

Tel Aviv, December 10, 1989

Editor
The Jerusalem Post
P.O. Box 81
Jerusalem 91000

Dear Sir,

On December 6 I mailed you a letter in incomplete reply to an article by Professor Lipkin (Post, Dec. 6), in which he seemed to attribute the success of U.S. policy in post-World War II Japan to our imposition of unconditional surrender and military occupation - as contrasted with less drastic Israeli policies in the territories occupied after the 1967 war. Thus, he wrote, any criticism of Israel's occupation policies by Americans would be hypocritical, etc. On another occasion, a young Israeli friend told me that, since the U.S. had acquired its Southwest by military victory in the Mexican War, and other parts of the West by riding roughshod over the Indians from 1860-90, Israel had an equal right to take over the West Bank and Gaza by any means it saw fit, without any hypocritical nonsense from the Americans, etc. As an admittedly inexpert American tourist and friend of Israel, I would like to address these two contentions.

First, as regards Japan, the success of our post-World War II policy there did not result merely from the imposition of unconditional surrender and the military occupation under MacArthur. It really happened because of some wise policies carried out under the occupation, including recognition of the Emperor as symbol of Japan; rebuilding of a sovereign and independent Japan with representative government; land reform and economic assistance; a free press, and an early departure by us. U.S. policy did not include any of the specific repressive measures now reported in the West Bank and Gaza. Had it done so, there would have been an intifada of 90 million Japanese that would have rendered the U.S. occupation totally untenable, militarily, morally and politically. Of course, a distinguishing factor of crucial importance is that we had no territorial ambitions in Japan, nor desire to displace its population or make it move elsewhere. So Professor Lipkin's analogy regarding our occupation of Japan seems, with respect, misplaced.

Second, the analogies of our war with Mexico and our crushing of the American Indians in the 19th century are more in point. Both clearly resulted from the demographic pressures of Euro-American settlers flooding ever westward, but a crucial practical difference from the present case is that the lands acquired by military victory from Mexico, or by forcible displacement of the American Indians, were only very sparsely populated. If the lands so occupied had been filled wall-to-wall with long-settled and organized Mexicans and Indians, most of whom bitterly resented our rule, and the only way we could maintain our sway was by the methods now employed in the West Bank and Gaza, I doubt we would hold those areas today. In addition, territorial aggrandizement

by force was, in the 1800s, a much more fashionable, accepted and feasible practice than it is today, perhaps because there was much more open space then than now, and no instantaneous world-wide communications to alert collective and individual consciences.

It looks to me, as just one, however-mistaken American tourist, that one underlying motive of current Israeli government policy may really be to make life so miserable for the majority inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza that they will, it is hoped, simply despair, die off or go somewhere else. Supposed end of problem. Hence the apparent foot-dragging on peace talks, among other things.

We obviously never had such a policy in Japan, so our policy there worked, and Japan is a valued ally today. We did have such a policy, at least de facto, toward the American Indians, and some might argue that it worked (even if only because there were so few Indians, and that was the 1800s, not 1990). But I would argue that it did not really work, and has left legacies that are a continuing drain on the American treasury, psyche and civilization to this day. More enlightened policies could have obtained much better results for settlers and Indians alike, as I believe happened in Canada.

Sincerely,

O. Williams
American Tourist
Tel Aviv.