

2013

H-Diplo

H-Diplo Article Reviews

h-diplo.org/reviews/

No. 409

Published on 26 June 2013

Updated, 13 June 2014

H-Diplo Article Review Editors: Thomas Maddux and
Diane N. Labrosse

Web and Production Editor: George Fujii

Commissioned for H-Diplo by Thomas Maddux

Paul Thomas Chamberlin. "Schönau and the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution: Refugees, Guerillas, and Human Rights." *Cold War History* 12:4 (November 2012): 595-614. DOI: 10.1080/14682745.2012.665368. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2012.665368>

URL: <http://h-diplo.org/reviews/PDF/AR409.pdf>

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In September 1973, a group of Palestinian guerillas, calling themselves 'The Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution,' attacked a train carrying Soviet Jews en route to Schönau Castle, a transit center used by the Jewish Agency to process the flow of European Jews to Israel. Five Jews were taken hostage, among them a 73-year-old man, an ailing woman and a three-year-old child, and were hustled aboard a Volkswagen bus owned by the Austrian railroad. In return for the safe release of the hostages, and a pledge that Austria would not become a site of future attacks, the guerillas demanded the instant closure of the Schönau Castle, and the cancellation of all flights to Israel from the Vienna International Airport at Schwechat. Fearing the hostage crisis could turn into another Munich, when eleven Israeli athletes were murdered by Palestinian guerillas at the 1972 Olympic Games, Austrian chancellor Bruno Kreisky quickly capitulated to Palestinian demands. He announced that Schönau would be closed, and provided the Palestinian guerillas safe passage to Libya.

Coming only a year after Munich, and just days before the outbreak of the 1973 October War, historians have often overlooked the attack on Schönau. The topic is usually submerged in the larger story of Soviet Jewry.¹ Yet, in his article, "Schönau and the Eagles of the Palestinian Revolution: Refugees, Guerillas, and Human Rights," Paul Thomas Chamberlin, a historian at the University of Kentucky, seeks to redress this gap in the historiography by examining opposition to the flow of Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union, much of which came from Palestinian Arabs and their supporters. This is an important study that highlights the transnational dimensions of the Palestinian national movement and its connection to the emerging literature on human rights during the post-World War II period. Drawing on Austrian, Arab, and

¹ See, for example, Gal Beckerman's, *When They Come For US We'll Be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2010).

American sources, Chamberlin shows how two distinct refugee communities—Palestinian Arabs and Soviet Jews—each sought to draw international attention to their plight by using similar language on human rights. By applying a shared norm of human rights and international law, the author demonstrates that Palestinian claims of self-determination and ‘freedom of movement’ were very similar to those of their adversaries.

For the Palestinians, who get the most attention in this study, the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel represented a clear threat to a future Palestinian homeland. The issue, as Chamberlin explains, was not one of freedom of movement of Soviet Jews to Israel, which is how many Westerners viewed the crisis, but rather the ongoing ‘colonization’ of Palestinian territory. “In their mind,” Chamberlin argues of the Palestinian nationalists, “the two hijackers were attacking not a flow of *refugees*, but rather an invasion of *colonists*” (10). Palestinians feared that if European Jewish immigration was not quickly curtailed, Israel would provide the new arrivals from Europe with homes in Arab territories that had been captured by Israel during the 1967 war. Given Israel’s decision to annex parts of Jerusalem and build settlements in the West Bank after 1967, this fear was not entirely unfounded.

According to Chamberlin, what makes the Schönau crisis so unique is that the “alleged terrorists” (in this case the Palestinians) justified their actions by using the “discourse of human rights, international law, and the importance of creating a functioning global community based on shared values” (9). The Palestinians, argues Chamberlin, fought for rights such as ‘self-determination’ and resistance to ‘colonialism,’ as well as rights that had been articulated most prominently in the UN Charter and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights -- rights that had been accorded to Israelis, Jews, and Westerners for decades. Palestinians living in the West Bank, in particular, were pleased to see the closure of Schönau Castle, not because it restricted the movement of Soviet Jews, but rather because it protected the rights of Palestinian refugees who would eventually resettle in a future Palestinian state; “By what set of standards, they asked, were the rights of Russian Jews fleeing Soviet oppression more sacred than the rights of Palestinian refugees seeking to return to their homeland” (12).

By focusing on the language of human rights, and how that language was applied in international forums, such as the United Nations, moreover, Chamberlin also highlights the hypocrisy of Israeli leaders as they applied their own human rights discourse. When Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir traveled to Vienna to protest Kreisky’s decision to close Schönau, she claimed that Palestinian guerillas, with Austrian assistance, had deliberately restricted the freedom of movement of Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union. This may have been true. But Meir also remained completely oblivious to the fact that Israeli policy for twenty-five years had restricted the freedom of movement of Palestinian refugees who wanted to return to their homes in Palestine. Chamberlin comments that “The Prime Minister’s conviction that freedom of movement was a basic human right had been, in Israel’s case, applied most selectively” (12).

Although this is an important study that further connects the Palestinian liberation movement to the global discourse of human rights, and broadens our understanding of the reaches of the ‘global Cold War’, it also leaves several questions unanswered. First, how should historians

reconcile Palestinian efforts to connect their liberation struggle to the language of human rights and international law with their complete and utter disregard for human rights and international law during the same period? Should the hijackings by Palestinian guerillas in September 1970 be considered a part of this global discourse? What about the murder of the 11 Israeli athletes at Munich Olympic games by the extremist Black September movement? How should historians explain the 1973 assassination of the U.S. ambassador in Khartoum, Cleo Noel, at the hand of Palestinians guerillas who had direct ties to Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat?² Yes, Palestinians used the language of human rights when it suited their purposes, but they also adopted tactics that made such claims ludicrous.

Finally, how much did the Schönau attack, and the Palestinians' use of human rights rhetoric during the hostage crisis, actually contribute to the PLO's growing international acceptance during the 1970s? Chamberlin's larger work on the Palestinians, recently published by Oxford University Press, suggests that Third World countries used their clout to push the Palestinian agenda, and their concern for human rights, at the United Nations and other international forums. The UN General Assembly, for example, supported resolutions reaffirming "the inalienable right of self-determination and independence of all peoples under colonial and racist regimes and other forms of alien domination," protected the rights of "oppressed peoples" fighting for national liberation, refused to condemn several acts of international 'terrorism,' and prevented US and Israeli efforts to criminalize the PLO.³ But whether the Schönau attack contributed to this agenda, or whether it will remain an isolated incident submerged in larger story of Soviet Jewry, remains difficult to discern. Chamberlin's article, I believe, rightly pushes for the former. But without more direct links between Schönau and the Palestinian use of human rights rhetoric, it may remain with the latter.

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² See footnote 3, Document 41 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, Vol. XXV, Arab-Israeli Crisis and War, 1973.

³ Paul Thomas Chamberlin, *The Global Offensive: The United States, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 178-179.