

TROUBLE ON CAMPUS

The headline in the *Golden Gater* read: "Mideast war comes to campus." The headline referred to the recent confrontations between pro-Israel and pro-Arab students on the San Francisco State University campus.

All pro-Israel students are not Jewish, and all pro-Arab students are not Arab. But it is mainly the Jewish students (Israeli and American) and the Arab students (foreign and American) who confront each other. The fact is that *direct* confrontation between Jews and Arabs in this country generally takes place on one college campus or another.

In San Francisco, for example, there are many Arab Americans with strong pro-Palestinian passions. But there has not been a signal record of confrontation between them and the Jews of the city. On matters of the Middle East, we oppose each other vigorously on the media and in the Congressmen's offices, but we don't physically assault each other at meetings. That is partly because of a feeling on both sides -- there have been conversations -- that in America, especially as fellow citizens, we should conduct our conflict according to American rather than Middle East procedures and modes. There have been several episodes over the years which probably breached that understanding, but they were the exception rather than the rule.

At many universities, however, direct confrontation has been the rule. Jewish students at those universities have a responsibility which is not generally recognized. They are at the front lines of the battle for the American mind. The elite, the policy makers, the opinion molders of the nation emerge from these universities. For most of them, what they learn in the classroom is more important than what they learn on the campus; statistically, college graduates are much more favorable towards Israel than those who don't graduate from college. But some are shaped in part by the ideological climate and debate on campus. And educated enemies are the most dangerous.

At San Francisco State University, the Arab students constantly show movies and have rallies on behalf of the Palestinian Arab cause, which typically paint Israel as colonialist and oppressive. The Jewish students -- through Hillel, the Jewish Students Action Committee which includes a number of Jewish groups, and the Israel Students Organization -- constantly mount programs of their own.

But on November 23, when the Jewish Students Action Committee was showing "The Unholy War," ABC's documentary on PLO and other terrorism, a group of Arab students came to disrupt the meeting. They banged on the doors, and, at one point, a couple of them stood in front of the video screens. The campus police told them they would be arrested if they didn't leave, and the showing of the documentary continued. After the meeting, the campus police asked the students at the showing not to leave by the main entrance where the Arabs were massed, but to leave by another door, and the students complied with that request.

If anyone thinks that the Jewish students were intimidated, they are dead wrong. The General Union of Palestine Students had long scheduled a rally for the next day, November 24. The Jewish Students Action Committee held a counter-demonstration. The Jewish students danced, waved flags and made their points. There was one attempt to tear down one of their flags, but the Jewish students persisted. The *Golden Gater* approvingly reported that Jewish event as a public counter-demonstration which was resolutely "peaceful." That was one of the points the Jewish students wanted to make to the campus community.

The Jewish students have also asked the administration to tighten its rules with respect to the disruption of meetings. On behalf of the community, the JCRC has also expressed its concern to the administration on that score, since it is a public university. However, the Jewish community organizations usually want to take their cues from the Jewish students, who are on the scene, and who feel that outside interference doesn't always help their cause.

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However, no one has to be concerned about the caliber of their leadership. The Jewish students at San Francisco State University are already planning a full public campaign for after the holidays -- and it would be a good bet that "The Unholy War" will be shown again, with an even wider audience. So much for intimidation.

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