**EDITORIAL**

**Shame on the city of Takoma Park**

There were so many things wrong with how the city of Takoma Park handled the screening of "The Occupation of the American Mind" that we find little basis to excuse the mistakes as naive, innocent or unintended. Given how the screening and its related programming played out, and the multiple opportunities the city of Takoma Park had (and either ignored or rejected) to handle things more carefully and sensitively, we can't help but conclude that the entire program was intentionally insensitive to the state of Israel, and knowingly bordered on being anti-Semitic. And we don't make these observations lightly.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is fraught with tension and deep political and emotional differences. Anyone presenting a program on the topic — particularly around a film that is controversial — knows that every aspect of the exercise is fraught with significant communal risk. So what did Takoma Park think would happen when it decided to screen a decidedly anti-Israel film that blames the Jewish state for everything that has gone wrong for the Palestinians, and accuses Israel of spinning a "Protocols of Zion"-like web to ensnare the American media into unquestioning support?

As reported in our pages over the past several weeks, there were many questions about how the screening was approved, as well as alarm regarding a hate-mongering panelist chosen to present at the program. Given the poor choices made by Takoma Park, it is not at all surprising that the panel "presentation" was pathetically short on "dialogue" and distressingly long on negativity, stridency and anti-Israel sophistry that was remarkably uninformed and insulting.

The event panel did not include participants from the Israeli government or the PLO. Washington's well-respected JCRC was invited to attend, but refused to participate since it found the film anti-Semitic. For a brief moment, Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld, of the District's Ohev Sholom — the National Synagogue, agreed to participate on the panel, only to withdraw upon learning that panelist Taher Herzallah, of the American Muslims for Palestine, had publicly called for violence against Israel and accused Jewish Birthright participants of being involved in ethnic cleansing.

That left professional facilitator Theo Franchot and individual Maryland legislators by Jewish organizations such as the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington's refusal to participate in a forum sponsoring blatant anti-Semitism, but also by the actions of eight members of the Montgomery County Council, Comptroller Peter Franchot and individual Maryland legislators across religious and political lines protesting the presentation.

Coming was painful, and so it must have been for a handful of others who spoke truth to bigotry. And by coming, I know the fight will be long and difficult. There will be a next time, and we will need more than a few of us to speak up.

Saul Golubcow writes from Potomac.

**Why I went to Takoma Park**

By Saul Golubcow

*SPECIAL TO WJW*

Last Tuesday, I was part of the overflow audience of a few hundred at Takoma Park Community Center to watch the disturbing documentary "The Occupation of the American Mind." What I saw was Israel portrayed as a vicious, illegitimate entity brutally killing and oppressing Palestinians.

Worse, the film promotes a conspiracy theory that from 1948 to the present, the Jewish state for everything that has happened when it decided to screen a terribly offensive film that blames the colonizer for everything that has gone wrong for the Palestinians, and accuses Israel of spinning a "Protocols of Zion"-like web to ensnare the American media into unquestioning support?

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