

A Spectacular Fraud

From Time Immemorial

By Norman G. Finkelstein

FEW BOOKS ON THE ORIGINS OF the Mideast crisis have evoked as much interest in recent memory as Joan Peters' study, *From Time Immemorial*. Virtually every important journal of opinion printed reviews within weeks of the book's release. The *New York Times* reports that five months after publication, *From Time Immemorial* is in its sixth printing.

Reviewers have differed in their overall assessment of the book. But they have uniformly hailed the prodigious research and the demographic findings that are at the core of Peters' study. Even John C. Campbell, in the one lukewarm notice to date, published in the *Sunday Times Book Review* May 13, praised Peters' "massive research...[that] would have daunted Hercules."

Walter Reich, in his July *Atlantic* review, surmised that if Peters' arguments, especially the demographic one, are confirmed, they will certainly change [our] assumptions about the Arab-Israeli conflict. In the July *Commentary*, Daniel Pipes throws all caution to the wind: Peters' "historical detective work," he writes, "has produced startling results which should materially influence the future course of the debate about the Palestinian problem."

Martin Peretz, in the July 23 *New Republic*, implies that there are no factual errors in the book, and that, if read, it "will change the mind of our generation. If understood, it could also affect the history of the future."

Not to be outdone, Holocaust scholar Lucy Dawidowicz congratulates Peters for having "brought into the light the historical truth about the Mideast." And Barbara Probst Solomon, Barbara Tuchman, Saul Bellow, Elie Wiesel, Arthur Goldberg and others have lent their voices—and names—to this chorus of praise.

And yet, *From Time Immemorial* is among the most spectacular frauds ever published on the Arab-Israeli conflict. In a field littered with crass propaganda, forgeries and fakes, this is no mean distinction. But Peters' book has thoroughly earned it.

The fraud falls into two basic categories. First, the demographic study of population shifts within Palestine is a transparent and vulgar hoax. Second, the evidence Peters adduces to document massive illegal immigration into Palestine is almost entirely falsified.

On the second point, Peters purports to document massive illegal Arab immigration into the Jewish-settled areas of Palestine during the British Mandate years (roughly, 1920-1948). She argues that a significant proportion of the 700,000 Arabs residing in the part of Palestine that became Israel in 1947 had only recently settled there—and that they had emigrated to Palestine only because of the opportunities opened up by Zionist

settlement. Therefore, Peters claims, the industrious Jewish immigrants had as much, if not more, right to claim this territory as their own.

Peters fails to say exactly what fraction of this Arab population in the Jewish-settled areas of Palestine was not indigenous. This is a curious omission from an author who pretends to achieve scientific precision in her calculations. Peters' few hints in this regard are remarkable for their inconsistency. This, too, is odd in a study that devotes much space to alleged numerical discrepancies in refugee reports, population statistics and other documents.

One two occasions Peters suggests that the number of illegal Arab immigrants (nonindigenous Arabs) that had settled in the Jewish areas of Palestine "was great enough to compare with [the] admittedly immigration-based increase of the Jews." (p. 275, 337) This would put total "illegal" or "hidden" Arab immigration at about 370,000. Elsewhere (p. 381), Peters seems to set her sights considerably lower—"at least 200,000" through 1939.

The figure Peters proposes for illegal Arab immigration is somewhere between 200,000 and 400,000. In other words, she alleges that nonindigenous Arabs constituted fully one-half of the Arab population residing in the region of Palestine that became Israel in 1947.

Peters' thesis is audacious. The 1946 Anglo-American Report estimated that only 19,000 Arab immigrants had settled in Palestine during the entire Mandate period. Ten thousand of these Arab immigrants had settled there legally. That would put the number of illegal Arab immigrants who had settled in Palestine at 9,000 for all 30 years of the British Mandate. Peters contends, on the contrary, that during each of the 30 years of the Mandate 10,000 Arabs had illegally settled in the Jewish areas of Palestine.

The burden of Peters' case is to prove this figure. Peters' reviewers uniformly praised her allegedly prodigious research. Readers of these notices could be excused for assuming that the author had managed to tap into a wealth of hitherto unexplored or unknown materials to substantiate her thesis. But nothing could be further from the truth. A close reading of Peters' voluminous footnotes reveals that she relies almost exclusively on the most standard official documents of the period—the 1930 *Hope Simpson Report*, the 1937 *Peel Commission Report*, the 1945-46 *Anglo-American Survey of Palestine*, the annual British reports to the League of Nations, etc. None of this evidence is new.

This raises an interesting question. Without exception, these official, mostly British-authored reports concluded that—in the words of the 1946 *Survey of Palestine*—"Arab immigration for the purposes of settlement [in Palestine] was insubstantial." Yet Peters manages to use these very same documents to "prove" precisely the contrary. How does she do it?

In effect Peters uses a three-pronged strategy to create evidence where none exists: multiple references, "tip of the iceberg" thesis and major surgery.

• **Multiple references**—the fragments of evidence that Peters does offer the reader (almost all of which are falsified) are repeated over and over again in the text. Peters' spectacularly chaotic presentation of the relevant material manages,

to some extent, to conceal this fact.

• **"Tip of the iceberg" thesis**—Peters advances the provocative thesis that the little evidence she does come up with is actually worth many times its apparent value. This is because the British purportedly turned a blind eye to all but the most "flagrant" cases of illegal Arab immigration into Palestine. It thus follows that, say, for every reported Arab deported from Palestine, many other illegal Arab immigrants must have been allowed to stay.

This argument hinges entirely on the allegation that the British were indifferent to all but the most egregious instances of illegal Arab infiltration. Unfortunately for Peters, however, save for a very brief period during World War II, Peters presents not a particle of evidence to support this "theory."

But Peters didn't let this obstacle stand in her way. She proceeded to completely falsify one paragraph from the 1930 *Hope Simpson Report* (pp. 296-97) to secure the crucial evidence. Peters construes the paragraph in question to mean that, however unjust the practice may be to the Jews, the British would only deport "flagrant" illegal Arab immigrants. This is pure invention. The actual document says nothing of the sort.

Peters repeatedly refers back to this same doctored material at each critical juncture in the text to clinch her argument. She makes 19—sometimes implicit, more often explicit—references on 12 different pages (229, 232, 233, 296, 297, 326, 375, 376, 379, 394, 402) to this same paragraph in the *Hope Simpson Report*. In each and every one of the 19 citations its content is falsified.

In sum, Peters argues *ad nauseam* that since the British responded to only the most flagrant instances of illegal Arab immigration, one can assume that for every reported illegal Arab immigrant during the Mandate years, many times more such illegal immigrants went unnoticed. Without the falsification of the *Hope Simpson Report*, Peters could not have sustained this central argument.

• **Major surgery**—Peters still needs the "tip" to prove the "iceberg." She still needs a fact before she can make multiple references to it. Peters resolved this problem by embarking on a falsification spree that in John Campbell's phrase cited earlier—"would have daunted Hercules."

Peters does not adduce one substantive and pertinent piece of evidence to document her thesis that is not in some way falsified. But though Peters is a grotesque falsifier, she is not lacking in cleverness. The quotes she falsifies in the text are often accurately rendered somewhere in a footnote. I suspect that Peters will at some point argue that she couldn't possibly have intended to conceal anything,

since the full quote is right there—buried in some 120 pages of footnotes.

This is not the place to document all of Peters' crude and shameless falsifications. I intend to do so in a book-length monograph, *The Protocols of Joan Peters*, that I am presently preparing for publication. In the space available here, I can only sample and gloss Peters' typical methods of falsification. These are illustrated in the following excerpts:

Actual Document

1. Hope Simpson Report (1930)

In Palestine, "...Egyptian labor is being employed in certain individual cases...."

"There can be no doubt that there is at present time serious unemployment among Arab craftsmen and among Arab laborers."

"Arab unemployment is serious and general."

2. Peel Commission Report (1937)

"A large proportion of Arab immigrants into Palestine come from the Hauran. These people go in considerable numbers to Haifa where they work in the port. It is, however, important to realize that the extent of the yearly exodus from the Hauran depends mainly on the state of the crops there. In a good year, the amount of illegal immigration into Palestine is negligible confined to the younger members of large families whose presence is not required in the fields. Most persons in this category probably remain permanently in Palestine, wages there being considerably higher than in Syria. According to an authoritative estimate, as many as 10 or 11 thousand Hauranis may go to Palestine temporarily in search of work in a really bad year. The Deputy Inspector-General of the Criminal Investigation Department has recently estimated that the number of Hauranis illegally in the country is at present time roughly 2,500." (My emphasis—NGF)

3. Anglo-American Survey of Palestine (1945-46)

"As a matter of emergency, official arrangements were made, in October 1942, to bring laborers from Syria and the Lebanon under the auspices of the Army.... Under this arrangement 3,800 laborers were admitted." (My emphasis—NGF)

"Arab illegal immigration is mainly casual, temporary and seasonal." The Survey observes that, for example, immigration increases in "boom" and emigration in "bust" periods. To illustrate this particular pattern of temporary immigration, the following example is cited: "[T]he 'boom' conditions in Palestine in the years 1934-36 led to an inward movement in Palestine particularly from Syria. The depression due to the state of public disorder during 1936-39 led to the return of these people and also a substantial outward movement of Palestinian Arabs who thought it prudent to live for a time in the Lebanon and Syria."

The examples below are typical of Peters' falsification technique. Here are some more inspired falsifications:

(1) Peters writes (p. 275): "From [1920] the preoccupation of Palestine's administration would be concentrated solely upon limiting the immigration of Jews. As a British report attested, for 'Arab immigration' a 'different' set of rules applied." But the *Survey of Palestine* (1946), is a discussion of how Arab housing differs

from Jewish housing. And the report continues: "Although different considerations from those relevant to Jewish immigration apply to Arab immigration, special consideration need not be given to the latter as, out of a total number of 360,822 immigrants who entered Palestine between 1920 and 1942, only 27,981 or 7.8 percent were Arabs. The number of room units to house Arab immigrants has, therefore, been calculated on the

From Time Immemorial

1. Peters

"[A]ccording to that *Report*, evidence of Arab immigration abounded: 'Egyptian labor is being employed;...' (p. 297)

"Further, Arab unemployment was claimed when in fact such was not the case; according to the *Report*, Arab unemployment figures were inflated." (p. 298)

Comments

1. Finkelstein

(a) Peters doesn't even insert an ellipsis after "employed" to indicate something—in this case, the crucial qualifier—was deleted;
(b) Peters corrects for her "oversight" in the footnote where the quote appears in full.

A nice example of how Peters distills the essence of a document.

2. Peters

"The 'Arab immigrants,' particularly 'Hauranis' from Syria, the *Report* stated, 'probably remain permanently in Palestine.' But although the number of Hauranis who illegally immigrated was 'authoritatively estimated' at 10,000-11,000 during a 'bad' year in the Hauran, only the unrealistically, perhaps disingenuously low Government estimate of 2,500 were concluded to be 'in the country at the present time.'" (p. 310)

2. Finkelstein

(a) recall that Peters must prove not only that massive numbers of Arabs had entered but also that they had *settled* in Palestine;
(b) in the original text, the Hauranis who "remain permanently" explicitly refers, *not* to the "10,000-11,000 during a 'bad' year," but rather to a "negligible" sum who immigrate in a "good" year;
(c) this particular falsification serves a triple purpose: (i) "documenting" massive illegal Arab settlement in Palestine, (ii) illustrating the bad faith and untrustworthiness of the British ("unrealistically, perhaps disingenuously low Government estimate of 2,500") and (iii) pointing up the alleged "contradictions" between the "facts" reported in the official British reports and their conclusions. (The *Peel Commission Report*, like every other document of the period, concluded that "Arab illegal immigration is mainly casual, temporary and seasonal.")

3. Peters

"What the official Anglo-American *Survey* of 1945-46 definitely disclosed... is that...tens of thousands of 'Arab illegal immigrants' [were] recorded as having been 'brought' into...Palestine..." (p. 379, emphasis in original)

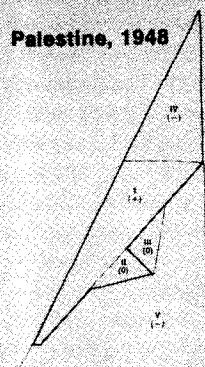
"Under the heading 'Arab Illegal Immigration,' a 1945-46 report noted that '...the "boom" conditions in Palestine in the years 1934-36 led to an inward movement into Palestine particularly from Syria.'" (p. 517, footnote #49)

3. Finkelstein

(a) a good illustration of how Peters handles figures—"3,800" recorded Arab immigrants becomes "tens of thousands";
(b) Peters' falsified presentation (pp. 378-79) of the—for her purposes—crucial section of the *Survey* in which this quote appears is in a class all its own.

(a) the quote is used in Peters' section headed "Hints of Substantial Unrecorded Immigration";
(b) one of Peters' favorite techniques for falsifying a document: wrenching an observation from its critical context.

Palestine, 1948



Simplified diagrammatic explanation

Demographic shifts, 1893-1947

– "too few" Arabs based on 1893 projection
+ "too many" Arabs based on 1893 projection
0 1947 population corresponds to 1893 projection

Area I: Israel + 168,090

Area II: Israel (0)

Area III: West Bank (0)

Area IV: Israel – 110,880

Area V: West Bank/Gaza – 123,150

Peters' argument:

the "missing" Arabs from Area V (West Bank/Gaza) must have "in-migrated" to Area I (Israel) during the Mandate years and then fled in 1948.

Peters' conclusion:

since they were indigenous to Area V (West Bank/Gaza), these refugees couldn't claim what became Israel as their homeland "from time immemorial."

The fraud:

the "too many" Arabs in Area I (Israel) may just as likely have come from Area IV (Israel). But these Arabs, once having become refugees in 1948, could have justly claimed that Israel was their homeland "from time immemorial."

same basis as Jewish immigrants...." So the phrase "different considerations," which Peters finds sinister, does not refer to immigration policy, but to housing construction. Peters repeats this falsification on page 514, footnote number 31;

(2) Peters compares figures for the Palestinian Muslim population in the years 1882 and 1893 and argues that the large discrepancy between the two totals cannot be explained by "natural" increase alone: massive Arab immigration must have inflated the 1893 figure (pp. 244-45). The argument appears reasonable enough until one discovers that Peters excludes Muslim nomads in her 1882 figure, but includes them in the 1893 figure. Yet, according to her own estimates, nomads accounted for more than one-quarter of the total Palestinian Muslim population;

(3) Peters tells us in her chapter on "Official Disregard of Arab Immigration" that, contrary to popular belief, Jews did not dispossess indigenous Arabs because the landless Arab peasants in Palestine were "mostly new Arab immigrants." (p. 323) Elsewhere (p. 546, footnote number 76), she quotes an Israeli professor, Moshe Braver, as follows: "landless peasants were new immigrants." But Braver actually wrote, "The immigrants were mostly landless laborers...." In other words, Braver does not say that all landless Arabs were immi-

grants. He says the immigrants were landless;

(4) To document the British Mandatory Government's indifference to Arab infiltration of Palestine, Peters cites the 1935 annual *Report to the League of Nations* in which, she asserts, "only 'Jewish Immigration into Palestine' was catalogued; that was the only heading...." (p. 275).

In fact, the British report in question neatly and exhaustively tabulates every conceivable aspect of Arab immigration (arrivals, departures, temporary visitors, transit travelers, social background, age, etc.) on eight consecutive pages (43-51). Peters could hardly have "overlooked"

Continued on following page

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this tabulation since the comparable statistics for Jewish immigration appear on the same pages. Every annual British Report to the League of Nations contained identical exhaustive tabulations of Arab immigration under the same chapter heading, "Immigration and Emigration."

In this connection, another of Peters' falsifications merits special comment. Peters, and her reviewers, make much of the alleged remark of an anonymous "veteran archivist" employed at the British Record Office. He purportedly told her that Arab immigration into Palestine "did not exist. There was no such thing. No one ever kept track of that" (p. 269—emphasis in original). Yet, every British annual report to the League of Nations and every major British study of the period includes an exhaustive tabulation of and detailed commentary on Arab immigration.

Let me now turn to Peters' highly touted demographic study. Readers who find the following argument rough going should consult the diagrammatic explanation (see diagram on page 13).

Peters claims to plot demographic growth and shifts within Palestine (i.e., the region bordered on the east by the Jordan River and on the west by the Mediterranean Sea) between the years 1893 and 1948. Her central finding is that 170,000 of the 586,000 Arab refugees in 1948 were recent migrants from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The study, however, is marred by very serious flaws.

For the purposes of her study, Peters divides Palestine into five areas, three of which (I, II and IV) correspond to the whole of pre-1967 Israel and the remaining two (III and V) essentially to the West Bank and Gaza (see map). Area I was the main zone of Jewish settlement between the years 1893 and 1948. Peters cites the following figures (p. 255) for the "Arab settled population" in 1893:

TABLE 1

Area I:	92,300
Area II:	38,900
Area III:	14,300
Area IV:	87,400
Area V:	233,500

She then calculates the total Arab settled population in 1947 (1893 population plus descendants) and notes that the overall Arab settled population in Palestine increased by a little over 2.5 times in the interim. However, the actual Arab population in certain of the five areas varied considerably for this national average. Table 2, based on Peters' data (pp. 424-25, Appendix V), juxtaposes the actual settled Arab population in 1947 (column A) against what this population would have been had it simply increased by the 2.7 times that the region as a whole averaged (column B).

Now, Peters contends that the natural increase in Arab population in the five constituent regions of Palestine couldn't have varied much from the national average, and that the excessive number of Arabs in Area I (center of Jewish settlement) and the unnaturally sparse Arab population in Area V (center of Arab settlement) can only be explained by Arab "in-migration." In other words, she claims 170,000 Palestinian Arabs forsook their native soil and moved into areas of Jewish settlement to take advantage of the opportunities opened up by the thriving Yishuv economy. Peters further argues that these 170,000 Palestinian Arabs likely found themselves among the refugees in 1948 since their roots in the Jewish-settled part of Palestine were not very deep. Her crucial point is that these "in-migrants" weren't really refugees because they had followed the Jews into this corner of Palestine and were not indigenous. Their real homes were in the West Bank and Gaza. Peters thus concludes: "From the evidence, then, among the estimated 430,000-650,000 Arab 'refugees' reported in 1948, well over 170,000 are appar-

ently Arabs who were returning to the "Arab areas" in western Palestine (the West Bank or Gaza) from the land that became Israel—the Jewish-settled areas where those Arabs had recently arrived in search of better opportunities." (p. 258)

Even evaluated on its own terms, the demographic evidence in Peters' study does not support her 170,000 figure. Her actual findings are, at best, trivial.

Look closely at Area IV (the western Galilee, etc.) in Table 2. This region is also "short" by approximately 111,000 Arabs. Couldn't these 111,000 souls have migrated to Area I? But this region was part of Israel in 1948, in which case, if they did indeed flee, these Arabs were genuine refugees. In other words, Arab "indigenes" from, say, the western Galilee region of what became Israel migrated to the Yishuv area during the Mandate per-

Areas I and II?

Another example: In her legend to Appendix V (p. 424), Areas I, II and III are bracketed off and labeled "contained most of Jewish population"; Areas IV and V are likewise bracketed off and labeled "contained very little Jewish population." But, according to Peters' map on page 246, Area III contained no Jews. By grouping the five regions in this highly misleading fashion, the distinct impression is again left that the first three areas became Israel while the remaining two fell within the jurisdiction of the Arabs in 1948: Area IV easily gets lost in the shuffle.

Had Peters properly grouped the five areas in her charts, it would have been obvious that: (1) the demographic changes within what became Israel could have more or less cancelled each other out,

TABLE 2

	A. ACTUAL POPULATION (1947) MINUS IMMIGRANTS & NOMADS	B. PROJECTED ARAB SETTLED POPULATION (1947) [Table 1 x 2.7]	C. NET IN-MIGRATION (+)/ OUT-MIGRATION (-) [A - B]
Area I	417,500	249,210	+ 168,090
Area II	110,900	104,930	+ 5,970
Area III	39,900	38,610	+ 1,290
Area IV	125,100	235,980	- 110,880
Area V	507,300	630,450	- 123,150

iod and then fled (for whatever reason) in 1948 and became refugees. (It seems not to have occurred to Peters that 170,000 Arab "in-migrants" could not have come from the West Bank and Gaza if, by her own reckoning, these areas were not "short" that many Arabs.)

Peters offers no explanation why the 111,000 migrants from Area IV (a part of Israel) should not be subtracted from the 170,000 migrants that were allegedly returning home in 1948.

Not only does Peters completely ignore the demographic changes in Area IV when they threaten to render her findings trivial, she actually falsifies the relevant numbers. According to Peters' chart (p. 425, Appendix V), there were only 71,200 fewer Arabs in Area IV than the projection based on the 1893 census. The real number is closer to 111,000.

In addition, all the data is arranged in what can only be described as a curiously confusing manner. For no apparent reason, the regions that eventually comprised Israel are labeled I, II and IV and the remainder of Palestine III and V (see key to map, p. 246). As a result, readers can be easily misled. For example, in her chart on page 425, Areas I, II and III are boxed off from Areas IV and V. It is easy to forget that the first of the latter two regions (IV)—from which, as we have seen, there was very significant out-migration—became part of Israel. Why did Peters section off Area III, and not Area IV, with

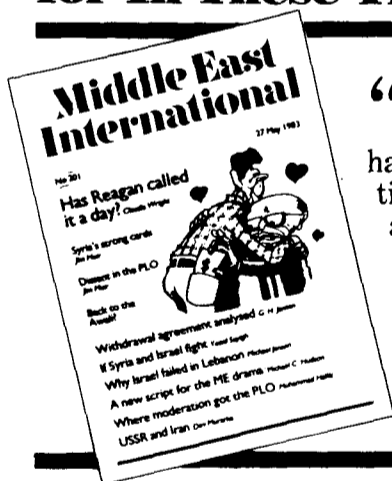
therefore (2) the amount of in-migration from the West Bank/Gaza could have been relatively insignificant, and (3) the number of West Bank/Gaza natives among the 1948 Arab refugees could also have been relatively insignificant.

Had Peters used Roman numerals I, II and III to designate the constituent areas of Israel and IV and V for the West Bank/Gaza, as common sense would recommend, the significance of the population changes within Israel would likewise have been highlighted.

The evidence suggests that Peters' demographic "study" is a carefully contrived, premeditated hoax. How else to explain why, in reading off the data from the very same Appendix chart (p. 425) for the table she assembles on page 257, Peters "remembers" to add Area IV in all the columns (e.g., in the column for "nomads," column C in the Appendix) but "forgets" to add Area IV in the column for "Arab in-migrants" (E in the Appendix)? ■

Norman G. Finkelstein is currently working on his doctoral dissertation for Princeton University on aspects of the theory and history of Zionism. He is a former student of Charles Bettelheim at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in Paris. Finkelstein would like to acknowledge Noam Chomsky, Mihalis Yannakakis, Cyrus Veaser and the staff at the New York Public Library, Public Affairs Division, for their assistance and encouragement.

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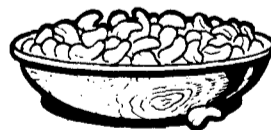
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JESSE JACKSON AND THE LEFT

DAVID MOBERG'S ARTICLE ON THE Democratic Convention (*ITT*, July 25) paints a very sympathetic picture of the progressive left, while somewhat perturbed, plugging away right "in the belly of the beast." But it might also lead one to the conclusion that the left in general missed the boat by not joining in Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition.

Moberg identified clearly the left's wider problem of "staying relevant at all" while missing the fact, as did the left in general, that the chance for relevancy was right under its nose. Jackson mobilized a mass constituency by touching those issues that represent the sectors of American society most weighed upon by the system, most left out of the "dream," with the least to lose and most to gain by challenging that system. Moberg notes that the Jackson forces came into the convention ready to fight because "they had so little to lose," while others on the left knuckled under to Cold War liberalism to "avoid being divisive" or because the issues weren't central enough.

Moberg quotes U.S. Rep. Gus Hawkins to explain the white left's behavior as resulting from Jackson's "racist campaign." But let us recall that from the September 1984 Washington March remembering Dr. King's sharing of his dream onward, Jackson invited all to join the Rainbow Coalition. In the course of the campaign he outlined a social program benefiting the elderly, the young, steelworkers and miners, and Hispanics as well as blacks. A few of those called did answer: Cesar Chavez and the UFW and Barry Commoner, for example. But white America and, sorrowfully, the white liberal-progressive/left forces (read AFL-CIO, NOW, DSA and thousands of individuals) as well declined the invitation and went elsewhere because, as *ITT* articles underlined throughout the campaign, Jackson's was a black candidacy for black people and black issues, while ignoring both Jackson's call and program for a wider movement.

The left's primary political problem is isolation from the sectors of U.S. society who most suffer from the status quo, have the least to lose and most to gain from change and who thus are most likely to organize on a left program. Jackson's campaign was a step in that direction.

Unfortunately, in the U.S. the race issue paints in very bold strokes, coloring even the vision of people on the left and preventing them from seeing the promise in the colors of the Rainbow. Let doubters ask themselves this: if Jackson had been white and all else equal, where would the left have stood?

—Frank Klein
Chicago

STYLE

MUCH AS I ENJOYED MARTIN KELLER's article on Garrison Keillor (*ITT*, Aug. 8), I must confess to some irritation when he characterized Keillor's style as that of a "fundamentalist preacher." Although I've heard Keillor comes from a fairly conservative Protestant background, he is no fundamentalist. Fundamentalists are Christians who believe in the inerrancy of the Bible and hold very literal interpretations of hell, salvation and miracles. They tend to be politically conservative. If Keillor held those views it would be clear: he would talk explicitly about his beliefs because it would be important for him to convince his listeners of a very specific set of propositions. There are many other Christians with faith as deep and sincere as fundamentalists', whose beliefs and styles of expression are much different. I suspect Keillor is

one of those.

This is not the first time your fine coverage and analysis has been marred by unfamiliarity with religious circles or religious idiom. Perhaps you are not aware that a good portion of the left in this country is made up of church people whose radicalism (or liberalism) comes directly out of their faith.

—Julia Tipton Rendon
Chicago

ABIDING FAITH

A THOUSAND OBSERVERS REPORTING on a political convention would turn in a thousand different stories—each story would reveal the bias of its observer-reporter. And so it was with Moberg reporting the recent Democratic Convention (*ITT*, July 25). It's not clear who Moberg favored but he wrote with a definite anti-Mondale bias. If Reagan and the high command of the Republican Party had hired someone to report the convention with the intent of discrediting it and Mondale in the eyes of liberals, such hired person could not have come up with a better essay.

Mondale is studiously castigated all the way through the article: "His rhetoric is largely conservative," "His American dream theme" indicates that Mondale lives in a dream world, not reality. "The pressure is still on Mondale to advocate clear alternatives to Reagan," "Mondale needs to spell out his programs and exactly how he's going to pay for them," "Failing to demonstrate that he believes in anything except striking pragmatic alliances."

Pragmatism! Sounds very like the charges leveled against FDR in the 1932 campaign. I was 30 at that time. Roosevelt was not my pre-convention choice of candidates. He was definitely my choice after his nomination but I remained skeptical of his flair for the dramatic: first candidate of either party to appear at the convention to "accept" his party's nomination. (Candidates were supposedly completely unaware of what went on at the convention until informed at some later date by a formally appointed delegation.)

Historian John D. Hicks stated in his text, *The American Nation*, "Roosevelt's speeches during the campaign were not always consistent. ...Always the pragmatist, Roosevelt consciously avoided making any too hard and fast commitments."

As a member of the Minnesota triumvirate (Humphrey, Freeman, Mondale), as the choice of Carter to be his running mate, as the one chosen by AFL-CIO, NOW, NEA, endorsed by Tip, Cuomo, Brook, Andrew Young, Bradley, and placed in nomination by Ted Kennedy, I have an abiding confidence that Mondale, if elected, will not be recorded by future historians as a non-entity (Fillmore, Pierce, Buchanan, Benny Harrison), a disgrace (Grant, Harding, Nixon), or a voice and champion for the trickle-down economic elitists (McKinley, Coolidge and _____), but will be listed among the better presidents.

—Richard D. Rowley
Ewen, Mich.

PRO-LIFE DEATH

ON AUGUST 10 OF THIS YEAR THE U.N. Conference on Population, in response to \$19 million worth of arm-twisting from the U.S. delegation, agreed to outlaw legal abortion and cripple contraceptive aid throughout the world.

This occurred, appropriately enough, in a country where an estimated 140,000 women die annually from homemade abortions. Wider application of this method of reducing noxious population gains should have a significant impact on world population problems. It would work out better if Msrs. Reagan and Salas had also come up with an equally acceptable device for exterminating all the men who produce those intolerable

LETTERS

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pregnancies, too. But the Conference did try to compensate for that omission by promising to discourage "humane treatment" for women who immerse from illegal abortions still breathing.

It should be clear by now, too, that President Reagan is not as indifferent to the perils of overpopulation as some have claimed. If his new policy were as successful on a worldwide basis as it is now in Mexico, world population counts could be reduced by eight million or more a year. That sure beats your old "social justice." It even beats bombing the Russians, who are only too likely to come back in swinging. And it comes so attractively packaged in colorful pro-life wrappings.

—Audrey Patton
Minneapolis

THE TRUE CHURCH

NICHOLAS PILUGIN'S VALUABLE article on the Nicaraguan ecclesiastical situation (*ITT*, Aug. 22) fails to make an important distinction. Archbishop Obando y Bravo and the other bishops of Nicaragua are not the "Church," as the article implies. They are merely the hierarchy, the Church is its entire membership.

As a member of the episcopacy, Obando y Bravo is merely following a long and sad tradition of a type of political involvement that is as old as Constantine's legitimization of Christianity within the Roman Empire in the fourth century. Although there have always been individual heroic members of the hierarchy throughout history—and are today such great contemporary examples as the late Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero and the yet living Don Helder Camara, Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in Brazil—the majority of the hierarchy has always supported conservative, reactionary and oppressive governments, so long as these did not hinder their own drives toward power and domination.

Look at the stance of the majority of

bishops in the U.S. today. They urge support of Ronald Reagan because he gives lip-service to their pro-life stance, but they silently ignore his policies that have destroyed the lives of the underclass and have set the whole world closer to nuclear destruction than it has ever been before. The Church's hierarchy as a whole has never been comfortable with real democracy, nor has it from its perch of privilege ever really been one with the people who make up the Church. Until that day, far, far in the future, when there can be a pregnant pope, and when bishops and cardinals earn wages and pay taxes alongside the Christian people, this situation will not much change.

Pilugin should not have been surprised at the simple and solid attachment to both church and revolution in the hearts and lives of most Nicaraguans. The reality of the Church is not pope or hierarchy; it is the life of the transcendent God immanent in the lives of church members through the sacraments and otherwise.

—Lawrence Barmann
St. Louis, Mo.

NO JOKE

MY FELLOW AMERICANS, I AM pleased to tell you that Ronald Reagan can be outlawed forever. We begin balloting in nine weeks.

—John Rossen
Chicago

P.S. This is *not* a joke.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

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