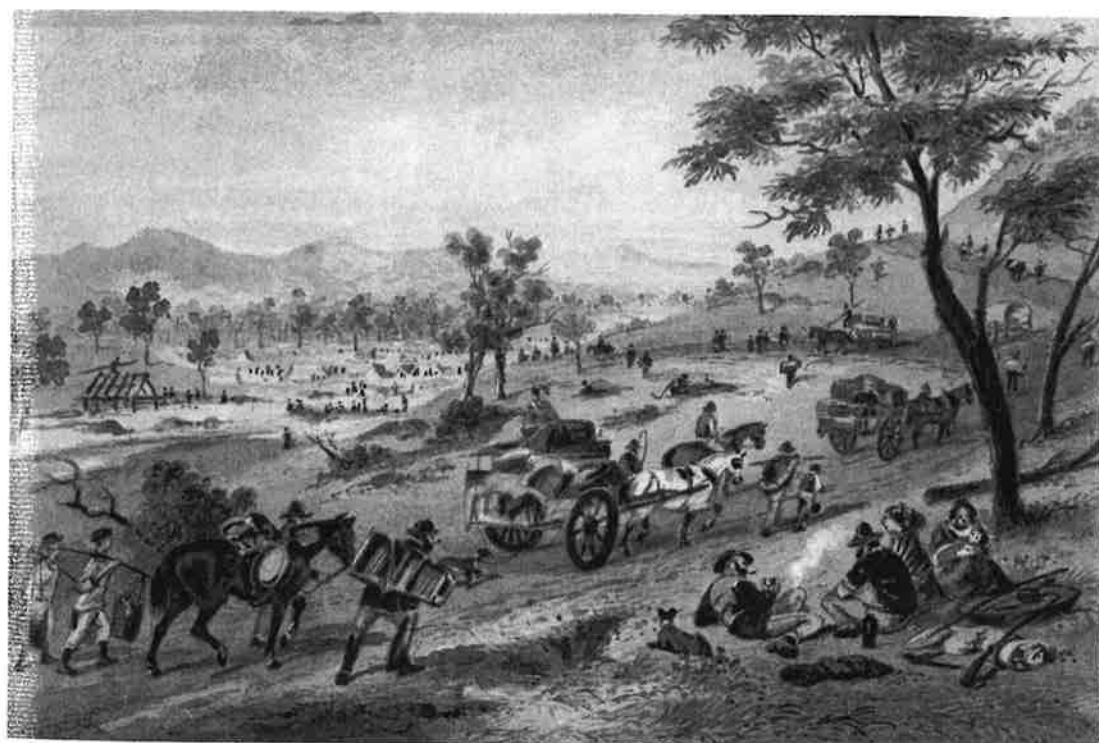


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Front cover

J.T. Gill (1818-80), *The Rush to the Ballarat Goldfields in 1854, 1872*; watercolour on paper, 24.5 x 16.5cm. National Library of Australia, Canberra, PIC 8842.

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THE AUSTRALIAN UNION OF STUDENTS' 1974-75 ISRAEL-PALESTINE DEBATES REVISITED

Philip Mendes

ABSTRACT

In 1974 and 1975, the radical left Australian Union of Students (AUS) presented extreme anti-Israel motions which were soundly defeated by a national student vote. As with the contemporary Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, the AUS attempted to cloak their headline agenda to destroy the existing state of Israel via the disingenuous use of moderate terms such as secular and democratic, falsely implying a commitment to equal rights for both Israelis and Palestinians. But in practice the AUS campaign set in train a systematic hatred for all Jewish supporters of Israel's existence, irrespective of their specific political or ideological views on conflict resolution, which has flowed through to all subsequent Australian debates on Israel and Palestine.

KEYWORDS

Antisemitism, Australian Union of Students, Australian Union of Jewish Students, General Union of Palestinian Students, Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, Zionism and Israel

Introduction

In early 1974 and again in 1975, the Australian Union of Students (AUS) passed a series of anti-Israel motions urging support for the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the abolition of the State of Israel. The 1974 motions stated that AUS would replace recognition of the National Union of Israeli Students (NUIS)

24. Asmis to Foreign Office, 30 December 1933, p. 20, File 43515 Jahresberichte der deutschen Auslandsvertretung in Australien, 1929-36, Bundesarchiv Postdam, Foreign Office vol. 16/17, quoted in Christine Winter, "A Good-Will Ship": The Light Cruiser Köln Visits Rabaul (1933), *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2008, p. 53.
25. *Adelaide Advertiser*, 19 March 1936.
26. *Burnie Advocate*, 9 June 1938; *Canberra Times*, 9 June 1938.
27. *The Argus*, 6 November 1938.
28. Quoted in *Melbourne Herald*, 11 November 1938.
29. Compare, for instance, *Queensland Times*, 14 November 1938.
30. See also, for example, letters in *Adelaide Advertiser*, 16 November 1938 and *Argus*, 16 November 1938.
31. *Workers' Weekly*, 18 November 1938.
32. *Brisbane Courier-Mail*, 17 November 1938.
33. *Adelaide Advertiser*, 17 November 1938.
34. *Workers' Weekly*, 18, 22 November 1938; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1938; *Adelaide Advertiser*, 18 November 1938.
35. *The Argus*, 18 November 1938.
36. *Ibid.*, 21 November 1938.
37. *The News, Adelaide*, 17 November 1938.
38. *Barrier Miner (Broken Hill)*, 21 November 1938.
39. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1938.
40. *Brisbane Courier-Mail* 18 November 1938.
41. *Tweed Daily*, 21 November 1938.
42. *The Argus*, 18, 19 November 1938; *Warwick Daily News*, 18 November 1938.
43. *Ibid.*, 21 November 1938.
44. *Workers' Weekly*, 2 December 1938.
45. *Workers' Star (Perth)*, 2 December 1938.
46. *Brisbane Courier-Mail*, 8 December 1938.
47. *The Age*, 23 December 1938.

with recognition of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS); that the Palestinian people have greater rights to the territory of Israel-Palestine than Israeli Jews; and that AUS would support the Palestinian liberation movement as represented by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).¹ Those motions were defeated by a national student vote of approximately 95 per cent against as opposed to 5 per cent in favour.

The 1975 motions seemed superficially to be more positive and inclusive, but the overall intent was the same. They proposed replacement of the State of Israel with a secular democratic state of Palestine which would guarantee equal citizenship rights to all religious groups. This did not mean support for a bi-national state as AUS did not recognise Jews as a genuine nation deserving of national rights. The motion also recommended recognition of the PLO as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and a media campaign to inform students and the broader community of the Palestinian side of the argument.² Those motions attracted support from approximately 25 per cent of students, but were still opposed by a 75 per cent majority.

This article builds on an earlier analysis of the AUS debates³ using more recently available sources to critically examine the key political and ideological factors involved. In part one, I explain why the AUS adopted extreme one-sided views on the Israel-Palestine conflict. In part two, I analyse the competing Australian Union of Jewish Students (AUJS) view in favour of a two-state solution, and their concerns about potential terrorism emanating from the AUS-sponsored tour of representatives of the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS). In part three, I explain why AUS rejected a two-state perspective with some reference to international Palestinian debates and local political alliances plus the strange influence of the marginal Israeli Marxist group Matzpen. In part four, I consider when and how anti-Zionism converged with antisemitism, noting the particular hostility of AUS to left-wing Jews who opposed their extreme abolish Israel position.

The Australian Union of Students shifts to the extreme Left

Prior to 1973, the AUS was largely controlled by students from the moderate Left associated with the Australian Labor Party, and generally adopted a neutral position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, the 1973 AUS elections resulted in a takeover by the radical Left. The AUS passed a motion calling for the abolition of the capitalist system, which they argued was controlled by a small powerful elite, to be replaced instead by a socialist society in Australia. They also defended the right of oppressed groups and nations to 'fight for social justice ... and resort to violence where all other peaceful means have been exhausted'.⁴

Not surprisingly, the AUS also adopted the pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist position which had become hegemonic within radical left groupings.⁵ The AUS identified the Palestinians as an oppressed people, and conversely the Israelis Jews as an oppressor nationality.⁶ Consequently, AUS sought to 'reverse' what they called the 'domination by Zionist propaganda of all discussion of the Arab-Israeli conflict'. Instead, AUS supported the Palestinians whom they called 'the real victims. It is they who lost their country. It is they who are forced to live in the miserable conditions of the refugee camps'.⁷ One manifestation of this pro-Palestinian bias was the decision of the editor of the AUS newspaper, *National U*, to privilege the Palestinian viewpoint, and deny equal space to the Zionist or pro-Israel perspective.

AUS's views on Palestine were influenced by three radical Left groupings represented in the Palestine-Australia Solidarity Committee. Firstly, there was the Trotskyist Socialist Workers League/Socialist Youth Alliance (SYA) which later morphed into the Socialist Workers Party and was eventually renamed the Democratic Socialist Party. The SYA was represented by three key pro-Palestinian activists: *National U* editor Frans Timmerman, Israeli-born Jew Sol Salby (aka Sol Salbe) who was the managing editor of the *Direct Action* newspaper and then became the International Research Officer of AUS,⁸ and Rod Webb who edited the Macquarie University student paper *Arena*. Secondly, there

were the Maoists affiliated with the Communist Party Marxist-Leninist. Their key representatives were La Trobe University activist Ken White and the 1974 AUS President, Neil McLean. McLean's successor as AUS president, Ian Macdonald, although formally a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), was also close to the Maoists. Thirdly, there were some representatives of the orthodox and relatively moderate Communist Party of Australia (CPA), although the CPA was divided on Middle East policy.⁹ Additionally, there was the specific role played by Bill Hartley from the Socialist Left faction of the Victorian branch of the Australian Labor Party who was appointed as the paid Education Research Officer of AUS despite his public endorsement of Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians.¹⁰

Support for the Palestinians came almost exclusively from the generation of younger Australian leftists who viewed the Vietnam War and associated concerns about American and western imperialism as a defining influence. Older pro-Palestinian advocates such as ALP radicals Bill Hartley and George Peterson were an exception to this rule. In contrast, most of the older leftists, whether social democrats or orthodox Communists, retained pro-Jewish sympathies emanating from the earlier common struggle against Nazism, and defended Israel's right to exist.¹¹

AUS acknowledged that their pro-Palestinian position was supported by only a small minority of Australian society, mostly Arab community groups, some trade unions and student groups, and left-wing political parties and movements. They conceded that the Australian Labor Party was 'riddled with Zionist elements'.¹² But they identified themselves as a vanguard whose long-term objective was to change public opinion in favour of the Palestinian narrative.

The AUS persistently argued that only the Palestinian Arabs and not Israeli Jews had legitimate national rights. Consequently they rejected solutions in favour of national rights for both Israelis and Palestinians such as the two-state solution which I discuss further below. But they were also concerned to refute arguments

from their critics that the elimination of the State of Israel would result in major harm or violence towards Israeli Jews such as mass expulsion or genocide. For example, Geoff Gordon from AUJS alleged that the AUS motion was implicitly endorsing the 'killing of millions of Jews',¹³ whilst another AUJS representative Michael Marx argued that '2.6 million Jews would have to be expelled' to create a democratic secular state.¹⁴ AUJS Political Officer Peter Wise accused the AUS resolutions of 'supporting genocide',¹⁵ and two other Jewish student leaders denounced the AUS resolutions as likely to 'make the three million Israelis refugees', or even worse result in their 'extermination'.¹⁶ Even left-wing union leader and CPA activist John Halfpenny, who was sympathetic to the Palestinians, acknowledged that the 'elimination of Israel as a state ... could well mean the elimination of the Israeli people'.¹⁷

But Bill Hartley ridiculed fears about the fate of Israeli Jews in an Arab-dominated state, insisting that all Jewish residents would experience 'equality, political and religious pluralism, freedom and democracy'.¹⁸ Similarly, Sol Salby cited the PLO's promise that all Israeli Jews would be guaranteed citizenship rights in a unified Palestine.¹⁹ Frans Timmerman argued that the Palestinians had 'no intention' of perpetrating a 'large scale slaughter and expulsion of the Jewish settlers'. To the contrary, the new state of Palestine would harmoniously combine the returning Palestinians and the existing settlers.²⁰

In 1975, AUS published a booklet arguing the case for a secular democratic state of Palestine incorporating the views of prominent Belgian Jewish anti-Zionist Nathan Weinstock, and leading PLO figure Nabil Sha'ath. Both authors denied that the end of Israel would result in the persecution of its Jewish population. To the contrary, the Palestinians were generously offering the Jews an opportunity for peaceful co-existence in a unified state.²¹

AUS's reassurance seemed to ignore the intense national hatred that existed between Israelis and Palestinians as reflected in regular outbreaks of violence. The non-Zionist Jewish academic

Dennis Altman commented at the time that their assessment was 'naively optimistic' in that it 'ignored the unpleasant persistence of nationalist fears, prejudices and aspirations on both sides'. Altman added that it was not reasonable to impose a solution that would seek to fix the injustice experienced by the Palestinian Arabs, but in doing so would create a similar injustice (i.e. denial of national self-determination) for Israeli Jews.²²

The Australian Union of Jewish Students' alternative: Two states for two peoples

In response to the AUS motions, AUJS presented an alternative position in favour of recognising the national rights of both Israelis and Palestinians, and supporting two states for two peoples.²³ Their principal slogan was 'Israel yes, Palestine yes, terror no'.²⁴ The AUJS President Joe Gersh specifically defended the right of the Palestinians to national self-determination within a West Bank state alongside Israel.²⁵ Similarly, the AUJS NSW Political Officer Peter Wise endorsed the concept of a 'Palestinian State living side by side with a Jewish Israel'.²⁶

The AUJS position in favour of a two-state solution was relatively radical at the time, given it deviated significantly from the then official Israeli Labor Government point of view (which was vaguely in favour of territorial compromise in partnership with Jordan but not supportive of Palestinian statehood), and the perspective of the Australian Jewish leadership bodies.²⁷ Nevertheless, the two-state proposal was endorsed by the World Union of Jewish Students,²⁸ and enjoyed significant support from groups on the international and Australian Left, from the Israeli peace movement, and from a minority within the PLO.

The official Palestinian position was in favour of a secular, democratic state of Palestine, and strongly opposed to a two-state solution. Contrary to the suggestions of some on the Australian Left, this did not imply a socialist bi-national Palestine in which Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs would live as equals. Rather, the PLO always clarified that Palestine would be an exclusively

Arab state in which the Jews (or some Jews) would enjoy cultural and religious freedom, but no national rights.²⁹

However, a minority of Palestinians cautiously explored the alternative possibility of a two-state solution. As early as November 1973, Said Hammami, the official representative of the PLO in London who worked closely with PLO leader Yasser Arafat, argued in the *Times* of London for the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. A further article by Hammami argued in favour of the mutual recognition of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Hammami proceeded to meet and discuss his ideas with leading Israeli peace activists such as Uri Avnery. Avnery, who was involved in the Israeli Council for Israel-Palestine Peace, actively briefed the Israeli government on developments, but there was no official dialogue between PLO representatives and elected Israeli leaders. Hammami was murdered by a Palestinian extremist in 1978.³⁰

Internationally, progressive academic Mervyn Jones, writing in the well-known *Socialist Register* annual, criticised the PLO's proposal to replace Israel with a secular democratic state. Jones argued that Israelis would never voluntarily consent to the destruction of their state, and consequently an alternative unified state could only be imposed by force, and would be inherently undemocratic. He defended Israel's right to exist as a nation state irrespective of criticisms of specific Israeli policies, and endorsed two states for two peoples.³¹

Similar views in favour of two states were expressed by emerging Jewish Left groups such as Breira in the USA.³² Within Australia, a group of long-time Jewish Left activists headed by Norman Rothfield formed the Paths to Peace organisation (and associated journal of that name) to campaign for Israeli-Palestinian mutual recognition leading to a peaceful two-state solution. Rothfield and his colleagues emphasised that Palestinian rights could not be achieved via the destruction of Israel, and strongly opposed the extreme pro-Palestinian views of Bill Hartley and others within the Australian Left.³³

The Australian Labor government of that time also broadly endorsed two states, noting that Middle East peace required Arab recognition of Israel's right to exist, an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, and a fair settlement for the Palestinian refugees.³⁴ A similar view in favour of two states and opposing the destruction of Israel was expressed by John Halfpenny, state secretary of the left-wing Amalgamated Metal Workers' Union.³⁵

In summary, most of the Australian and international Left broadly supported the two-state solution proposed by AUJS.

AUJS and the threat of terrorism

One particular argument raised by AUJS against the AUS motions generally and the AUS-sponsored tour of two representatives of the GUPS in 1975, Eddie Zaniniri and Samir Cheikh, was that these activities could be seen as implying approval of Palestinian terrorism. For example, Joe Gersh alleged that Eddie Zaniniri was the Fatah Branch leader at the American University of Beirut, and active in the 'recruiting of students for overseas terrorist operations'.³⁶ Other Jewish student leaders alleged that Zaniniri was an active PLO intelligence officer.³⁷

The equation of the Palestinian cause with support for terror infuriated AUS who dismissed this argument as racist and ill-informed.³⁸ SYA activist Geoff Tanks condemned an AUJS rally for allegedly stereotyping Palestinians as gun-toting extremists.³⁹ Sol Salby described the reported Black September threat against trade union leader Bob Hawke as a hoax, arguing that the allegation was simply Zionist propaganda designed to undermine the Palestinian cause.⁴⁰

Yet, there is evidence to suggest there were legitimate fears about the possibility of terrorism emanating from organised Palestinian groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) reported numerous concerns that the terror attacks undertaken by Palestinian groups at the Munich Olympic Games and other locations could be duplicated in Australia.

Serious threats were identified against the Israeli Ambassador, the union leader and later prime minister Bob Hawke, and Jewish community leaders Isi Leibler and Sam Lipski. More than 30 local Arabs were listed as potential local PFLP sympathisers.⁴¹

Specific concerns about links between the GUPS, which was a formal arm of Al Fatah, and terrorist activities also held credence. The West German government banned the GUPS and expelled hundreds of its members in late 1972 following evidence that its representative in Bonn, Abdallah Hasan Al-Frangi, had actively collaborated with the perpetrators of the Munich Olympic Games massacre. The West German authorities presented further evidence that the GUPS endorsed violence to achieve political aims, and that its members were actively involved in military training.⁴² Given these demonstrated connections between various Palestinian groups including the GUPS and terror activities, it was not unreasonable for AUJS to express fears about the safety implications of the GUPS tour.

Why AUS rejected the two-state perspective

In contrast to AUJS, AUS aggressively dismissed proposals for a two-state solution as involving an Israeli and/or American plot to undermine Palestinian national rights. This approach reflected a number of factors. Firstly as noted above, the Palestinian leadership – despite the initiatives of Hammami and others – also rejected any political solution that involved recognition of the State of Israel. For example, Nabil Sha'ath rebuffed proposals for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza which he crudely labelled 'PalestinoStan' on the grounds that it would require the Palestinians to recognise the Israelis as a legitimate nation. According to Sha'ath, that outcome would 'mean continuation of racist settler-colonialism in Palestine, at the heart of the Arab world. It means the continuation of imperialist domination with all the racist overtones'.⁴³

AUS operatives expressed similar sentiments. Peter Connor from Melbourne University claimed that a Palestinian state in the

West Bank and Gaza Strip would be the equivalent of a South African Bantustan. He argued that 'only the complete dismantling of the Israeli state and the establishment of a totally new form of multi-national state is a possible solution'.⁴⁴ Neil McLean dismissed a Palestinian state as unsatisfactory given it would be reliant on the Israeli economy and surrounded by the Israeli army. Moreover, it would not allow the Palestinians to return as they demanded to their original homes and towns inside Israel.⁴⁵ Elsewhere, he objected that a two-state solution would require the Palestinians to 'cede most of their homeland to the Israeli settlers'.⁴⁶

La Trobe University activist Ken White opined that two separate states for Jews and Arabs would introduce 'a system of apartheid into the Middle East'.⁴⁷ Similarly, Frans Timmerman identified a Palestinian state as an Israeli ploy to subjugate the large Palestinian population within a small geographical area whilst stealing the best land to establish new Jewish settlements.⁴⁸ On another occasion, he argued that the Palestinians did not want a 'separate mini-state' controlled by the Israeli military. Rather, they wished 'to return to their places of origin'.⁴⁹ Simon Marginson described two states as a 'Zionist concept' which would not allow the Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Israel.⁵⁰ Rod Webb argued that two states would leave 'a racist, capitalist satellite in a most critical part of the world'.⁵¹

The visiting GUPS representative, Eddie Zananiri, rejected two states on the basis that any recognition of Israel would undermine Palestinian rights to self-determination. He also suggested that the Israel would never be willing to withdraw from sufficient territory to permit the creation of a Palestinian state.⁵²

A second factor was that the AUS campaign relied heavily on political and financial support from sections of the Australian Arab community. It was alleged by AUJS that much of the funding for pro-Palestinian activities came from members of the local Arab community and probably Arab diplomatic sources.⁵³ ASIO reports suggested that the Sydney businessman Reuben Scarf was

a key figure in funding publications such as the *Palestine Forum* journal, pro-Palestinian advertisements in newspapers, and proposed visits by PLO representatives. A number of other Arab businessmen also contributed funds.⁵⁴

It is also evident from ASIO reports that a close political partnership existed between leading AUS figures such as Frans Timmerman and Bill Hartley, and key Arab community activists such as Edmond Melki, Tony Maron, Reuben Scarf, and Rudolph Aboukater.⁵⁵ Notably there were no Arab community leaders at this time who rejected the PLO's call for the elimination of Israel and supported consideration of a two-state solution.

A third factor was that AUS closely aligned itself with the views of Matzpen/Compass (the Israeli Socialist Organisation), a marginal Trotskyist sect with about 100 members based in Jerusalem.⁵⁶ Matzpen was also the PLO's favoured political partner inside Israel.⁵⁷ Some of Matzpen's key members such as Akiva Orr, Haim Hanegbi and Moshe Machover had left Israel to live in Britain, and attained significant status within the international new Left. Matzpen argued that self-determination was not an absolute right, but rather that it was to be granted or denied in accordance with the interests of the struggle for socialism. Thus, the Israelis who were an oppressor nation would only be entitled to self-determination after the victorious Arab socialist revolution had transformed them into an oppressed nation.⁵⁸ Matzpen's anti-Zionist blueprint appealed to AUS because it reinforced their own ideological position against compromise involving a two-state solution. It also seemed superficially to provide some evidence in support of their view (which was also the view of the GUPS)⁵⁹ that increasing numbers of Jews were assisting the Palestinian struggle,⁶⁰ even though Matzpen were totally unrepresentative of the views of Israelis or Jews more broadly.

The convergence of anti-Zionism and antisemitism

AUS persistently denied that there was any antisemitic motives involved in their anti-Israel agenda. For example, *National*

U editor Frans Timmerman referred to the 'red herring of the charges of the antisemitism which are already being thrown at us'.⁶¹ AUS President Neil McLean accused 'Zionist public relations men' of exploiting false charges of antisemitism 'in a kind of emotional blackmail'.⁶² AUS activist Diana Auburn later denied that there was any 'trace of antisemitism in any of the pro-Palestinian articles and leaflets available from that period'.⁶³

But there were in fact three manifestations of antisemitism involved in the AUS campaign. One was the regular use of the racist stereotype associating Jews with disproportionate wealth, power and influence including control of the media.⁶⁴ For example, Rod Webb referred to the 'power and wealth of the Zionist propaganda machine' which he suggested ensured a 'strong media bias' in favour of Israel.⁶⁵ Ken White insisted that 'the Zionists have the use of all the media available to the capitalist press in Australia'.⁶⁶ Frans Timmerman claimed 'Zionists wield a lot of influence in the ruling circles of this society and hence are in a good position to control what Australians are allowed to read about the Middle East'.⁶⁷

Another AUS activist, Simon Marginson, referred to the 'enormous resources and political influence' of the Jewish population,⁶⁸ and further to AUJS receiving 'large amounts of money from Jewish Boards of Deputies and the like'.⁶⁹ Additionally, AUJS officials visiting the Gippsland Institute for the AUS debates were greeted with prejudiced comments such as 'Jews have too much money, support the PLO'.⁷⁰

Bill Hartley was the worst offender. He accused 'pro-Israeli communities ... of extending their loyalty more to Israel than to the nation of their residence'.⁷¹ He argued that the Jewish community held 'political, economic and media influence disproportionate to its numbers'.⁷² These statements were criticised by Communist Party activist Dave Davies as the equivalent of traditional far-Right stereotypes of Jews as a traitorous group.⁷³ Hartley later attacked Jews for opposing a visit by PLO officials to Australia, stating: 'It is easy to see how the cause of antisemitism

is furthered when a group of this type [the Jewish community] exerts political, social and especially economic pressure in a way which is far in excess of their numerical position in the community'.⁷⁴ Similarly, Sol Salby argued that 'a powerful Zionist lobby in the Labor government had blocked the visit, naming three members of the cabinet including the [Jewish and non-Zionist] Minister for the Environment, Dr Moss Cass'.⁷⁵ A further editorial in the *Scope* newspaper, edited by Hartley and published by the Victorian ALP Socialist Left trade unions, denounced Zionists as an 'alien influence' within the labour movement.⁷⁶

AUS officials frequently asserted that the Jewish community provided huge funds to support the AUJS campaign against the motions. The former editor of the University of NSW student paper *Tharunka*, Jefferson Lee, has recently claimed that 'the Jewish business lobby bankrolled' the AUJS activities.⁷⁷ But in fact, whilst some funding was provided by Jewish community groups and individual donors, this funding was not even sufficient to fund the anti-AUS campaign, and AUJS was left with significant debts.⁷⁸ Conversely, Altman argues to the contrary that AUS and their *National U* newspaper had access to larger resources based on the compulsory membership fee collected from all students.⁷⁹

A second example of overt antisemitism was the equation of Jews or Zionists with Nazism, in an attempt to diminish and trivialise the extent of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust.⁸⁰ For example, SYA activist Geoff Tanks openly compared a pro-Israel rally by Jewish students at the University of NSW with the anti-Jewish rallies held by Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Tanks compared Jewish claims to the land of Israel with Nazi demands for 'Lebensraum'.⁸¹ The Radical Student Movement at La Trobe University accused Zionism of being 'part of the growing Fascist movement in Australia'. They argued that Zionism was 'based on a religious myth, i.e. a chosen people - in the same way that Hitler based Nazism on a genetic myth, i.e. master race'.⁸²

An associated slur was the allegation that Zionists had collaborated with the Nazis to facilitate the Holocaust which was

intended to shift the blame or responsibility for the Holocaust from the Nazi perpetrators to the Jewish victims.⁸³ The Zionist-Nazi collaboration thesis was actively espoused by Bill Hartley and Ian MacDonald,⁸⁴ and also Ken White from La Trobe University who directly accused Zionist leaders of opposing Jewish resistance to the Nazis in the Warsaw Ghetto⁸⁵ despite the fact that the Jewish Fighting Organisation in the Ghetto was led by Mordechai Anielewicz from Hashomer Hatzair. The AUS also sponsored showings of a 1973 California Newsreel film called *We are the Palestinians: Revolution until victory* which alleged Zionist cooperation with Hitler.⁸⁶

The third and arguably most significant manifestation of antisemitism was the branding of all Jewish supporters of Israel's existence, whatever their views on conflict resolution, as the ideological enemy. As noted by Altman, the term Zionist became a form of abuse not dissimilar to that of Nazi or fascist.⁸⁷

In practice, AUS directed particular venom at left-wing Jews, despite their almost universal support for both Israeli and Palestinian national rights, alleging they were progressive on all issues other than Palestine.⁸⁸ For example, John Bechara accused Jewish radicals of allowing their 'clannish loyalty' to outweigh their 'socialist principles'.⁸⁹ CPA activist David McKnight asserted that 'Zionist students, although many have in the past supported moratoriums and anti-apartheid campaigns, find themselves in alliance with the rightwing students in attacking AUS'.⁹⁰ Simon Marginson argued that Jews who supported revolutionary positions on Vietnam and other international conflicts suddenly turned into 'reactionary liberals' when confronted with an issue that 'touched them personally'.⁹¹ Elsewhere, he accused radical Jews of failing to make 'a rational choice' when confronted with the dilemma between supporting the oppressed Palestinians, or alternatively maintaining 'their sense of identity with the concept of a Jewish state in Israel'.⁹²

At Monash University, an anonymous letter writer accused leftist Jewish candidates for the Public Affairs Committee, Stan

Rosenthal and Michael Frankel, of hiding their pro-Zionist leanings which were alleged to be incompatible with left-wing politics.⁹³ Rosenthal noted in response that 'many people with impeccable left-wing credentials, both locally and internationally, have supported or do support, Israel's right to exist as a Jewish homeland. I refer to Mark Taft (CPA) locally, and Allende and Dubcek internationally'.⁹⁴

Additionally, Norman Rothfield, a long-time left-wing anti-war activist and supporter of both Israeli and Palestinian national rights, was booed and jeered when he spoke at a forum on Palestine held at La Trobe University. According to an ASIO report that referred to Rothfield and another Jewish participant, 'some younger males in the crowd wanted to fight them and fix them up'.⁹⁵ These attacks greatly angered progressive Jews who felt betrayed by their former comrades. Michael Danby expressed 'sadness that a word describing the national liberation movement of the Jews is uttered in the same breath as fascist and Nazi'.⁹⁶

The potential for AUS's extremist rhetoric to provoke anti-Jewish violence was reflected in the violence perpetrated against a group of young Jewish demonstrators outside the AUS headquarters in Carlton on 4 May 1975 by a group of Maoists and local Arabs from the May Day march. According to a student reporter, 'No provocation (and there was none in this case) could have excused this disgusting piece of thuggery, which hospitalised three people. The attempts by some people within AUS to brush the incident off do them no credit'.⁹⁷

Conclusion

The extreme viewpoint and strategies adopted by AUS allowed no room for common ground with even the most progressive supporters of Israel. Their unconditional endorsement of Palestinian Arab nationalism, whilst completely rejecting the legitimacy of Israeli Jewish nationalism, placed AUS well outside the broader Australian Left consensus in favour of national rights for both peoples. In contrast, AUJS, despite overtly favouring the Israeli

narrative over the Palestinian narrative, which was not well understood in western countries at that time, proposed a form of conflict resolution that could in principle facilitate national self-determination for both sides.

The AUS campaign set the tone for pro-Palestinian advocacy for future decades culminating in the activities of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. The AUS campaign and the contemporary BDS movement arguably share the same core beliefs. They affirm national rights for the Palestinians, but withhold the same national rights to Israelis. They hate all Zionists, but reserve particular distaste for left-wing Jews/Zionists who insist on a solution that affirms the national rights of both peoples. They vigorously deny any anti-Jewish motivations, but in practice use a range of racist stereotypes to attack their mostly Jewish critics. They disingenuously claim that they enjoy significant Jewish support when in fact their few Jewish members are completely unrepresentative of mainstream Jewish opinion. And they deny any hostility towards individual Israelis even though the implementation of their agenda would inevitably lead to the ethnic cleansing if not genocide of the Israeli Jewish population.⁹⁸

Endnotes

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INSIDE THE AUSTRALIA-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP: JOHN MONASH TO THE PRESENT DAY - AN INTELLIGENCE PERSPECTIVE¹

Elisabeth Holdsworth

ABSTRACT

Based on her 2018 Leo Baeck Centre Lecture in Melbourne, the author, a retired intelligence officer with considerable experience of the intelligence dynamics of the Middle East, discusses the Australia/Israel relationship from the time of John Monash to the present. This span of time was chosen to reference the important work of Monash in establishing an Australian Intelligence Unit within the General Staff structure of the Army in the pre-World War One era. Drawing on source documents from the CIA, a relationship with Mossad that had an unlikely beginning, Australian Parliamentary Papers and her own notes, some alternate points of view regarding theatres of conflict such as Gallipoli, Vietnam, the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the 1973 Yom Kippur War are examined.

KEYWORDS

Military History,
Arab-Israeli War 1967,
Australian Intelligence
Corps, Mossad, Sir John
Monash, Yom Kippur
War 1973

Intelligence in the context under discussion refers to my former profession. I don't like the term spy or secret agent. Leave that to the movies. Intelligence officers are engaged in the gathering of knowledge. There are various ways this knowledge may be

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