

Zionism Opposes Violence

Mrs. Faye Schenk, President of American Zionist Federation, assesses Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's recent visit to America. She outlines the course of Zionism, its progress and purpose. She emphasizes that Zionists of America are faced with a tremendous challenge.

"Israel can expect no justice from the United Nations in its present form," said Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to the joint session of Congress on January 28th. This poignant and damning comment seemed to express it all. It was a moral as much as a political statement. It summed up, in a word, the truth that the international community, as organized in the United Nations, is morally bankrupt. It has ceased even to listen to what Israel has to say and therefore Israel refused to join in the last Security Council tirade.

As if to emphasize its own degradation, the United Nations said not a word about the Lebanese tragedy that was simultaneously unfolding. And even while the Lebanese Moslem-Christian wounds were continuing to bleed (8,500 dead in 8 months), the PLO spokesmen were mouthing their hypocrisy about a "democratic, secular state of Palestine." It is not many months ago that Yassir Arafat told an interviewer of the LONDON ECONOMIST: "We have in the Lebanese experience a significant example that is close to the multi-religious state we are trying to achieve."

The Lebanese experience is a significant example of one thing alone: That Arab nationalism will not tolerate the autonomous expression of any group in the Middle East that is not Arab-Moslem. The Assyrian community was decimated because of it, as were the Copts and the Kurds. Now the one experiment in the Middle East, outside of Israel, that expressed a semblance of democracy and which gave a million Christians a determining voice in their own affairs, has been destroyed.

As Lebanon Islamises, radical Arab nationalism, led by Syria and the PLO tightens its grip and the Christian world hardly utters a squeak. Had Israel spoken out in support of the Lebanese Christians, this would surely have been condemned by the international community



THE MUKHTAR ABDUL MAGID ABU KHDER, MAYOR OF SHOFAD, A NEIGHBORING ARAB VILLAGE, GREET'S HADASSAH PRESIDENT, ROSE E. MATZKIN.

been condemned by the international community as "aggressive intervention." Jerusalem found it prudent, therefore, to limit its comments to matters of its own security as affected by the new circumstances.

Here in America, Mr. Rabin spoke bluntly about the dangers to the whole of the democratic community, unless it wakes up to the debilitating appeasement infecting it. In this bicentennial year, he had much to say about the principles of the revolution which gave the free world its existence. He spoke of Zionism as a "revolution", analagous in moral significance to the American revolution. It is an apt parallel.

By definition, a revolution is non-conformist. It does not seek legitimacy through the approval of others. It operates in accordance with its own value system. This is what made Zionism a revolution of the Jewish people.

From the earliest days, Zionism, as the Jewish movement of self-determination never conditioned its decisions on the consent of others.

It battled for what it thought right for Jewish revival, existence and survival, through its own self-will. It based its strategies on what it deemed just and feasible, not on what others thought convenient and proper.

What endowed Zionism with its universal human significance was its ingrained Jewish humanistic values. Therefore, it never preached violence as an instrument of revolution; self-defense, yes, but never physical force as an end in itself. As a matter of ideology, mainstream Zionism sought - and seeks - compromise as opposed to maximalism, and co-existence rather than conquest.

Nevertheless, whenever it considered it had compromised as far as it dare go, it drew a line and dug in. By that, it did not make its existence subject to the will of others -- be it the British, the Arabs, or the international community.

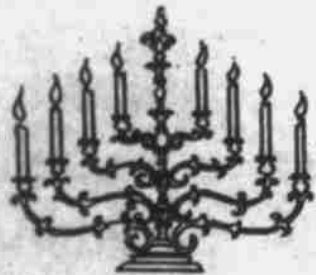
I believe this to be a major message to the American Jewish community implicit in the pronouncements of Prime Minister Rabin in recent months. I have heard him a number of times in Jerusalem in recent weeks, and now here in America. What he is saying is Jews to be Jewish. We've faced much worse times, and we've overcome them by being Jewish together. The world has gone mad before and, as always when that happens, Jews are on the front line. Now that we have a Jewish state, it is on the front line. A fairly reliable yardstick whereby to measure the moral climate of the world, said Martin Buber, is how the world relates to the Jewish people. Yitzhak Rabin adds that we are better equipped than ever before to counter the present world malaise, because as a collective, we are no longer helpless.

Through Israel, world Jewry has a catalyst around which to mobilize its collective strength and will. Jewish will and strength are no longer defused and dissipated. This is Zionism's greatest accomplishment. Aliyah is its highest expression. Jewish education is its ammunition. Public solidarity and material support are its raw materials produced by those in the rear lines for those at the front.

What Yitzhak Rabin's visit to the United States has emphasized and dramatized is that we, the Zionists of America, are faced with a tremendous challenge.

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