katz is mistaken.

Mr. Katz said in his original article that Meron Benvenisti's figures show that we are spending only \$100 million of our annual budget on the West Bank. In my article, I said that I had spoken to Mr. Benvenisti and he had said that it was 200 million. Now Mr. Katz accuses me with “malicious purpose” of misrepresenting the truth. I therefore spoke to Mr. Benvenisti again, and he again confirmed to me that it is really 200 million.

We know that the Alignment is trying to show its connection with settling the West Bank, and Shimon Peres also said a few words showing that they had something to do with settlements. But this does not mean that Peres claimed that the Alignment had settled a large proportion of the Jews living in the West Bank, as Katz had written in his first article. I asked Yossi Beilin, the spokesman of the Labour Party, about this, and he said that Peres could not have said that the Alignment had settled a large proportion of the Jews on the West Bank. And I quoted Beilin by name in my article.

Now Katz quotes Peres' exact words, and it transpires that Peres had said not that the Alignment had *settled* a large proportion of Jews there but merely that they had *initiated* and *planned* several settlements. These were later frantically crammed with settlers by the Likud.

I spoke to Beilin again on this and he said that that is just what happened and not that the Alignment believed in or effected wholesale and overall settlements in the West Bank.

Katz berates me for calling the taking over of the West Bank “annexation.” But any land that is not fully and legally a part of a country and is taken over is called “annexed.”

Katz also condemns my use of the word “imperialism.” I feel, however, that any situation in which one people rules over another (native-born) people against their will is imperialism.

In my article I said that many annexationists want to cause Arabs to emigrate by causing them “unpleasantnesses,” such as killing them in buses.

I did not say, nor did I imply, that Shmuel Katz sympathizes with the acts attributed to the alleged Jewish terrorists. I know that Mr. Katz is too civilized a person to have such feelings.

If what I said in this regard was misinterpreted and cast reflection on Mr. Katz, I deeply regret this.

REUBEN ALBERG

Tel Aviv.

Reader's letter, 25 July 1984

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

To the Editor of The Jerusalem Post

Sir, – Reuven Alberg's letter (July 5) calls to mind the old story of the man who, having killed his parents, pleaded for mercy on the ground that he was an orphan.

He made a vicious personal attack on me in his original article. He fabricated the story that I (of all people) do not call Judea and Samaria by their names, but refer to them as "Western Israel," thus "showing" I have designs on Jordan. Every word untrue.

In his new letter, he coyly omits any mention of this little misdemeanour or of his other slanderous references to me. Then, instead of being thankful that I only referred to his behaviour as malicious and as that of a know-nothing – he still complains about *my* "invective."

About settlements: "Know-nothing" is a precise description of anybody who claims to know what he is talking about and does not know (even without Mr. Peres's reminder) that the Jordan Valley communities and the Etzion bloc villages were fully established and the Ma'ale Adumim settlement was launched under Labour government auspices, before ever the Likud came to power; and were indeed part of the framework for the Labour Party's Allon Plan.

Alberg claims he is not a self-hating Jew. Who ever heard of a self-hating Jew admitting he is a self-hating Jew? See, then, his choice of language when he writes about his fellow-Jews. Thousands of them, free citizens in a democratic state, out of love of their people and their country, went from usually comfortable homes to settle and improve inhospitable areas in the Jordan Valley and the Judean Desert (as also in Samaria), or, as children of the Etzion bloc destroyed by the Arabs in 1948, went back to renew their own lives and to restore the homes of their parents. These are the people whom Mr. Alberg describes as having been "*frantically crammed* into their settlements by the Likud." Jews were *crammed*, and *frantically* at that, by their fellow Jews into settlement?

On the Benvenisti memorandum all I can add is that if Mr. Benvenisti now claims that the portion of the budget which emerges from his memorandum as being insignificant was 200 million dollars, he should publish a correction. Alberg evidently never read the memorandum. He now knows that others have quoted precisely the same figure as I did. He still does not trouble to check but continues to attack me (and only me). This is patent malice.

On “imperialism,” Alberg now defines imperialism as “any situation in which one people rules over another (native-born) people against their will.” He should read up his history – at least on the relative relationship and rights of Arabs and Jews in Eretz Yisrael. He will find that in 1919, after the Balfour Declaration, the Zionist aim was redefined (by Herbert Samuel) as a “Commonwealth under the auspices of an established Jewish majority” (that is, with a non-Jewish minority). In 1947, the Zionist leaders accepted the U.N. partition plan for a Jewish State in whose territory there were 45% Arabs. In 1967, after the Six-Day War, the Knesset empowered the government to incorporate any part of the territory (and its Arab population) under IDF control. It was in execution of this resolution that east Jerusalem was then incorporated in Israel and that (by Alberg’s definition) enabled Mayor Kollek to carry out his imperialistic design. My view (and I believe the view of most Israelis) is that the application of that resolution should be extended to the rest of Western Eretz Yisrael.

Mr. Alberg is free to give all this – from Samuel to Weizmann to Ben-Gurion to Begin to Kollek – the ridiculous mendacious appellation “imperialism.”

SHMUEL KATZ

Tel Aviv