

<http://www.physics.harvard.edu/~wilson/NYTimes1948.html>

Below is a "copy" in its entirety of a very important letter to the New York Times from Jewish intellectuals including Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt, and Sidney Hook that appeared on December 4, 1948. Of particular interest is the reference to the Deir Yassin massacre which occurred earlier that year. While it is quoted from in brief on several web sites, it appears nowhere in its entirety, and it deserves to be disseminated as it originally appears.

Letters to The Times New York Times December 4, 1948

New Palestine Party Visit of Menachem Begin and Aims of Political Movement Discussed

TO THE EDITORS OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Among the most disturbing political phenomena of our times is the emergence in the newly created state of Israel of the "Freedom Party" (Tnuat HaHerut), a political party closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties. It was formed out of the membership and following of the former Irgun Zvai Leumi, a terrorist, right-wing, chauvinist organization in Palestine.

The current visit of Menachem Begin, leader of this party, to the United States is obviously calculated to give the impression of American support for his party in the coming Israeli elections, and to cement political ties with conservative Zionist elements in the United States. Several Americans of national repute have lent their names to welcome his visit. It is inconceivable that those who oppose fascism throughout the world, if correctly informed as to Mr. Begin's political record and perspectives, could add their names and support to the movement he represents.

Before irreparable damage is done by way of financial contributions, public manifestations in Begin's behalf, and the creation in Palestine of the impression that a large segment of America supports Fascist elements in Israel, the American public must be informed as to the record and objectives of Mr. Begin and his movement.

The public avowals of Begin's party are no guide whatever to its actual character. Today they speak of freedom, democracy and anti-imperialism, whereas until recently they openly preached the doctrine of the Fascist state. It is in its actions that the terrorist party betrays its real character; from its past actions we can judge what it may be expected to do in the future.

Attack on Arab Village

A shocking example was their behavior in the Arab village of Deir Yassin. This village, off the main roads and surrounded by Jewish lands, had taken no part in the war, and had even fought off Arab bands who wanted to use the village as their base. On April 9 (THE NEW YORK TIMES), terrorist bands attacked this peaceful village, which was not a military objective in the fighting, killed most of its inhabitants—240 men, women, and children—and kept a few of them alive to parade as captives through the streets of Jerusalem. Most of the Jewish community was horrified at the deed, and the Jewish Agency sent a telegram of apology to King Abdullah of Trans-Jordan. But the terrorists, far from being ashamed of their act, were proud of this massacre, publicized it widely, and invited all the foreign correspondents present in the country to view the heaped corpses and the general havoc at Deir Yassin.

The Deir Yassin incident exemplifies the character and actions of the Freedom Party.

Within the Jewish community they have preached an admixture of ultranationalism, religious mysticism, and racial superiority. Like other Fascist parties they have been used to break strikes, and have themselves pressed for the destruction of free trade unions. In their stead they have proposed corporate unions on the Italian Fascist model.

During the last years of sporadic anti-British violence, the IZL and Stern groups inaugurated a reign of terror in the Palestine Jewish community. Teachers were beaten up for speaking against them, adults were shot for not letting their children join them. By gangster methods, beatings, window-smashing, and wide-spread robberies, the terrorists intimidated the population and exacted a heavy tribute.

The people of the Freedom Party have had no part in the constructive achievements in Palestine. They have reclaimed no land, built no settlements, and only detracted from the Jewish defense activity. Their much-publicized immigration endeavors were minute, and devoted mainly to bringing in Fascist compatriots.

Discrepancies Seen

The discrepancies between the bold claims now being made by Begin and his party, and their record of past performance in Palestine bear the imprint of no ordinary political party. This is the unmistakable stamp of a Fascist party for whom terrorism (against Jews, Arabs, and British alike), and misrepresentation are means, and a "Leader State" is the goal.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, it is imperative that the truth about Mr. Begin and his movement be made known in this country. It is all the more tragic that the top leadership of American Zionism has refused to campaign against Begin's efforts, or even to expose to its own constituents the dangers to Israel from support to Begin.

The undersigned therefore take this means of publicly presenting a few salient facts concerning Begin and his party; and of urging all concerned not to support this latest manifestation of fascism.

ISIDORE ABRAMOWITZ, HANNAH ARENDT, ABRAHAM BRICK, RABBI JESSURUN CARDOZO, ALBERT EINSTEIN, HERMAN EISEN, M.D., HAYIM FINEMAN, M. GALLEN, M.D., H.H. HARRIS, ZELIG S. HARRIS, SIDNEY HOOK, FRED KARUSH, BRURIA KAUFMAN, IRMA L. LINDHEIM, NACHMAN MAISEL, SEYMOUR MELMAN, MYER D. MENDELSON, M.D., HARRY M. OSLINSKY, SAMUEL PITLICK, FRITZ ROHRLICH, LOUIS P. ROCKER, RUTH SAGIS, ITZHAK SANKOWSKY, I.J. SHOENBERG, SAMUEL SHUMAN, M. SINGER, IRMA WOLFE, STEFAN WOLFE.

New York, Dec. 2, 1948

Source notes: Laura Nader gave a copy of the microfilmed NYT to Anne Lipow in April. (Nader has been using it in her class at UC). The copy was illegible in parts and the first column was cut off; Laura's original was the same. Anne and UC Anthropology Librarian Suzanne Calpestri then tried to retrieve an electronic version of the letter. It appears nowhere in its entirety on the Internet, and is not in any NYT electronic archive accessible to UC Librarians (i.e., it doesn't exist). Suzanne made another copy from a different microfilm; it solved the mystery of the missing first column but this copy was also "dirty" in other areas. Neither copy was scannable using OCR, so I typed it in by hand exactly the way it appeared in the original, and have proofed it carefully. However, the spelling of some of the signatories was unclear in the microfilmed originals, so there may be a few errors in this rendition. It would be nice if someone were to annotate the list of signatories, so that those less-familiar names could be placed in context. At any rate, this clearly belongs IN FULL TEXT on the web for distribution to as many people as possible. Please circulate this among anyone you think may be interested; I think it especially belongs in the hands of those friends and family members who are still reluctant to criticize the Israeli government.

source info: Jenny Lipow Berkeley, CA <jennylipow@netscape.net> 22 May 2002