

Letters to the Fifth Estate

Various Authors

1983

Visually Dull

Hello:

I would like to subscribe to the *Fifth Estate*. I'm impressed with the content or the majority of it enough to want to see more.

However, the format and layout will assure you that only the true believers will ever read it regularly. You don't break up the columns, it's endlesssssssss. Visually it's dull; reminds me of *The Weekly People*, only with possibilities.

Also, you can't easily photocopy or zerox since the columns are out-of-date with today's methods.

Dandy Lion

Berkeley CA

Note: While we appreciate the validity of your remarks about our design, it's not a problem that can be rectified cheaply. That is, since our articles are often so long (we do only come out four times a year), it would probably necessitate another four pages to properly space out some of the articles you are concerned about.

The front page of the last issue is a good example of the space/cost problem. As we added increasing amounts of copy to our lead article on Israel's destruction of Lebanon, the planned graphic and headline shrunk correspondingly so as the final result was something less graphically attractive than we had originally planned. Since we can't afford to put on endless pages, we are stuck choosing between copy and graphics, and while we think the latter important, certainly the ideas are more so.

More on Zionism

Dear Friends:

I wanted to let you know how much I appreciated Fredy Perlman's article on the Lebanon situation ["Anti-Semitism and the Beirut Pogrom," FE #310, Fall 1982]. The insight expressed therein, comparing Zionism in its latter-day, right-wing-extremist form with the converse phenomenon in Medieval Spain, is both profound and fruitful.

This way of analyzing Zionism, as a flight away from rather than the embodiment of Judaism it claims to be, is not all that new. For example, many orthodox Jews, whose general outlook is abysmally reactionary and obscurantist, reject Zionism and particularly Begin on theological grounds, and strongly attack the Israeli state as an illegitimate, usurping, parasitical growth on the Jewish community...if not, in effect, and invention of the devil. Curiously, the strident choruses of Israeli and Palestinian nationalism have managed to efface from most people's consciousness the existence of such a "Jewish anti-Zionist" opinion.

But to return to the converso metaphor, it should be said in defense of the Jews who converted [to Catholicism] to stay in Spain that the majority of them did not go to the extreme of actively supporting the Inquisition; and, of course, many apparent conversos practiced Judaism in secret.

Another historical parallel between the present tragedy of Judaism and past social psychopathology has been discussed for some time within the ranks of an informal grouping of “revolutionary-minded” Jews of my acquaintance here in San Francisco: the comparison between Zionism, and particularly Beginism, and the movement of the “false messiah” Jakob Frank in Poland in the 18th century.

The Frankists, “illuminated” by the not-much-earlier example of Sabbetai Zevi, the “mystical messiah” of the Sephardim, whose meteoric movement spread from Turkey throughout the European Diaspora and even took Polish Jewry “by storm,” began preaching the arrival of the messianic age, and converted en masse to Catholicism. This, on the part of the Frankists, was equivalent to the “closing act” of the Sabbataian movement, in which the mystic’s followers converted to Islam, upon entering the Turkish empire.

However, unlike the Sabbataians, who were neither inclined nor obliged by their Turkish lords to attack Judaism once they had abandoned its then-reigning orthodox form, the Polish Frankists were so carried away by their unenthusiasm for their new Catholicism, and so anxious to impress their Polish neighbors as to their sincerity, that Frankist rabbis publicly proclaimed the veracity of the “blood Libel,” arguing from the stage in various Polish towns that, indeed, Jews did sacrifice Christian children to make matzo, and that this practice was clearly and undeniably prescribed by Jewish religious writings.

Thus, like Begin today, the Frankists were compelled by their anxiety over the situation of Jews in the Christian world to embrace the worst excesses of the Christian ruling classes, to the point of directly endangering their own and other Jews’ lives.

Gershom Scholem, friend of the unorthodox leftist critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin, and author of *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, in discussing the “heritage” of the Frankists, notes that there is evidence that the descendants of Frankist families who assimilated into Polish Catholic society not only produced a number of prominent Polish political and literary figures whose “Jewish” origin is today virtually unknown (such as the poet Adam Mickiewicz), but also, in Poland and Germany, were to some extent responsible for the emergence of modern, secular Reform Judaism; the “Haskalah” or enlightenment movement in 19th century Germany seems to have had some descendants of the Frankists in its ranks.

Steve Schwartz
San Francisco

Use for FE

Dear F.E.,
Know what I use your paper for? Starting fires in my woodstove. That’s all its worth.
So take me off your mailing list. You are a bunch of amateurs.
M.O. Roth
Raleigh, N.C.

Vicious Attack

Fifth Estate,
[Re: “The Israeli Massacre: Peace in Galilee?” FE #310, Fall 1982.] Palestine! Have you ever made a peep about it in the past dozen years? If material in the Fall issue had been printed nine months ago I could see the point, but aren’t you really just blowing with the wind, friends, riding the coat-tails of the current fashion of the corporate media?

Cheer-leading at the end of the parade brings into question, makes suspect any genuine intent and conviction on your part. Just another bunch of liberals posing as radicals with “original” articles that quote extensively from the bourgeois press.

Although Perlman’s article (“Anti-Semitism and the Beirut Pogrom”) was personal and interesting, Einstein and Arendt’s letter in 1948 to *NY Times* was more to the point of the problem. A pity you didn’t reprint that letter while quoting so eagerly from the bourgeois press.

Albert Speer, upon conviction at Nuremberg many years ago said: “Every country in the world today faces the danger of being terrorized. The more technological the world becomes, the more essential will be the demand for individual freedom and the self-awareness of individual human beings as a counterpoise to technology.” I don’t see any pretentious situ-babble in the above quote. I wish I could say the same for much of the writing in the Fifth Estate.

As for the anonymous vicious attack on Joffre Stewart and your patronizing attitude to the *SRAF Bulletin*, more than anything it reminds me of the Stalinist approach to situations (see FE #310, Fall 1982, “News and Reviews”). First, you devote an entire issue to lip service about anti-Zionism on one hand while at the same time you slander (“anti-Semite, insane diatribes, idiotic ravings”) one black man, an anarchist for many years who has consistently attempted a discussion of the Middle East and Zionism when you were ignoring the subject.

Joffre makes a convenient whipping boy for many Zionists and even some anarchists apparently. You malign and dismiss one black man who has had the courage and conviction to attempt a discussion of an up to now unsafe subject, Israel.

Now that the subject is safe, you put in your two cents worth. Not only is your wet finger up to the wind, it’s bent.

Your Fall issue has been an educational experience for me and my friends. The chauvinism of governments in a microcosm called the Fifth Estate.

Christopher Cooper
Washington DC

FE note: Although we don’t want to play psychoanalyst, we cannot help but suspect that what you are getting on about is our swipe at the *SRAF Bulletin* in the last issue of the FE (see “News & Reviews” column, Fall 1982 FE), and not specifically anything we had to say about the Middle East. While it may be true that we cannot cover every problem in the world all the time, we would hardly call our discussion of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon cheer-leading at the end of any parade. And while you reprimand us for quoting the bourgeois press, the Einstein letter you refer to was originally printed in 1948 in that most bourgeois of bourgeois newspapers, the *New York Times*, and was recently reprinted by Alexander Cockburn in the *Village Voice*. (The FE, by the way, has been distributing this very revealing letter, and will send it to anyone who sends a 20 cent stamp.)

Not sure what to make of your choice of quoting nazi war criminal Albert Speer to say something the FE has been arguing for quite some time, but as for your defense of Joffre Stewart as someone “who has consistently attempted a discussion of the middle east and zionism,” perhaps it will be sufficient to let Mr. Stewart speak for himself for our readers to decide whether his diatribes represent courage and conviction or idiotic, anti-Semitic ravings. We quote from his letter which you so graciously reprinted in the November 1982 *SRAF Bulletin*: “Certainly Jesus, an anarchist like ourselves, opposed Jewish domination. His method, of course, was altogether different and loving from that of Hitler [sic] who went at it like a Bolshevik (radical surgery) and foney [sic] (he was a politician put into Power by the Rothschilds, his cousins) ... [ellipsis in the original] My acquaintance with The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion is rather slight, but the more I learn about Zionism the more it seems to verify what the Protocols allege. If the Protocols were indeed a forgery, as people like G.K. [another *SRAF* correspondent who criticized Stewart] want us to believe, then it is quite possible that they can be read as prophesy.” He then goes on to cop-bait, asking rhetorically, “...we should not neglect to ask ourselves, is G.K an agent?”

Stewart has also wormed his way into the packets which are distributed by the North American Anarchist Network. In their most recent packet, we read the following from him (and we are only giving a taste of what is there): “A teacher at Notre Dame pointed out that during the Kissinger-Schlesinger-Nixon period, Jews held at least 90% of government power. I cannot remember a Secretary of Defense who has not been Jewish since that time... In 1976, the democrats ran 3 Jews for President (and 1 of them won)... Jews control the movie industry...Jews get rid

of a place of public accommodation that discriminates against Jews by buying it up... It was Warburg-Rothschild money which financed the Bolshevik Revolution to destroy the Russian Revolution and our anarchist comrades in the process..." etc. and ad nauseum.

The struggle against nationalist, statist ideology—including Zionism—is a fundamental principle of any genuine anti-authoritarian perspective, but the kind of garbage which Stewart spreads can only serve the interests of the Zionist state by obscuring the basic, life-and-death distinctions between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Printing and distributing his ravings can only be seen therefore as not only a waste of limited and valuable resources, but as downright irresponsible. If SRAF and NAAN want to waste their energy and resources (as well as undermine their integrity as anti-authoritarians) by distributing pathetic rehashes of the most discredited, right-wing anti-Semitic claims and conspiracy-mongering, from such sources as the czarist police to the nazi propagandists, that's their business, but we have absolutely no interest in doing so, and will not allow this "discussion" to go any further in our pages.

Prison Request

To the Fifth Estate,

I am writing in behalf of the Prison Writer's Guild here at Jackson Prison. We are a self-oriented group designed to further the writing of prisoners here and elsewhere. We need correspondence from professional people and others who wish to correspond with our members. All letters must be addressed to one of the following persons: Mr. Antoine Evans No. 138870, or Mr. Ramone Davis No. 137786, at the following address: P.O. Box E, Jackson, MI 49204.

STATEMENT

Hello,

On May 29, 30, and 31 we held our yearly Assembly in the department of Garonne. During those three days we talked about such problems as workers cooperatives, the rise of "new right-wing movements," assuming the appearance and using the vocabulary of anti-authoritarian groups or pacifist organizations and our position on the use of violence as an efficient revolutionary instrument. You'll find, in this mailing, the text of the motion we adopted around this matter.

We also confirmed our will to communicate with libertarian (or other) movements around the world. That's why we'd like you to send us information about your struggles, your movement, your publications, etc... On our side, we're ready to relay at our level your information, your campaigns. And we would like to exchange your publication and ours: *Le Libertaire*, a monthly published by three groups of our union.

Motion of the General Assembly

—Whereas the use of violence has always allowed the principle of authority to survive, and, as it has been said, 'revolutions have perished by sword,'

—Whereas the end does not justify the means but, on the contrary, the means allow the end,

—Whereas a humane society could not be built upon a heap of corpses,

—Whereas our libertarian ethics hate bloodshed, and an anarchist civilization, a true world association, will not come out of a carnage,

—Whereas, in the field of tactics, the powers are favoured by the privilege of might,

The "Union des Anarchistes" rejects the fiction (marxist or other) of a great social battle, of a popular insurrection or a civil war necessary to the resolution of class antagonisms, wishes to spare a slaughter and to obtain by pacific means, such as civil disobedience, the breaking off from the old world, and thinks that what matters is less to unsettle the tyrant than not to support him...

Union des Anarchistes

Wishing for news from you and hoping for a fruitful exchange,

Yours friendly,
D. Gastellu
Route de Pau
40300 Peyrehorade, France

VANCOUVER—A 23-year-old woman was acquitted on charges of mischief even after admitting that she had urinated into a constable's hat. She was about to be released without charges related to an investigation when she was told to shut up for asking to use the restroom. When she was refused permission, she used a constable's hat left in the room to relieve herself.

"I believe the definition of necessity could be used in this case," said the Provincial Judge in dismissing the case.

fifth Estate

Various Authors
Letters to the Fifth Estate
1983

<https://www.fiftheestate.org/archive/311-winter-1983/letters-to-the-fifth-estate>
Fifth Estate #311, Winter, 1983

[fiftheestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://www.fiftheestate.org)