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OPINION & EDITORIAL

Rhetoric fails complexity of issue

by Letters to the Editor

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Apartheid, colonization, ethnic cleansing: those are only a few of the terms that an article about Israel should contain if it attempts to appeal to the basic sentiments of a leftist-liberal campus town. The fact that those catchwords have very little to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is beside the point.

No, I do not intend to imply that the Israeli Government is the true representative of God on Earth, and yes, Israel indeed has been responsible for too many atrocities. Almost 40 years of occupation of the Palestinian territories is grave enough. And yet, it seems when one has to describe misconduct, one's terminology is reduced to the keywords noted above. I am unable to understand how given the variation of evil in human life, the vocabulary of describing it is so remarkably poor.

Mohammed Abed in his article "Israeli withdrawal masks true intent" condemns Israel for its withdrawal from Gaza, but it also condemns it for having stayed there and in other Palestinian territories. It seems Israel cannot escape the critical pen of Mr. Abed no matter what it does. It is always doomed to be portrayed as having apartheid-colonizing-ethnic cleansing policies. According to Mr. Abed, when Israel withdraws from Palestinian land, it does it for the wrong reasons, namely, to propel "physical parathion between the two ethnic groups in historical Palestine." And when it stays there, it is ostensibly engaged in its colonization project. We should take notice of Mr. Abed's phenomenal achievement in philosophy as he proves Aristotle to be wrong: a proposition and its negation can both be wrong at the same time.

Furthermore, according to Mr. Abed, all Israeli actions are aimed at expelling the Palestinians and effectually colonizing Jews in their expropriated land. Even when Israel does the opposite and evacuates Jewish settlers from the Gaza Strip, Mr. Abed contents that it is part of the scheme. He argues that Prime Minister Sharon's pullout of Gaza is a mere strategic arrangement of the chessboard due to Israel's failure to enforce its plan, which following that strange logic proves in turn that Israel has such a master plan. This reasoning is impossible to beat. An attempt to refute it will be as futile as proving to devoted Marxists that Marxist predictions are not valid.

Mr. Abed describes in length a narrative in which the Palestinians thrive to be the Jews' best friends, to be their ever-welcoming roommates in the small apartment west of the Jordan. The Jews, on the other hand in Mr. Abed's esteemed interpretation have been consistently and viciously trying to take hold of their roommate's strategic room. Next, their actions are interpreted as a part of their piecemeal plan to have it all for themselves. In developing his interpretation of modern Middle East history and politics, Mr. Abed does not allow facts, reason or even basic logic to come in his way. The result is indeed a convincing Hollywood fiction in which you know from the start who's right and who's wrong. The story Mr. Abed chooses to tell is neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian: he promotes a one-state solution which is neither Israeli nor Palestinian, while the majority of both parties clearly prefers to celebrate their identity and self-definition in their very own — albeit small — apartments.

I do not intend to follow Mr. Abed's article sentence by sentence to prove where he is wrong, where his

speculations on Israeli motives are the less reasonable or plausible of all. And I readily admit I am afraid to get into the debate about 'legitimate moral claim' as he puts it. I find moral accounting an extremely intricate business. However, if Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon chose to refer to the difficulties and hopelessness of Palestinian routine life in his speech to the nation on the very day his pullout plan from Gaza was about to be executed, there might be more common ground than we usually think. Isn't such a delicate agreement a better way for a debate, for enlarging and enriching our political lexicon, than some false moral or historical comparisons?

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