

Anti-Zionist Interviews

The following are interviews made with anti-Zionist Jews at the UN International Conference on the Question of Palestine, September 1983, in Geneva. The first is with Uri Davis, who revolted against the reality he experienced growing up in the Zionist state. The second is with Alfred Lilienthal, who rejected the tyranny of world Zionism as exercised in the United States. The viewpoints expressed in the two interviews are not identical; nor do we agree on every point. However, we greatly value the ideas contained in the interviews, both in terms of exposing Zionism, and as contributions to a dialogue on how joint Arab-Jewish struggle can be realized for the sake of a democratic Palestine.

Alfred Lilienthal “Israel’s Flag is not Mine”

For over thirty years, Alfred Lilienthal has been one of the leading Jewish critics of Zionism in the US. He has lectured in 300 universities and some 250 cities around the country, each time facing local Zionists' attempts to cancel his lecture, because of their fear of a Jew speaking out against Zionism. Being so outspoken has put him in the center of controversy, and finally led to his being excommunicated from the Jewish faith by a group of rabbis on the grounds of lack of loyalty to 'Israel'. He is the author of *What Price Israel?*, published in 1953, one of the best known books written by a non - Arab on the question of Palestine, which has sold well over a million copies in the Arab world. His other works include *There Goes the Middle East*, *The Other Side of the Coin* and *The Zionist Connection*. Alfred Lilienthal has visited the Middle East no less than 23 times. The following is excerpts of our interview with him.

As an American anti-Zionist Jew, can you give our readers an idea of how you see the Zionist movement and ideology, and why you are anti-Zionist?

I am anti-Zionist because Zionism has attempted to replace the faith of the religion into which I was born, Judaism, with a narrow, nationalist, chauvinist movement of a political nature. This disregards the basic principles of Judaism. Number one: Without righteousness and justice, there is no Judaism. I am not the most religious person in the world; I have respect for my religion, and I believe that Zionism is trying to replace Judaism. Number two: Zionism is trying to push a double loyalty on me. I am an American; my only loyalty is to America. Zionism says: Even if it is against the best interests of

the US, you have to support Israel. I resent their political tyranny of trying to saddle me with a double loyalty and trying to speak in my name, saying that all Jews are Zionists, and that if you're not a good Zionist, you're not a good Jew; therefore, we speak in your name, we can decide the political policies; we can decide when Israel is right or wrong; you're just a follower; if you are a Jew, then you follow the rabbi, you follow the Jewish law...There was something that rebelled in me. I don't know what the lord inspired in me, but I picked up my pen and wrote: Israel's flag is not mine. Once I did that, I put myself in a very difficult and controversial position, and I have since been fighting to prove I was right...

How do you see the distinction between Zionism and Judaism?

Zionism is a political movement which really started in 1893, when Theodor Herzl wrote his book *Der Judenstaat (The Jewish state)*. Then five years later, in Basel, the first Zionist Congress (was held), whose goal was to recreate a Jewish state.

Judaism is a relationship between man and God, nothing to do with politics; it requires no loyalty to any state. If you don't believe in any state, you still can believe in Judaism, which is a set of ethical concepts and principles -justice, righteousness, belief in one god, relationship between man and God, man and man, and not between man and state; that is political. Therefore, in order to be a good Jew, one does not have to be a good Zionist. As a matter of fact, the basic ethics of Judaism have been flouted by Zionism in their treatment of the Palestinians, in their aggressive wars....

Does that mean that the Jews all over the world don't constitute a nation?

I don't think they constitute 156 nations. They are citizens in the countries in which they live. The Jews are not (a nation). This concept is wrong in many ways. Zionists, echoed by Begin, say we must go home; Judea and Samaria are ours. This overlooks the basic fact that the overwhelming majority of Jews in the world never came from the holy land. They are the result of conversions of people, foreign to the holy land, who wanted to practice a religion based on one god. The only religion at that time based on one god was Judaism, so they adopted Judaism. They may have been in Afghanistan; they may have been in South America, wherever. They were not a nationalist, ethnic group. This myth that Begin and the Zionists have tried to sell the world is totally false and wrong.

This means that those Jews who lived in Palestine before the