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April 21, 2005 Running the campus gauntlet

A reader who is currently at a British university has sent me this cri de coeur about the anti-Jewish witch-hunt going on in our seats of learning:

'I have been particularly incensed by the activities of certain universities, most notably SOAS. I am currently attending Aberystwyth University, and I can assure you that the rot within academia seems to be all pervasive.

'The most notable decline in academic rigour is the opinion of most of the academic staff that all the world's current ills can be attributed to the activities of the US and Israel, and those that can't are the result of our colonial legacy. This results in a refusal to try and investigate or understand the problems in the developing world; or more precisely the Islamic world.

'Certain members of the academic staff hold some quite frankly offensive views. During a recent series of lectures about terrorism, the lecturer gave an admirably balanced assessment of most of the terrorist groups and their activities around the world. Then came the 'Middle East Conflict'. He began by handing out photocopied pieces of his own published work that sought to claim that the myriad terrorist groups operating in Israel and Palestine were necessary to prevent 'Israeli genocide'. He then went on to inform us that during the course of his research he had met and interviewed numerous members of Hamas and Hezbollah, and that he counted some of these men as 'close personal friends' and had invited one of them to his native Holland.

'I found this situation entirely unpalatable. suppose that the lecturer had declared his support for another of the terrorist groups he was lecturing about — Combat 18 for example, or perhaps the numerous Aryan/White power groups in the US. Can we imagine that he would still be teaching, or for that matter that he would be anything more than a pariah?

'A Jewish friend put this question to the department and was essentially told that first of all he couldn't really have an opinion because religion clouds the individual's judgement, and that secondly he was an undergraduate and therefore not able to understand academic objectivity.

'It also seems that the only way to really succeed within the university industry is to pander to the prejudices of the academic staff; anything that differs with the anti-Semitic orthodoxy results in rather harsh marking. When I first went to university, I came with the naive belief that study at such an institution was about the pursuit of knowledge and truth; it is about lies, propaganda and the worst sort of prejudice.

'Our "Guild of Students" (for some reason we don't have a union) has been filled with rabid Amnesty International types. I find the ideal that Amnesty was set up with admirable. However, it seems to have been hijacked by those that oppose the state of Israel. There have been a rash of frankly laughable and ridiculous activities to show support for the oppressed Palestinian victims: we have had a "Stop the Wall" evening, conducted with university approval. This evening featured collections for some rather dubious charities, and interpretive dance and drama to "show solidarity and resistance".

'I have two months left at university and they cannot pass quickly enough.'

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