



Thursday, March 27, 2014

25th of Adar II, 5774

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Shabbat times for Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Candle lighting: 7:22pm on Friday, 28 Mar 2014

This week's Torah portion is Parashat Tazria

Shabbat HaChgdesh occurs on Saturday, 29 Mar 2014

Havdalah (45 min): 8:26pm on Saturday, 29 Mar 2014

Shabbat times for Montreal

'Critical solidarity' – Israel bashing by another name

Thursday, February 16, 2012

Tags: Columnists

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Gerald Steinberg

I have heard many excuses for crude anti-Israel propaganda, but the term "critical solidarity" is new. This is the phrase that Germany's Heinrich Böll Foundation used in the effort to justify channelling money to a particularly poisonous web magazine that goes under the name "+972" – the international dialing code for Israel.

Many of the posts on the site exploit the odious "apartheid" analogy that is central to the 2001 Durban strategy, designed to promote the "complete international isolation of Israel" – in other words, annihilation by political warfare.

Published in English, few Israelis read +972 and many of the writers are from the tiny fringe anti-Zionist sect of Israelis and Jews who have failed to gain attention and influence through the democratic process and resort to inflammatory rhetoric to attack Israeli policies.

In one typical example, in January 2012, Haggai Matar wrote "Dozens of Popular Committee activists gathered in Jericho for a 'freedom ride': an attempt to drive their cars to Ramallah on the fast lanes of the apartheid roads meant for Israelis only." Similarly, Noam Sheizaf, uses +972 to declare his religious belief that the IDF is the "main institution in promoting, maintaining occupation, apartheid." And Joseph Dana, who masquerades as a journalist, proclaimed, "I am opposed to the exclusive nature of Zionism and the privilege that it affords one people in this region." No wonder that Ali Abunimah, the head of Electronic Intifada and a leader of hate-filled anti-Israel events on North American campuses, is a big supporter.

This website is not the only form of anti-democratic manipulation and warfare funded by the German Böll Foundation. Its Israeli partners include Ta'ayush, an anarchist group that provokes violent confrontations in the West Bank. Another partner is Yesh Gvul, which is involved in lawsuits in Europe targeting Israeli officials that are responsible for counter-terror operations against Hamas. In the European Parliament, the group has sponsored highly biased presentations on "anti-democratic trends in Israel." And in January, it sent a letter to members of the Israeli Knesset opposing very preliminary proposals that would have placed limits on their and other foreign government funding for political advocacy NGOs. Apparently, the officials of these foreign foundations think that they're the real democrats, and not the elected officials chosen by the Israeli public.

What is a German political institution (the Böll Foundation is associated with the Green Party, and is funded by taxpayers) doing supporting this modern version of colonialism and antisemitism?

Their official response is that this funding was a form of "critical solidarity with Israel." George Orwell would have been proud – the phrase implies that hate speech and calls for the destruction of Israel are actually signs of support for and solidarity with the Jewish nation-state.

Böll also said it did not want to "censor" +972, as if censorship, and not funding, was the issue. By this warped logic, money given to any cause, no matter how marginal and immoral, is justifiable – there are no limits. It is hard to decide what is worse – the activities and funding or the absurd and insulting explanation.

Böll officials might also argue that they are only following the other German organizations and European

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governments, such as Norway and Sweden, in this form of "critical solidarity." Tens of millions of taxpayers' euros are given to fringe anti-Israel groups that work against the peace efforts that the governments claim to support. These groups are also active in promoting the demonization of Israel, and their publications repeat the libels of Israeli "apartheid," "genocide," "colonization," "massacre," and "ethnic cleansing."

If officials from Germany's Heinrich Böll Foundation and the rest retain any sense of decency and self-respect, they will end this immoral funding immediately and apologize for the damage done to Israel by their "critical solidarity." Europeans, in general, and German groups, in particular, have no right to manipulate Israeli democracy or to preach to Israelis on any issue.

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