

LETTERS

Israeli-U.S. relations

I WOULD JUST LIKE TO SAY BRAVO TO *IN THESE TIMES* for its continuing courageous coverage of the Palestinian uprising and Israel's brutal repression. The recent articles and viewpoints by Diana Johnstone, Stephen Zunes, Rashid Khalidi and others, raise important and politically volatile questions about the enormous, unaudited U.S. financial and military support of the Israeli regime. Most publications on the left have, for the most part, chosen to report only the most heinous aspects of Palestinian oppression and have shied away from probing analyses of Israeli-U.S. and Israeli-Palestinian relations. I am glad to see that *In These Times* has chosen not to under-report this issue.

Michael Browne
New York

Drugs, urine and totalitarianism

AS A LEFT-WING LIBERTARIAN I WANT TO APPLAUD your editorials advocating the decriminalization of drugs in this country. We need more politicians like Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke and Reps. Fortney Stark (D-CA) and Steny Hoyer (D-MD) who are willing to risk unpopular positions on this issue instead of emotional rhetoric from the likes of Rep. Charles Rangel.

It is fundamental to a free society that individuals make their own moral choices. To have laws against possessing a plant that grows from the ground is insane. I will not tolerate some vote-hungry "liberal" asking for tougher drug laws while at the same time saying capital punishment for sadistic murderers is wrong! The 1988 platform to the Socialist Party USA has the correct position: "Elimination of all laws that create crimes without victims. Substance-abuse is a medical and social problem for which police action is not the best solution."

I would suggest that Robert Whealey (Letters, July 20) vote the straight Piss-Tester Party (alias GOP) ticket if he is that concerned about enforcing more drug laws and subsequently establishing a totalitarian state.

Richard Clark
Salem, Ind.

Flesh out

DAVID MOBERG (*ITT*, AUG. 17) IS CORRECT. I BELIEVE, in arguing that relying on ecological principles rather than technological fixes will more likely result in sustainable agriculture. However, he ignores the prime threat to future food security—our reliance on flesh-centered diets.

Over 80 percent of the grain grown in the U.S. is fed to animals destined for slaughter, while 20 million people die annually due to hunger and its effects. Over half the U.S. land area is used for grazing and the production of feed crops for animals. Livestock agriculture also requires extensive energy, water, pesticides and fertilizer. Of the four million acres of cropland being lost to erosion each year (according to the U.S. Soil Conservation Service), over 85 percent is directly associated with the raising of livestock. The U.S. is the world's largest importer of beef, and it has been calculated that 55 acres of tropical rain forest are destroyed

to produce just one fast-food hamburger. In summary, livestock agriculture has tremendous negative effects on our resources and on our ecosystems and, next to nuclear war, is arguably the greatest threat to global survival.

Richard H. Schwartz
Staten Island, N.Y.

The "well-known" syndrome

TO THE SURPRISE OF ABSOLUTELY NO ONE, *IN THESE TIMES* endorsed Dukakis-Bentsen in its August 3 issue. Tell us, will we soon see a new organization? Democratic Socialists for Dukakis-Bentsen.

Some of your writers were uneasy. They had swallowed Jackson's rickety-rack about how he had made huge gains over 1984. And then Dukakis put him in his place, in the back of the party bus, and picked a contra veep. But who did Jackson—or *In These Times*—expect your lesser evil would pick? Mother Teresa?

A few questions: Would you have supported a Bentsen-Dukakis ticket? Why would you quibble over whether the contra murderer's name is on the right side of the hyphen or the left? Or whether the Arab-killer, which Dukakis surely is, had his name on the left side or the right?

You previously printed a letter in which I charged that the Democrats help murder Palestinians, and do so for campaign contributions from rich Jewish chauvinists. You do not dispute this well-known truth. Which leads to another speculative question: Would you tell readers to vote for Dukakis if he helped the PLO kill Jews in return for funds from Arabs?

This tells us something. Our lesser evilists are not necessarily subjective racists. But they are objectively. For them an Arab-killing presidential candidate is tolerable. Not a murderer of Nicaraguans. If Dukakis, an Arab-killer, gets elected, *ITT* will be happy. But if he killed Jews, *ITT* would never stop howling. Tell us, if you can, why it would be infamous to vote for a Jew-killer, but it is our civic duty to vote for a murderer of Palestinians?

You editorialize that the left is marginal if it stays out of the Democratic Party. Aren't you marginal within the party? You didn't want Dukakis or Bentsen. The left is marginal today in or out of the party. So is Jackson. Go on the street and ask blacks what he won the masses? Sure, a victorious Dukakis will throw us a bone. But the billionaires will stay rich and the poor will still be the poor.

So spare us bullshit about marginality.

All of us will lose. However people will say maybe Brenner was right, maybe wrong, certainly he is a socialist. But if you say you are leftists, folks gonna laugh 'til tears roll down their cheeks. Because no way would a leftie vote for an Arab-killer and a contra.

Lenni Brenner
Berkeley, Calif.

Editor's note: *In These Times* has not endorsed Michael Dukakis. Even so, we hope he wins.

His cup overfloweth

THANK YOU FOR REPORTING THAT THE NATIONAL Bureau of Standards has begun peddling freeze-dried urine (*ITT*, Aug. 17). Now my friends believe me when I tell them I earn a decent living peeing for the government. It's a neat job. Twice a week a team of us professional urinators get together, take a drug—cocaine or marijuana, depending on what the Bureau needs—drink a six-pack of diuretics, and then to work. We get \$10 a cup.

I am hoping to sign on with the Pentagon because they pay from \$400 to \$73,000 a cup, depending on the day of the week.

Some folks may think this work is demeaning, but what the hey, I'm a patriot, and the tree of liberty has to be watered with something.

We invite your readers to sign up and join the great American Ureanalysis.

David Everett
Austin, Texas

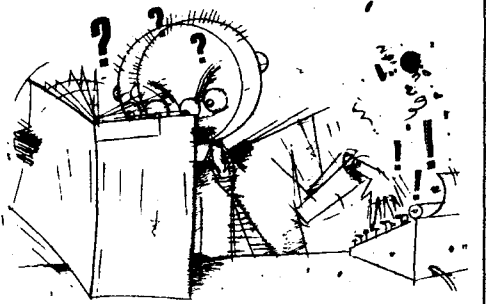
Left moralism

TWO RECENT ARTICLES (*ITT*, JULY 20) ARE ILLUSTRATIVE of problems the American left faces when it comes to establishing its moral and intellectual credibility. "The day Puerto Rico won't forget" treats the notion of suspicion of the *Independentista* movement as absurd. Yet, I think discomfort with that movement is understandable. The pro-independence Nationalist Party was linked to a purported plot to assassinate President Truman, and members of that organization violently disrupted U.S. congressional proceedings. The pro-independence FALN is a notorious terrorist organization responsible for a number of incidents of terrorist killings. The Puerto Rican Socialist Party was, at least in the past, sycophantic in its devotion to Fidel Castro and the Cuban system. Now, obviously, this doesn't mean that all *Independentistas* are violent or anti-democratic in their orientation. I believe the Puerto Rican Independence Party is

neither. But it does suggest why the *Independentistas* might be viewed negatively. That may be guilt by association, but let's face it, that's how many opinions are formed and often those opinions are correct. Not to point this background out is its own form of oversimplification. It's reflective of the tendency of committed leftists to dismiss the worries of those who don't share their ideological commitment as baseless and silly, when in fact they are neither.

The comments by Sue Coe in "The passion of Sue Coe" are even more fascinating. Apparently she considers the ideas of the new right to be not simply wrong, but "utterly bizarre, the dreams of maniacs." Not only are right-wingers insane, they apparently don't really exist. Coe claims she's never really met one. She claims nonetheless (in spite of their apparent non-existence) that she really wants to meet them, even though their ideas are totally illogical. She wants to know how they think. (Interesting, because although she's never met one or actually read anything by them, she seems to know how they think. They're illogical and insane.) Nonetheless, your writer attributes depths of generosity to Coe. I don't think I'm being particularly unfair to Ms. Coe by suggesting that her comments are breathtakingly shallow, condescending (a condescension based on complete ignorance) and indicative of Coe's lack of knowledge of the U.S. and its people. What can one make of a person who claims to travel the country and meet scads of progressives but no one on the right. (I guess all those people who voted for Reagan are just a figment of my imagination.) If Coe is accurately portrayed in this article—let's hope not—she is a patronizing myopic snob completely out of touch with the fears and desires of most Americans. (No wonder people with strong religious convictions who help others are a mystery to her.)

John A. Kelleher
Summit, N.J.



SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



By Mitchell Kaidy

SINCE THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING, OR *intifada*, began, raids and confiscations of published news organs, as well as searches of newspaper offices and physical harassment of reporters, have become commonplace in the Occupied Territories.

At least 35 Palestinian journalists have been physically abused and jailed, their publications and press services shut down or severely restricted. But there has been virtually no news leaking out about the right-wing Shamir government's punitive turn against its own dissident press in Israel. Largely unreported is the fact that about eight left-wing Israeli journalists who have been critical of the government's policies in the West Bank and Gaza have been charged with crimes and their publications suspended.

Some news has filtered out about the repeated crackdowns against the Palestinian press, and the world has taken it in stride along with the everyday casualty reports. But such vaunted organs as the *New York Times* and the Associated Press—which are normally hypersensitive to censorship and media crackdowns—have not seen fit to mention Israel's increasingly antagonistic and abusive treatment of its own press.

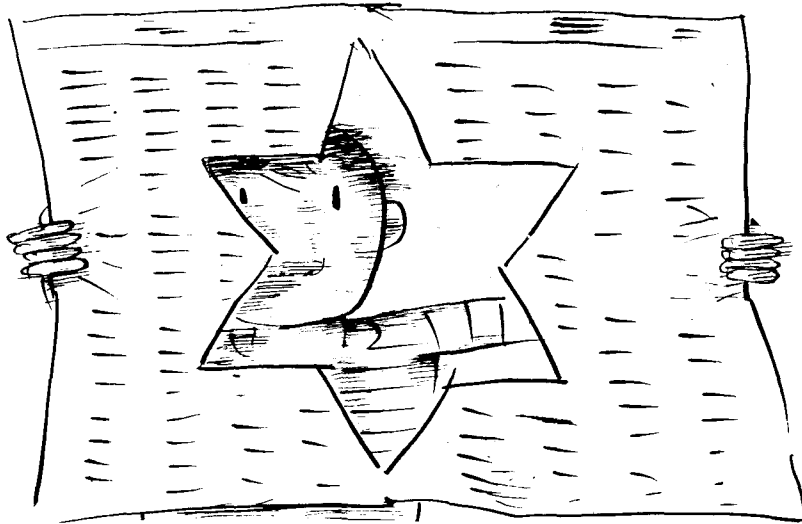
About a month ago, overriding Amnesty International's protests, Israel adopted a new tactic—deporting Palestinian journalists to Lebanon—thereby violating the Fourth Geneva Convention to which Israel is signatory, as well as violating Lebanon's sovereignty.

Long before the uprising the Palestinian press had been subjected to harassment and censorship, but the recent closures and Draconian crackdowns on what may currently be published represent a new phase in the government's attempts to prevent more information from getting out.

Under the old military censorship code, Arabic and English translations from the Israeli (Hebrew) press were not subject to review. Nor were most political cartoons. Now the translations, cartoons and photographs depicting confrontations between Palestinian civilians and Israeli soldiers almost never get past the censor.

Up to 90 percent of reports relating to the uprising are being blocked or severely altered, according to one editor of the West Bank daily *al-Sha'ab*. Striving to cope with the new restrictions, the editors are forced

Israel is imposing a veil of silence on West Bank



to keep on hand a large pool of bland articles that are used as fillers following the censors' rejections of timely reports.

The word "martyr," commonly used by Palestinians to honor their dead, is prohibited. So is the Arabic for "fedayeen operations." Even though such operations may be against military occupiers and are sanctioned by international law, the censors substitute "terrorist operations."

Arbitrary censorship: Hatem Abdel Qadir accidentally learned how quirky and baffling military censorship can be. Through a mixup, Qadir, an editor of the Arabic-language *al-Fajr*, sent two copies of the same article for review. One article passed, the other was blocked.

Sources in the Occupied Territories said five of the nine members of the Arab Journalists Association's executive board are serving six-month administrative detentions. Such detentions, which are routinely placed against Palestinian journalists, have been denounced by Amnesty International.

The usefulness of such charges is that they need contain nothing specific, and they can be renewed without limit.

Also serving six-month detentions are the head of the Palestinian Writers Union, al-Mutawakel Taha, a poet, and Jamil al-Salhout, member of the administrative board and an editor of the monthly literary journal *al-Kateb*. A musician from a suburb of Jerusalem, Suhail Khouri, 25, was brought into a

military court in Lydda on a charge he made a recording hailing the Palestinian uprising. The *al-Fajr* weekly of Jerusalem reported that Khouri could face up to 10 years in jail.

Unspecified charges based on secret information were lodged against Samir Abu Jundi, a member of *al-Fajr* Arabic daily's news staff, who was held initially in Gaza, then transferred to the Ansar 3 detention center in the Naqab district.

Palestinian journalists who complained of being beaten included three women, two of whom were arrested. *Al-Bayader Assiyasi* magazine published an article in July re-

Palestinian press services and publications have systematically been shut down.

porting that Nada Khazmo, the pregnant wife of the magazine's publisher, Jack Khazmo, was on assignment in Jerusalem when police arrested her and beat her so badly she suffered a miscarriage. She was later released on \$1,000 bail.

Another woman Palestinian journalist, Amineh Nimr, who lives in the Dheisheh refugee camp, was roughed up, arrested and held in detention for two days after a women's demonstration at the camp. Fatena Zughayyer of the West Bank weekly *al-Taili'a* was beaten by a soldier during a demonstration in Bethlehem and held in jail for two days before being released.

Palestinian Mohammed Zahayka of the Arabic edition of *al-Fajr* holds the dubious distinction of having been beaten twice by soldiers while covering events that had not been officially proscribed. Zahayka was first beaten and arrested for covering a West Bank demonstration, then was beaten again while covering an East Jerusalem disturbance last spring.

In an affidavit circulated by Amnesty International, Palestinian Ribhi al-Aruri reported he was beaten and kicked for an hour after his arrest, handcuffed with a sack over his head, interrogated for days while deprived of sleep and food and placed finally in a "cupboard" that permits only standing. Al-Aruri declared that he was later subjected to the cupboard treatment for

two days without food.

An Arabic editor of the Hebrew/Arabic newspaper *Derech Nanitzotz* (*Tariq al-Sharara*), whose Israeli editors were also arrested and remain in jail, al-Aruri has been adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'Aretz* published an article about the four jailed Israeli and Palestinian editors, reporting that they tried but failed to get an explanation of the charges against them. When the authorities broke into the newspaper's offices, they found that the bilingual newspaper had installed a computer and was selling news reports about the Palestinian uprising to foreign countries.

The left-wing Alternative Information Center in Israel, which was raided last year, is still closed, and its director, Michael Warshawsky, remains in jail awaiting trial. Initially the police charged the center with being a "terrorist front," but later the charge was amended to providing typing services to groups allegedly linked to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Veil of silence: Censorship, harassment and arrests of Palestinian journalists by Israel obliquely made it into the U.S. press recently when an American unit of the writers group PEN wrote Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir rebuking Israel over the journalist's arrests, the *New York Times* reported. They also asked him to reopen the shuttered Palestine Press Service, which U.S. television networks had praised and relied on for accuracy.

But when the Palestine Press Service as well as the Gaza Press Service were shut down, the American media, which had valued them, ignored the events. Noteworthy because it cited "censorship of poetry, books, school reading materials and literary texts" by Israel, the *New York Times* article estimated the number of arrested Palestinian journalists at between 25 and 35, but made no mention of arrested Israeli journalists.

A tardy and timid protest against Israeli censorship and harassment of the media emanated from the U.S. State Department last spring, but this, too, went unreported by the American media. The single protest invites comparisons with the incessant denunciations by the Reagan administration of Nicaragua's temporary shutdown of the newspaper *La Prensa* and limited censorship instituted by the struggling Nicaraguan government. Members of both Congress and the administration, as well as the mainstream press, have beaten this theme like a drum in denouncing the left-wing Sandinistas. But if criticism has been uttered about the U.S. allies, the democratic Israelis, it has wafted into the break in the ozone layer.

Bob Simon, CBS bureau chief in Israel, summed up Israel's success in bottling up information about the Palestinian uprising. In an article in the English-language Israeli magazine *New Outlook*, Simon was quoted as saying: "To a large extent they [the military] are successful, and that is why a great deal of what is going on is not being shown even by the foreign networks. What we do get on the screen is only the tip of the iceberg."

Mitchell Kaidy, a journalist who has worked for three daily newspapers and a television station in New York, has a special interest in the Middle East.

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