Under Prodding From a Zionist, Al Gore Fires a Speech Writer

By Donald Neff

It was three years ago, on July 9, 1995, that Vice President Al Gore fired his new speechwriter, Richard Marius. The abrupt action came after New Republic editor Martin Peretz accused Marius of anti-Semitism. Marius, 62, was a senior lecturer at Harvard who had written a 1992 book review in which he compared the Israeli secret police with the Nazi Gestapo, infuriating Peretz.

Since then Peretz, a passionate Zionist, had been attacking him as an anti-Semite. When Gore appointed Marius a full-time speechwriter, starting July 24, Peretz intervened and had Gore reverse the decision. Said Peretz: “When you make the Nazi analogy, it cannot be tossed off as, ‘Oh, how silly of me to have done this.’ When you write that, you believe it. So, once the vice president knew, he had to figure out if he wanted someone who believed that on his staff.”

Marius protested: “I’ve never had an anti-Semitic thought in my life….That’s the only thing I’ve ever written against Israel. I certainly have never written anything anti-Semitic. I won’t defend myself against the charge. If the vice president thinks I’m an anti-Semite, I won’t write for him again….I thought the whole issue of that review was behind me, and I’ve been very careful not to touch those buttons again.”

Marius had written in a review of Helen Winternitz’s book, A Season of Stones, that “Many Israelis, the Holocaust fresh in memory, believe that that horror gives them the right to inflict horror on others. Winternitz’s account of the brutality of the Shin Bet, the Israeli secret police, is eerily similar to the stories of the Gestapo, the Geheimstaatspoliz over occupied territories, in World War II.” The review appeared in the March-April edition of Harvard Magazine.

Gore had a close relationship with Peretz. They had known each other since 1965, when Peretz was an instructor at Harvard and Gore a pet student. During the 1992 presidential campaign, Peretz hung out on Gore’s campaign plane, “banning publication of all but the mildest criticism [of Gore] in his magazine,” according to The Washington Post.

Peretz’s Zionism rubbed off on Gore. He said in 1992 with wild exaggeration: “Israel is our strongest ally and best friend, not only in the Middle East, but anywhere else in the world.” There is little doubt why he was a warmly welcomed official guest in Jerusalem on Israel’s 50th anniversary celebration in April 1998.
During a visit to Russia in mid-December 1993, Gore went out of his way to seek a solution to a dispute between the Chabad Lubavitcher sect and Moscow over some 12,000 Hebrew volumes confiscated by the Soviets in 1917. The Soviets had long contended the books had been lost or destroyed but in 1990, 2,000 of them came to light and the Lubavitchers sued. On Dec. 16, 1993, Gore went to the Russian State Library—formerly the Lenin Library—in Moscow and received a copy of one of the books, Tanya, by Rabbi Shneur Zalman, spiritual leader of the group who wrote it 198 years earlier, for delivery to the Lubavitchers in Brooklyn.5

As for Marius, the sudden firing left him bitter. He had already rented his Belmont home in Massachusetts in preparation for moving to Washington. Marius later wrote about the experience, saying: “It seems that Martin Peretz had complained about my appointment...and threatening the vice president with unrelenting attack and the loss of Jewish support if I were hired.”6

Marius said he had wanted to write for Gore as a way to fight the influence of the religious right: “I just despise those Republicans crawling to Pat Robertson. But, honest to God, I don’t see any difference between crawling to Pat Robertson and crawling to Marty Peretz.”7

RECOMMENDED READING:
*Kahane, Rabbi Meir, They Must Go, New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1981.


FOOTNOTES:


