

Forum aims to remind people of continuing Palestinian question

Sixty-six years after the Balfour Declaration was approved, it prompted controversial speeches at a forum Wednesday in the Nebraska Union.

Nadeem Yousif, president of the UNL Organization of Arab Students, said "the reason for the forum is to remind everybody of the Palestinians who were forced out of their land by England, favoring the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine."

Bruce Erlich, associate professor of English at UNL, spoke about the declaration "in the context of modern Jewish history."

He said the declaration recognized a Jewish political state. It also provided concrete evidence of Europe wanting to get rid of the Jews.

"The idea of establishing a homeland for Jews is a modern one," he said. "The choice of Palestine was a coincidence."

Erlich discussed alternatives European Jews had, other than establishing a political state in Palestine. Internationalism was one alternative, he said. Internationalism is the welfare of all, including Jews, Arabs and others living in peaceful coexistence, he said.

A second alternative, Erlich said, was autonomism — the idea of the dispersal of Jews as the normal condition of Jewish existence.

Bill Pratt, a UNO history professor, spoke about the "legacies of colonialism" providing a historical context behind what is happening now in Israel and Lebanon.

After World War I, the Allies secretly agreed to divide the Ottoman Empire which controlled the Middle East, Pratt said. Prior to that, England had agreed to create an independent Arab state, but failed to fulfill its promises. Instead, the area was carved up into regions under colonial powers. France had Syria, which was divided into Syria and Lebanon. The division was favored by the Maronite Christians at that time, which gave them the power to control the country after the French left. Almost every group in Lebanon opposed the division, Pratt said.

Pratt said the declaration was issued to enhance the position of the Allies in World War I, and to have a country serving their colonial interests in the region. By no means was the Balfour Declaration brought about for the well-being of the Jews, Pratt said.

The third speaker, graduate student Krishna Madan, spoke about Zionism and Fascism. He defined fascist movements as those that have popular support of one or more minority groups and grow under economic and political oppression.

Madan also talked about the legitimacy of the "so-called Israeli democracy." He said Palestinians under Israeli rule are not allowed to vote or participate in any other political activity. They are "third-class citizens," he said. Madan said Israel "is not and cannot be a democracy."

Off The Wire

National and international news from the Reuter News Report

Leader of Grenada: Elections within year

U.S. troops began withdrawing from Grenada Thursday at the island's governor-general promised to announce an interim government within a week and hold open elections within a year.

The first of about 2,300 U.S. servicemen began flying home Thursday, leaving 3,000 servicemen on Grenada, military spokesmen said.

Governor-General Sir Paul Scoon, whom the Reagan administration has called the sole constitutional authority on the island, said in the Grenadian capital of St. George's that organized resistance to the U.S.-led invasion of his country 10 days ago had ended. Scoon said he is not consulting with Washington on the formation of his new government.

In Washington, President Reagan said the invasion had achieved his goals and he foresaw no circumstances that would compel him to intervene with military force elsewhere in the Caribbean. Reagan also dismissed a vote by the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday that deplored the action, saying, "It didn't upset my breakfast."

S. Africa to share power

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — White South Africans have voted in decisive numbers to allow some non-whites into the government for the first time. Final results announced Thursday of Wednesday's whites-only referendum showed that a 2-1 majority approved a new constitution that gives a limited governmental role to Indians and people of mixed race, known in South Africa as "coloreds." Blacks, who account for more than 70 percent of the country's population of 28 million, will continue to be excluded from government, and black leaders warned that racial tensions may increase.

Gemayel may visit U.S.

GENEVA, Switzerland — Lebanon's leading politicians Thursday asked President Amin Gemayel to go to Washington to find a way out of an impasse over the Lebanese-Israeli troop withdrawal agreement, the most contentious issue at national reconciliation talks. The politicians made the decision after two days of talks failed to reconcile the opposition's demands for the repeal of the Israeli accord and the government's insistence that the implications would be too serious. Israel has said that if the Beirut government tears up the agreement, it might seal off occupied south Lebanon and keep its troops there indefinitely.

Military deaths and taxes

WASHINGTON — Treasury Secretary Donald Regan appealed to Congress Thursday for a bill to relieve survivors of the American servicemen killed in Beirut and Grenada of income taxes on their military pay.

Under present law, no taxes are due if military deaths occur in an area a president has designated as a combat zone. However, there have been no presidential declarations of combat zones since the Vietnam War. The pending bill would exempt pay from taxes if deaths occurred overseas in hostile areas, without the need for a presidential designation.

Noisy sculpture too much

MONTREAL, Canada — Anti-war artist Andre Cote dumped a five-ton "screaming sculpture" outside the Montreal courthouse, but the massive block of steel, containing a 23-minute tape of screams, gunfire and dive-bomber aircraft, was moved after one day. Police and city workers said it was too noisy and city officials feared it might crash through to the courthouse basement.

Cote, who used a crane to deposit the sculpture outside the courthouse before dawn Wednesday, said, "They can't turn it off immediately. To stop it, you have to lift it." So municipal authorities rented a crane to remove the sculpture. If Cote pulls the same stunt again, officials said, they will send him a bill.



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