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The struggle is not so much to convince the West

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OF hymies and ragheads.

These were used by a reader as the heading in his e-mail which commented on last week's column (Nov 8) titled "Muslim World Paying Price For West's Guilt".

Neither hymies nor ragheads can be found in English dictionaries as they are American slang.

Hymies is a disparaging term used on Jews while ragheads is a derogatory reference of the Muslims.

While the terms used by the reader, presumably a Westerner staying in Sarawak, are interesting, the contents of his e-mail is the real subject of discussion.

Among others, he pointed out that last week's article had highlighted a report by the Scottish Sunday Herald, a publication, which according to him, was of no account.

The report by the Sunday Herald which was used in the column was the one which touched on the possibilities of the Mossad, the Israeli's secret service, having a hand in the Sept 11, 2002 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York.

He also pointed out that the columnist was wrong in using Tel Aviv in reference to the Israeli administration when Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.

The reader also opposed the high-lighting of the 24 Protocols of the Elders of Zion which he said was a "semi-plagiarised mess". He ended his e-mail by saying: "Please try to get your facts straight in future. Even Third World journalists owe a duty of accuracy to their readers."

A reply was sent to the reader, explaining that last week's column was not intended to give credence to either the Sunday Herald nor the Protocols.

It aimed at highlighting the fact that all these writings and reports were written by Christians who were white and that their writings were contributing towards anti-Semitism.

It was also an attempt to reflect on the incongruity of the reactions of Jews and their powerful lobby groups including the Simon Wiesenthal Centre which, instead of arguing their case, chose to push for retaliatory measures, pressuring Washington to opt for punitive measures.

An example was its reaction to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference Summit in Putrajaya last month in which the former Prime Minister pointed out that Jews controlled the world through proxies.

What Dr Mahathir said, especially after the reactions by the US, seemed to prove what he said was true.

At the same time, by comparison, what Dr Mahathir said was based on historical perspective and there were no attempts of promoting theories of Jewish conspiracies unlike that contained in literatures written by the Christian whites in the West.

The Protocols for example, was given much attention by Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Company. Ford's work on the Protocols were incorporated in his book The International Jew, written in the 1920s and still on sale.

While Ford can be said to have been misled in his views on the Jews, the same cannot be said of William Shakespeare.

The Bard's Merchant of Venice which depicted Shylock, a Jew, as a heartless, conniving and greedy person against the good-hearted Christian Antonio, remains one of the works which influence many youngsters in their introduction to literature.

It was also quite interesting that the reader raised the issue about the reference to Tel Aviv vis-a-vis Israel and not Jerusalem which is the capital.

It was not out of ignorance for some Third World journalists to use Tel Aviv and not Jerusalem. No doubt, the Israelis had declared Jerusalem as its capital since 1950 but the fact remains that Tel Aviv is considered the administrative and financial centre of the country.

Furthermore, Jerusalem has always been a cause for dispute between Palestinians and Israelis and to refer Jerusalem in relations with Israel will tantamount to accepting the right of the Israelis over Jerusalem.

Lest the reader forgets, according to the UN and international law, Tel Aviv is the capital of Israel.

If such contentions are not enough to convince the reader and other like-minded readers, even though reference to a nation vis-a-vis a city is always the capital, there are situations in which a financial and administrative centre of the nation is used as reference.

Take the issue of Myanmar and Yangon or that of Mumbai in India.

Some journalists from the developed nations are still insisting on using Burma, Rangoon and Bombay even though the governments of these nations had made the declarations in the changes of the names.

None of these names of city or nation are disputed territories but the developed nations had refused to accept the changes.

It may be due to the need to reflect on their glorious colonial past or that they have no regard for the government of the nations. Either way, journalists from the developed nations seemed to have the right to determine how they want to refer to Third World cities or nations and there is nothing anyone can do to change that.

As always, anything that comes from the Third World must be questioned and belittled and whatever the West and developed nations do is to be taken as justified.

But the struggle for the Third World persists and it is not so much to convince the West, much less to influence them.

It is more of a struggle from being drowned by the arrogance stemming from ignorance.