

Earl Raab

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RUMANIA AND ARAB PROPAGANDA

Every few months we should pause in our laments and take note of some good news- and we might as well start with the Rumanians.

A few months ago, Congressman Tom Lantos of the North Peninsula led a Congressional delegation to Rumania, carrying a tough message. Last November, Rumania suddenly announced an exit tax for emigrants. All Rumanians leaving the country for Israel, the U.S. or West Germany would have to first pay the cost of any educations they received beyond the compulsory ten years. This would have to be paid in hard currency, and it set a real obstacle in the path of would-be emigrants. About a thousand Jews had been leaving every year for Israel.

Tom Lantos told the Rumanian authorities in no uncertain terms that if they persisted in the exit tax, they would lose their most-favored-nation trade status. He invoked the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik amendment which the American Jewish community had successfully lobbied in 1974, and indicated that he would lead a Congressional movement to implement those provisions. President Reagan later joined the movement by announcing that Rumania would lose its trade status on June 30 if it did not rescind that exit tax.

Last month Rumania informed the U.S. that it is rescinding the exit tax. Of course, it is the kind of good news which depends on the reversal of bad news - something akin to putting on tight shoes because it feels so good when you take them off. Nevertheless, it shows the efficacy of political action, starting with the election of Congressmen like Lantos.

And American/Israeli relations fall into the area of good news this month. Each branch of government is tumbling over the other in order to give more support to Israel. The House of Representatives increased the aid proposal sent down by the

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administration. The Senate increased the House proposal. And the Administration has indicated its happiness with the increases. The State Department has expressed disappointment with the Saudis. Casper Weinberger has made an unusual public expression of support for Israel. And the American public continues to register its overwhelming support for Israel.

It is illuminating that this kind of support has never been eroded by outright "Arab propaganda." A couple of months ago, the firm of "Dutton and Dutton" sent a letter to all Congressmen, calling for a cut in aid to Israel. Fred Dutton was a well-known liberal Democrat in this area before he went to Washington with the Kennedy administration- and stayed to become a chief propagandist and registered foreign agent for the Saudi regime. He has been sending slick anti-Israel material to Congressmen regularly for a number of years now.

This letter was nothing new, and it should be noted that it was *followed* by *increased* support of Israel by our government. American support for Israel is not irreversible, but it will take a lot more than outright "Arab propaganda" to reverse it. When it comes to American national interest, neither the American government nor the American public are to be taken for fools. That's the good news for this month.