

Anti-Semitism was an Issue in UM Harrassment Case

To the Editor:

As we write this letter, the University of Miami is deciding whether or not to fire Prof. Jiri Valenta, a professor of political science at the university.

Dr. Valenta is accused of sexual harrassment, but there is evidence that his accuser may be motivated by political, ethnic and religious bias.

In an exchange of views printed in the *Miami Herald* on Monday, UM President Edward T. Foote II, stated that Dr. Valenta's case had been subjected to an extensive review.

In fact, when one of us, in testimony before the UM Faculty Committee, tried to raise the issue of Dr. Valenta's accuser's anti-Semitic and anti-Cuban attitudes, he was not allowed to speak.

Dr. Valenta is a distinguished scholar. Having fled the Soviet tanks in his native Prague, he is also a supporter of conservative causes, a strong opponent of Castro and a friend of Israel.

That's not exactly a minority position in Miami. But it puts him at odds with many of the professors at UM. And one of them, Venuka Kubalkova — like Valenta, a Czechoslovak emigre —

filed an array of charges against him, including ones of sexual harassment.

When Kubalkova first brought charges against Valenta, his friends did not take them seriously, for we saw them as a mix of the preposterous (accusing him of neglecting his students), the false (accusing him of financial irregularities), and the trendy (the inevitable sexual harassment charge).

But the matter got serious when the university adopted those charges as its own. The administration convened a hearing to investigate the charges, at which we both testified. This hearing combined the worst aspects of a court and a journalistic inquiry. Unlike a court, the charges were defined broadly and vaguely; we were asked leading questions about any evidence of Valenta's shortcomings. Unlike a journalistic inquiry, the professors sitting in judgment ruled out of order any examination of why the charges had been offered, and whether the accuser had ulterior motives.

To be specific, when Clawson attempted to testify about racist remarks Kubalkova made to him,

he was not allowed to speak. He wanted to explain how Kubalkova attacked Valenta in a conversation lasting some 45 minutes in a manner which smacked of religious and ethnic prejudice; and how this conversation in May, 1992 had included not a word about sexual harassment. He hoped to show that the university overlooked an obvious explanation for the sexual harassment accusation: that it is a convenient mechanism to rid the campus of conservatives, whose views are out of favor.

We are deeply saddened that the University of Miami has taken Kubalkova's charges so seriously and that it may well use these as the basis shortly to fire Valenta. That would be a terrible mistake. It would signal that faculty at the university don't have the freedom of expression that tenure was intended to provide. It would inform your community that its leading educational institution expels Jewish faculty at the bequest of those antagonistic to Israel.

**Dr. Daniel Pipes,
Dr. Patrick Clawson,
Foreign Policy
Research Institute,
Philadelphia**

Sexual Conduct At Issue

To the Editor:

Professors Daniel Pipes and Pat Clawson's (letter last week on Jiri Valenta) is undoubtedly an expression of (their) knowledge and perception of the Valenta case. Unfortunately it focuses on a secondary, if not questionable issue — anti-Semitism.

Having been involved with the problematic aspects of this case from its inception, I must assure you that (they) have missed the central question of sexual conduct as known to both faculty and students over these many years.

The political views (they) cite are easily disputable as a number of the complainants and testifiers are strong anti-Castro advocates and vehemently pro-Israel, including Jewish and non-Jewish faculty and students.

I suggest (they) carefully examine which party to the dispute is using the Jewish aspect as a diversion from the key issues in the case.

Under no circumstances can I stand by and permit such a horrendous image of the University of Miami to be presented to the public.

Bernard Schechterman
Professor, International Relations and Middle East Affairs
First Director of Judaic Studies
Univ. of Miami

Valenta Deserved It

To the Editor:

I was shocked and saddened to see the Letter to the Editor entitled "Anti-Semitism was an Issue in UM Harassment Case" in your Oct. 1-7 issue.

As one of Dr. Valenta's victims, I was asked by the university to testify during the hearings. This was an excruciatingly painful process, necessitating dredging up memories that I had worked hard to bury. I was also subjected to a grueling cross-examination by Dr. Valenta's lawyer, often on topics unrelated to the abuses I suffered. The university committee, while questioning the relevance of the questions, nonetheless allowed his attorney to continue.

I and many others of those who testified were unaware of Dr. Valenta's religion; if in fact Dr. Valenta is truly Jewish, he has been remarkably quiet about it. Moreover, as adviser to the College Republican Club and a foreign policy adviser to the Ronald Reagan campaign in 1980, I take issue with the statement that anti-conservative views played any part in the charges against Dr. Valenta.

To print unsubstantiated allegations by people who are not even in the same city and appear to be unfamiliar with the facts of the case does a great disservice to Dr. Valenta's victims and is tantamount to mocking their ordeal. It

is also grossly unfair to the University of Miami.

Prof. June Feufel Dreyer,
Dept. Political Science
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Mr. Benjamin Korn
Executive Editor
Miami Jewish Tribune
Fax: 305-573-9551

Dear Buddy:

I would appreciate if you would run this letter in the next issue of the *Tribune*:

Patrick Clawson and I wrote a letter (“Anti-Semitism was an Issue in the UM Harassment Case”, *MJT*, Oct. 1-7) which raised the matter of anti-Semitism with reference to the firing of Jiri Valenta from the University of Miami.

In reply, Bernard Schecterman wrote (“Sexual Conduct at Issue,” *MJT*, Oct. 8-14) that Dr. Clawson and I are focusing on “a secondary, if not questionable issue” and accuses us of “using the Jewish aspect as a diversion from the key issues in the case.” Well, it so happens that Dr. Clawson had a long conversation with Vendulka Kubolkova, Dr. Valenta’s primary accuser in May 1992. During the course of those 45 minutes, she vented bias against him on ethnic and religious grounds but said not a word about sexual harassment. We conclude that she conjured up the latter charge as a means to strengthen her campaign against Dr. Valenta.

To June Teufel Dryer (“Valenta Deserved It,” also *MJT*, Oct. 8-14) we make three points: First, that we live outside Miami city says nothing about what we know of the Valenta case. Second, her doubts about Dr. Valenta’s Jewishness (“if in fact [he] is truly Jewish, he has been remarkably quiet about it”) strike us as very peculiar; does a person need personally to prove himself Jewish to Dr. Dryer before she will accept this as a fact? And third, though Dr. Dryer does not fit the general political pattern of Dr. Valenta’s opponents (leftist, anti-Israel), she has private reasons—well known to herself and to others—to jump on the anti-Valenta bandwagon.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Pipes
Foreign Policy Research Institute