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PATRIOTS AND PATRIOTISM, JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALISM

As'ad AbuKhalil is completing his doctoral studies in comparative government at Georgetown University. For The Nation of January 9, 1988, he wrote the lead article, "Palestinian Youth Comes of Age," with the subtitle, "The Politics of Rage." He writes of those who are heroes and patriots to our local solon who knows all there is to know about everything, especially the Middle East, that they are not heroes but are political murderers and that they incite and have ulterior purposes in the current Palestinian violence.

These "young people, mostly in their teens, have seized the initiative and relegated the traditional leaders ... to the sidelines ... new forces are emerging ... the Fatah-Revolutionary Council (Fatah-R.C.), known in the west as the Abu Nidal group, and a new Palestinian Sunni fundamentalist movement encouraged but not created by Iran."

By way of explanation for those who do not hang on our wise man's every word and my commentaries on them, Abu Nidal is the man he extolled as a nonterrorist patriot. Nidal is responsible for such acts of patriotism as the bombings of the Rome and Vienna airports, the piracy of the Achille Lauro and the patriotic murder of the aged, ill and crippled American, Leon Klinghofer, who, with his wheelchair, was thrown overboard, and other such acts of nobility.

In Gaza, AbuKhalil continues, two "veteran PLO commanders" promised an escalation in the military confrontation with Israel "in contrast with Arafat's newly-stated position."

One leader's (Abu Musa's) "group quickly lost its popularity" when Syria "used its fighters to defeat Arafat's forces in the northern port city of Tripoli, utilizing indiscriminate shelling of refugee camps." (No local columnist tears were shed over this slaughter of Arabs by Arabs.) Some of its "members were notorious for their corruption and thuggery" and for other abuses of Pales-

tinians and "Fatah-R.C. came to symbolize 'action against all enemies' and 'insulation from the corruption of Beirut.'" Meanwhile, "Syria ... became increasingly uncomfortable with the erosion of popular support of Abu Musa's people in the Syrian refugee camps in favor of Abu Nidal's offices," which it expelled in 1987.

"The new situation forced the leaders of Fatah-R.C. to restructure." After reference to Nidal's acts of "patriotism" in Rome and Vienna, he continues, "a new structure was created to help Fatah-R.C. broaden its appeal" and so the Abu Nidal group now has two structures. "No Palestinian - or other Arab - is allowed to become a member" of the internal operational bodies "unless that person passes through a trial period of a year" and then "pledges an oath never to leave the organization. This strict condition may account for the high number of executions that take place within its ranks." It publicizes its executions in its own publication, calling those who decided against inhuman violence and terrible murders "traitors." These assassinations fit perfectly with our sage's description of murderers as not terrorists but "patriots."

AbuKhalil next refers to this "patriotic" group's embarrassment when it discovered that its newer piracy, of a boat it believed held Israelis, actually made eight non-Israeli Europeans its captives. (Those who are French were not included among those French hostages released after France paid the blackmail terms our man of consummate wisdom praised in a column.)

There is more "patriotism": "Abu Nidal's men killed several P.L.O. representatives in Europe for having met with Israelis." Now if this raises in any minds questions about how Israel can negotiate with anyone, that will not trouble our wise man because he has never suggested that there ought be any negotiations of any kind to end killings and wretchedness. He espouses only "patriotism."

At the same time, AbuKhalil continues, "a pro-Iranian fundamentalist"

movement is "developing within ... Arafat's Fatah ... The ascendance of Islamic fundamentalism (Khoumani's gang) in the Lebanese camps has been accompanied by a similar emergence in the Israeli occupied territories ... centered in Gaza." These Khoumani types are "increasing in popularity by resorting frequently to "operations" against Israel. They "reject Israel's existence on religious grounds." Thus the cries from the mosques to wipe Israel out and Kill all Jews. It is godly as well as "patriotic."

Why he who knows all there is about anything and everything, especially the Middle East, did not see fit to include anything like this and much more similar information so readily available I do not know. Perhaps it is because, impressed as he is with his omniscience, he considers worthless anything that does not pop into and out of his own great mind.

And so in all his many columns in which he made no mention of any of this and so much more like it, all easily available to anyone who is interested, he never gets around to mentioning that those who today lead this new Palestinian violence are great and traditional friends of the United States, the "patriots" of Abu Nidal's assassins who assassinate even their own and those of the Khoumani stripe of "religion," if godliness consists of murders and tortures and kidnapping and blackmail.

Another element is missing in the many columns relating to the West Bank. It, too, was occupied by Jordan for 20 years after it took that land by force of arms in 1947. Hussein's army, led by the British general, Sir John Glubb, and financed and trained by the British, took all of Old Jerusalem along with Judea and Samaria. Hussein, the humanitarian, decided to use his wealth, some of which reportedly (and without denial) came from the CIA, more of that tax money the spending of which is objectionable only if spent on Jewish refugees, to build himself a fine castle in Jerusalem. One supposes that Arab hunger pangs would recede on gazing at its Arab glory. Well, Hussein's castle is unfinished

because Israel captured it along with the rest of the West Bank.

There are, as I've written before, major problems that cannot continue to be resolved by force of arms after 4,000 years of it, when two peoples can make legitimate claim for the same land. There also is what has come to be recognized as the right of conquest when the security of a state is involved. No nation has benefited from this as much as our own. Without the West Bank, to which its claim goes back to the first book of the Bible, Israel is indefensible. It is only about ten miles wide at its northern border and is surrounded by the sea and the states at war with it.

How secure would Fredericktonians feel if enemy artillery were, say, at Thurmont when artillery, even now, I believe, including hand-held weapons, can fire accurately more than ten miles?

(Note to editor: I include a recent map from the Washington Post in the event you want to use it.)

It ~~then~~ was possible to bombard Israeli settlements, farms, schools and hospitals without such modern weapons because the wealthy Arab states were not financing ~~their~~ terrorism ^{as} so heavily. Now those states, while refusing to take Palestinian refugees, are financing the PLO generously. It now has modern weapons. How about Israeli civilians now, including Jewish children and grandchildren and non-Jews? Should they be slaughtered indiscriminately? Does one wonder about Israel's belief it is entitled, by acute need and historical right, to the lands from which Jews sprang, Judea and Samaria, and the site of their, the first, temple to the One God, Jerusalem?

Some human affairs are of enormous complexity, yet some of the most complicated matters can be made easy to understand. If this is a writer's objective.

There are no human affairs that can really be settled by violence. But it is only in support of the current violence that our local wise man writes with what, without being uncharitable, we can call lapses of memory that led him to omit so much.

If the people are to know what they should know for representative society to work properly, they need to know more than one side, even if that side is presented to them by the most brilliant and informed of writers, the most profound thinkers.

As perhaps some of those who have written letters demanding the opposite may be able to realize now, along with the realization that nobody knows all there is to know and that some writers do not say all they know.

Those of us who write so that the people may know assume the obligation to be accurate, honest, truthful and fair and not to take advantage of the lack of knowledge of those for whom we write.