

Erwin Knoll
The Progressive
409 East Main St.,
Madison, WI 53703

2/28/90

Dear Erwin Knoll,

You are close to my age so I am less uneasy in addressing you as I'd be reluctant to address a younger man.

Have you ever really stopped to assess what it is that drives you to your campaign against the State of Israel? Not any particular government, and I share your dislike of the present and recent ones, but in everything you've written and published, you inveigh against the state.

The disproportionate and entirely unbalanced space you've used in your own magazine is not enough. Now you use The Nation, where Navasky is like-minded and has a similar record.

Quite aside from criticism of the Podhoretzes, of whom I think as you do, you say those who think other than you do, see other than you see, give "mindless support for Israel's garrison-state policies."

And quite aside from whether or not this is fair or unfair, true in the normal sense or not true, how many countries can you remember, or governments, without what someone can describe as garrison-state policies when, aside from domestic disturbances they have 20 or more states in a persisting state of war with them? In Israel's case, from the day it was established by war.

In any rational and reasonable assessment, the actualities are enormously complex, much more than in most disputes and controversies. I do not remember ever seeing in your magazine any effort to inform your readers, most of whom I presume are too young to really be aware of these many factors and considerations, of these actualities. If any of this is in your mind, I recall no reflection of it. It all comes out as hatred for the State of Israel and of even its existence and endless tirades against its existence.

Have you stopped to think why the 20-some states remain in a state of war with Israel, why Arafat blows smoke about it, ~~why~~ why the Arabs have been slaughtering those Arabs who even talk to Israelis about peace, why if it even considers peace and the peaceful existence of a Jewish state the PLO doesn't change its charter? And recently, just before Arafat's ploy I refer to in the enclosed letter I've just written Frontline, again refused to?

The grim reality is that no Muslim leader has or can hope to survive recognizing the existence of any Jewish state. Until this changes, and I see no prospect of any change, there can be and there will be no peace for Israel. This is a condition no Israeli government can change. The refusal of all Muslims to recognize any Jewish right to any tiny portion of Palestine is clear and amply reported, going back to at least the days of the British Peel Commission, when Jews accepted only 10 percent of the area of the present state and no Muslim would even talk about it.

One of us is Merlin and we can't remember the future. But if we don't remember the past we are doomed to relive it. The possibility of another holocaust does exist and there are millions who lust for it. If and when it happens, those who think and write and publish as you and Navasky do will bear a share of the responsibility.

As editors you are less than honest and do not meet the responsibilities of editors in informing their readers. Of anything but their unhidden hatred.

I fear you both reflect some probably entirely unrecognized inner hatred. I hope not!

Because of my considerable respect for the many fine things both of you have done this really does trouble me. You have both seriously impaired the amount of good you can do in your intended lack of balance and honesty in this matter. Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

Harold

Mr. David Fanning, producer
Frontline
WGBH-TV
Boston, Mass.

7627 Old Receiver Road
Frederick, Md. 21701
2/28/90

Dear Mr. Fanning,

Your interesting, informative and well-done study of Yassir Arafat brought information about him to many Americans who knew nothing about him and thus is valuable, yet the show itself made a number of basic and I think serious errors that misinformed the viewers. Because these shows are repeated + hope you will consider rectifying some of the unfactual and misleading statements. The tragedy of that area of the world is going to continue, for reasons only slightly indicated in the show and the actualities are unknown to most Americans.

You referred to Israel and its occupied territories as "old Palestine." This is factually incorrect and seriously deceptive. All that territory is less than a quarter of old Palestine. Not only should this have become apparent in your research - you had an appropriate opportunity for dealing with it when you reported the PLO's effort to take Jordan over. (And if my recollection is correct, understating Arafat's involvement in it.)

When Britain took the Ottoman empire over after World War I it had made promises to both Jews and Arabs about Palestine. British anti-Semites prevented keeping the promise to Jews, the Balfour Declaration, but Trans-Jordan was established in more than three-quarters of "old Palestine." It got its name because it is all of Palestine across the Jordan River. To obscure reality, Hussein eliminated the "Trans" from the name.

Whatever the political reason for Israeli governments playing this down, probably involving hopes for an ultimate solution coming from Hussein, it is a fact that from old Palestine the Arab state was created.

You stated that Arafat, responding to Washington's pressure, guaranteed the right of the State of Israel to live in peace and security. And you used some footage of his statement. But you did not use the footage in which he was quite careful not to say what you reported he said, the statement that Washington, knowing better, accepted and most of the media has been misrepresented since.

Had he guaranteed the peace and security of the State of Israel, as he well knew (and in my belief does not intend anyway) he would have faced the fate of Abdullah, whose assassination made Hussein king, and of Sadat, the only Muslim ruler to agree to a peace that recognized the State of Israel. If you look at the footage you have you will see and hear that instead Arafat spoke of the "people" of Israel. Thus, as those who would kill him for recognizing the State's existence, as the PLO's charter keeps him from doing in any event, he pointed out he did not. He could tell them, for example, that the rights of the people could and would be preserved, as Muslims view that preservation, in an Arab state. Which is the unaltered objective of the PLO.

You were too uncritical in handling his abandonment of terrorism and reported this as a fact. It is not. He abandoned such terrorism as the airport massacres and the kidnapping and murder of diplomats. The terrorism against Israel continues, only he says it is not terrorism. It has never stopped.

You fudged over the question of peace. If by some remote and entirely improbable chance Israel and the PLO or any other Arabs did agree to a peace treaty, what peace would there be for Israel with the rest of the Muslim world, except Egypt, persisting in a state of war with Israel? Without the entire Muslim world recognizing and agreeing to peace with the State of Israel it will have no peace. Peace for them means only recognizing the State of Israel and whether or not any of those governments would want that, not one dares have it because all know there is no surviving it. Until this changes, in my opinion, there can be and there will be no real peace. For Israel and that part of the world.

As you related to that fine fellow, Paul Fanning, who produced the Jerry Williams show on WBBM-TV?

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg