

**HADASSAH BLASTED ON AUTOPSY**

A charge that Mrs. Faye Schenk, national president of Hadassah, "has taken on a new series of allegations and distortions" in defending Hadassah Hospital's policy on autopsies, was levelled by Zeirei Agudath Israel of America, the national youth group affiliated with Agudath Israel of America. The Orthodox youth group was referring to an article by Mrs. Schenk in Hadassah Magazine (January 1972) in which the Hadassah prexy goes into a lengthy attack on those who have harassed Hadassah pathologists in Israel and abroad. The Orthodox youth group condemned Mrs. Schenk's statement as "irresponsible, misleading, and a smokescreen to distort the real facts."

"Mrs. Schenk's magazine article is evasive in that it carefully avoids the REAL issue in the autopsy controversy by dealing with a "side issue," namely the harassment of pathologists. The issue is not whether pathologists should be harassed since all responsible Jews have condemned the irresponsible actions of some. The issue is whether autopsies should be performed

where there is no prior consent, which is contrary to the accepted rule in any democratic society," the Zeirei Agudath Israel statement said.

Using "The President's Column" Mrs. Schenk justifies the practice of unauthorized autopsies in Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem by quoting the Director of Shaarei Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, Dr. David Maeir. Zeirei Agudath Israel accused Mrs. Schenk of "misusing the name of a prominent pathologist in a desperate attempt to obtain a license for the actions of Hadassah Hospital." "The fact is," the Orthodox youth group charged, "that in a recent letter to the editor (Jerusalem Post-January 6, 1972) Dr. Maeir deplores the practice of unauthorized autopsies in Israeli hospitals."

Dr. Maeir, in his letter co-signed by another prominent medical leader, Theodore R. Fink, writes "What many of us question is the right of a small group of people, in this case physicians, to decide when an autopsy is obligatory. Is this an abrogation of civil rights? This is the

**HADASSAH ANSWERS CRITICS**

President Faye L. Schenk of Hadassah used her column in THE HADASSAH MAGAZINE to reply to those who have upbraided her organization on the question of autopsies. She said, "day after day the national office of Hadassah... has received bomb threats, our switchboard has been tied up by incessant telephone calls, and our work has been interrupted." On autopsies, she quoted:

Dr. Marco Caine, head of the Dept. of Urology of the Hadassah-Hebrew University Hospital to the effect that they "are needed to establish the cause of death, to reveal hazards to the public health, to give information on hereditary diseases that may help the family of the deceased," and, continuing to paraphrase the doctor, she said they are also needed "as a means of controlling and supervising medical treatment and surgical operations. The life of the next patient undergoing the same operation may depend on knowing what went wrong." She concluded that "there are complex religious, ethical, social and human considerations involved. But whatever the Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law is, there can be no justification for the terrorist campaign against pathologists under the aegis of the so-called Committee on Human Dignity."

issue that must be discussed." Dr. Maeir was replying to a letter by Dr. Glazier, a practicing American doctor who defended the practice of performing autopsies without consent. "We consider it presumptuous on Dr. Glazier's part to suggest that in Israel, where these questions are being raised, we abide by answers which are unacceptable in the country in which he practises medicine...no

autopsy is performed in any one of the 50 states unless a signed and witnessed permission is granted by the next of kin."

Mrs. Schenk ends her article with an appeal -- "Is it too much to expect that they (Orthodox) permit freedom of religion and conscience to the non-Orthodox? Is it too much to expect that the Orthodox will recognize that the preservation of human life is one of the cardinal tenets of Judaism?"

"Mrs. Schenk's appeal is void of any real facts, since the issue is by no means an Orthodox issue or, for that matter, a Jewish issue. It is simply a question whether autopsies should be performed without consent which is contrary to the fundamentals of democracy. The fact is that a majority of non-Orthodox Jews also oppose autopsies without consent," the Zeirei Agudath Israel statement concluded.

A spokesman for Zeirei Agudath Israel summed up the Schenk article: "The Hadassah

president was obviously avoiding the real issue, which is that the current practice of unauthorized autopsies in Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem is undemocratic and contrary to the fundamental principles of human rights." The spokesman appealed to the Hadassah leadership to immediately implement a policy of prior informed consent.

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