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Independent Thinking

Diaspora Jewry is confronted by a delicate and gnawing problem. Should it criticize official Israeli government policy when such criticism is warranted, and how far to go?

For the most part, there seems to be a reluctance, bordering on intellectual paralysis, to express views other than those given in official policy statements. Anything else is viewed by many diaspora leaders as a "deviation" from the "line". However, many Israelis have no such compunction about criticizing their government and leaders in public.

This week, for example, two influential Israeli journalists - Moshe Shamir of Maariv, and Yeshayahu Ben Porat of Yediot Achronot - characterized the aftermath of Premier Golda Meir's visit with the Pope as a ringing slap in Israel's face. One of them also questioned the wisdom of Mrs. Meir's trip to Paris in the eye of the hurricane of official French criticism of her visit.

Whether or not either of the two journalists, and others in Israel who vented similar views, are correct or not, is beside the point at the moment. What is important -- and the lessons that can be drawn in the diaspora -- is that open and frank discussion is the only guarantee that the metabolism of democracy is functioning.

In similar fashion, Dr. Nahum Goldmann told the Conference of European Jewish Communities which convened in London that there is "a reluctance on the part of Jewish leaders, or some of them, to speak out on great humanitarian issues which do not directly affect the Jewish people."

Dr. Goldmann, who is frequently in hot water with Israeli officials and diaspora leaders for not being reluctant enough, noted that Israel may not always be able, or may not think it politically wise to intervene in issues in which she is not directly involved at a given moment. "This does not mean," he said, "that Diaspora Jewry need always follow Israel's line."

Silence regarding Israel's policies when responsible criticism is required, or even token response to great humanitarian issues -- like the single-handed decision by President Nixon to renew the bombing of North Vietnam -- is the kind of subservience to a "line that can, as Goldmann warned, lead to Jewish isolation" from great parts of world public opinion. This warning is well worth pondering.

Lament

BY RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

No rabbi in the history of the U. S. has had a more glistening career than Rabbi Jacob Shankman, who for 35 years has led Temple Israel,

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Conservative Women Conduct Torah Service



The 1,700 delegates to the Biennial Convention of the National Women's League, the 200,000 member women's organization affiliated with the Conservative movement, called for increased participation by women in Synagogue administration as well as more equality in synagogue ritual. The picture above shows the preparation for a special morning service for the women which took place at the Convention. Reading the Torah is Mrs. A. David Arzt, Program and Education Director of the League. Receiving 'aliyot' were (l.) Mrs. Sol Henkind, the League's immediate Past President (r.) Mrs. Milton Perry, a Vice President and Mrs. Louis Ginzberg a 50 year member of the League. At the conclusion of the Convention the League's name was changed to Women's League for Conservative Judaism.

New Rochelle. The congregation started small, but now it is one of the nation's largest.

A native of Chelsea, Mass., a graduate of Harvard, a naval chaplain in World War II, internationally renowned for his leadership in the World Union of Progressive Judaism, Rabbi Shankman is even popular in his own congregation.

Other people mind their p's and q's, but Rabbi Shankman has brilliantly minded his ecclesiastical p's; he shines as a pulpiteer, pastor, pedagogue, priest and prophet and is deeply beloved by all who know him.

Proof of the devotion he inspires is a most reprintable and unusual Lament written by Nelson Jarschauer, a parishioner, when the rabbi announced his retirement as of this June: Retirement tolls the knell of golden days! We, somehow, hoped that yours would never come.

Your active years deserve a paean of praise,
With elegiac rhyme its medium.

As rabbi you a priceless-gem have been,
A ruby that this temple proudly wore!
A leader knowledgable, kind, serene,
Who e'er our chastened spirits could restore.

You often softened maddening blows of life,
You turned our thoughts and ever bade us pray

For peace of mind, for peace from earthy strife,
You brought our better natures into play.

You taught our young; you taught our postulants;
You tied our knots; you named our new arrivals;
You eulogized departed congregants,
For tact and style to us you had no rivals.

In the limits of these lines we can't express
In fitting form our heartfelt sense of loss,
We "married" Jake for good, nevertheless,
He asks release and we accept "divorce".

How goodly is thy tent, beloved Jake!
Your temple rose to these existent heights
Because you prompted us to undertake
To set ourselves unprecedented sights.

Behold Seasongood

By RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

What a thrill I had when I looked into the pages of the American Israelite, that splendid newspaper in Cincinnati which was founded by Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise and is now flourishing under the steady hand of Henry Segal.

In the paper I saw a photo of Murray Seasongood, standing sturdily and stalwartly as he received a citation from the American Jewish Committee.

TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth
Constitutes A Majority"

BY JACK TELL



(Continued from Page 1)

at the Stardust, and the Keno runner at the Landmark, who were so friendly and cordial when we always dropped in with Bea.

We drove up to the Sands, figuring on a little Chinese food, but never got past the newstand where we bought the Review-Journal and the Sun. Back in the car we decided on some chili at the Horseshoe, but half-way down town our mouth started to water for seafood at the T-bird. We settled for a bucket of Kentucky fried chicken and swung back to the apartment. The next day it was MacDonald's hamburgers and then a take-home sandwich from Foxy's.

Here it is, the seventh day and apart from the routine stops at the post office and bank, we hardly even left the apartment. We saw and heard more daytime TV and radio than in all the years we'd been married.

That classy check-out dame at Wonderland rolled her baby blues and gave us that warm friendly smile, just as she had been doing for all the years of shopping. But this time we fumbled with the change and practically ran out of the store.

(When we were thinking about writing this piece, we figured on a bit of exaggeration, you know, poetic license, to add a touch of humor and to maintain our self-imposed reputation as a ladies' man.)

It didn't work out that way. In order to exaggerate, there first has to be a little something to be overstated. We didn't have anything to be expanded. If you multiply nothing by two, or five, or ten, you still have zero.

The food problem was solved by going on the banana-buttermilk diet. At this point we gained a couple of pounds.

What bothers us most is the condition of the apartment. No matter how we tidy up it always seems to be messier than ever. We keep throwing out the garbage regularly, but there seems to be more at all times under the sink than in the bin out back. We never before stumbled over so many shoes and books, and old newspapers seem to be everywhere.

Worst of all is the hide and seek game the coffee cups keep playing with us. There were at least a dozen when Bea was around. Now the only place to find a cup for coffee is under the pile of dirty dishes in the sink.

It really wasn't all that bad. We had dinner a couple of nights with Mike and even slept over at Don and Rita's.

Las Vegas, undoubtedly, has the greatest entertainment found anywhere. The shows are dazzling, with bright lights, excitement, glamor and about 300,000 visitors a month. But with Bea gone, it's a very lonely spot.

That old gag we answered when people asked how come we always are with our wife everywhere, "It's better than kissing her goodbye," has lost its sparkle.

The next time we let her go anywhere by herself, we're going with her.

Few Americans have had a more distinguished record in trying to make this a better country than Mr. Seasongood.

Now 94 years young, Mr. Seasongood is inscribed in our history books as the leader of a group of young men who turned Cincinnati into one of the finest cities of the country after it had fallen prey to rapacious politicians who made it one of the worst.

That was many years ago. Murray Seasongood was in everything worth while; synagogue life, aid to Israel, improvement in our laws, better family living. He had more citations from more organizations than most nonagenarians have wrinkles.

It was fitting that Mr. Seasongood's photo was in the Israelite, for he is one of the few people alive who remembers Isaac Mayer Wise, the dynamic synagogal leader who died in 1900.

In the Bible the Lord looks at what He fashioned and noted, "Behold it was good."

Our nation can ask who it was who proved that politics can be pure and exclaim, "Behold it was Seasongood."