Draped in the flag

American Jewish Committee, Rashida Tlaib: two sides of one coin

Should we demand of synagogues that they remove the Israeli flag from the pulpit because, you know, this is evidence of “dual loyalty?”

The question is a rhetorical question — is it? The American Jewish Committee might be the first in line demanding the Israeli-flag removal — if it is consistent. Objecting to an objectionable comment by freshman Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, the AJCommittee dispatched a tweet of photo of Tlaib wizarding a fan wrapped in a Palestinian flag, with this tagline: “Tell us more about dual loyalty, @RashidaTlaib.”

We cringed. It is no more evidence of dual loyalty to embrace the Palestinian cause — or the Irish cause, or the Cuba cause — or the cause of whatever homeland one is attached to — than it is to embrace the Israeli cause. What matters in the dual loyalty charge is whether one supports duties and interests, not first and foremost. Of all the organizations to forget this, it is especially shameful for the American Jewish Committee to do so, since it sponsors celebrations at the swearing-in of new American citizens.

One would think that the AJCommittee understands the definition of American citizenship. It does not exclude sympathy for any country or people not at war with the US.

Now, what precisely was objectionable about Tlaib’s comment? She accused pro-Israel senators (all non-Jewish) of forgetting what country they represent for their sponsorship of pro-Israel bills in Congress. Well, state that in reverse, Ms. Tlaib: To be pro-Israel is no more evidence of dual loyalty than it is to embrace the Palestinian flag.

Dual loyalty, when it exists, is an equivalence between the US and another country. No US senator is guilty of dual loyalty.

Be careful, Ms. Tlaib. If you keep using the phrase “dual loyalty,” it may be turned against you. The next person to be charged may be you or other advocates of the Palestinian cause. We hope not, not least because the dual loyalty charge primarily targets pro-Israel American Jews. As ably stated by the ABL:

“Though the legislation discussed is sponsored by four non-Jewish senators, any charge of dual loyalty has special sensitivity and resonance for Jews, particularly in an environment of rising anti-Semitism.”

The country needs more judicious language from both Rashida Tlaib and the American Jewish Committee.

Martin Luther King Day

The emotional pinnacle at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tenn., is a video recording of Rev. King’s final speech.

“I just want to go to G-d’s will. And He’s allowed me to go up to the moun-tain. And I’ve looked over. And I’ve seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a peo-ple, will get to the promised land!”

Someone recently commented on something to this effect: He would like to go through one week without once hearing the word Hitler, to which we might add: Or to go through one election cycle without once hearing the word Hitler. Memo to Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Georgia): You spoiled it.

JTA reports that Johnson, a congressman from Georgia, speaking from the pulpit of a Baptist church in Atlanta, said that Hitler “rode a wave of nationalism and anti-Semitism to power. Replace anti-Semitism with ‘all Latinos crossing our borders are rapists, drug dealers and murderers.’ Does that sound familiar?”

No, it doesn’t. Regrettable, crude, and inaccurate as some of President Donald Trump’s statements about immigrants surely are, they are not designed to lay the ground for, nor do they in fact lay the ground for, mass extermination of immigrants or anyone else.

Johnson went on, just in case no one caught his drift, “Americans elected an authoritarian, racist, anti-immigrant strongman to the nation’s highest office. Americans, particularly black Americans, can’t afford to make that same mistake about the harm that could be done by a man named Hitler or a man named Trump.”

Knowledge of history is not one of the Georgia Democrat’s strong points, not to mention knowledge of American democracy. Among the nearly countless data points of difference between Trump and Hitler that Johnson should familiarize himself with, let a single one suffice. Let Johnson watch a video of Hitler’s maniacal harrangues to robotic masses of Heil Hitler waving masses of Germans, which, needless to say, have no parallel in these United States. Instead, we have the free- dom to demonstrate or praise, thwart or facilitate, advance or retard, work with or work against, celebrate or mourn, the person and policies of the president of the United States. It’s called democracy, which, other than the election that brought Hitler to power, died with his election to power.

Yes, it is necessary to remind Rep. King: ‘White supremacy is offensive’

The saddest part of the case of Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) is that he seems clueless as to why the entire Republican leadership in the House of Representatives stripped him of all committee privileges, including the agricultural committee, a plum assignment for a politician from Iowa.

The case of King is this: He wondered, in an interview with The New York Times, how such terms as “white supremacist” and “Westem civilization” became offensive. Besides the obvious racism inherent in his adoration of white supremacist-cism was his confirmation of the worst of current historical stereotypes: the equation of racism with Western civilization. Our civiliza- tion, no doubt, employed and acted on the worst of racist sentiments, but from within this political cauldron there emerged, in fits and starts, political concepts that emerged from no other civilization — concepts of universal suffrage, of equality before the law and the protection of other individual rights, regardless of race — concepts that now govern much of the Western world and beyond.

The real worry with Rep. King is not King; it is the people who elected him. King’s ideas are well known to them. His most recent racist comment was far from the first. That a person like him could be elected is, yes, a problem for the Republican Party, but beyond that it is a problem for the people of Iowa and for the American people as a whole. This is not the type of person who should represent any segment of America.

The GOP House leadership was right to strip King of his privileges. The next step, devoutly to be hoped for, is for him to be recalled by his constituents.

Rep. King suggested building an electrified fence along the US-Mexico border. “We do that with livestock all the time,” he said.

‘Nuff said.