

Hussein's Smoke Screen

NEW YORK, N.Y. — King Hussein's latest proposals for Middle East negotiations are "nothing more than a smoke screen for the arms he wants to buy from the U.S.," according to Dan Meridor, a Likud member of the Knesset.

Hussein's call for an international conference, including the U.S.S.R. and the Palestine Liberation Organization, is designed to rupture Israeli-American relations, Mr. Meridor told a meeting of the Middle Eastern Affairs Committee of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

"There is nothing to be gained by bringing the Soviets into the peace talks," he said. "What's more," he added, "Israel will never negotiate with the P.L.O. You cannot put Israel, Jordan and the PLO into one basket. It will never work."

"If Hussein wants to negotiate for peace," the former Secretary of the Cabinet in the Begin and Shamir governments said, "he should come directly to Israel -- not to the U.S."

"The Camp David Accords remain the only realistic plan for peace...and President Reagan knows that is the only way Israel can go," Mr. Meridor told the gathering.

"Nothing," he predicted, "will come out of the Hussein proposals."

Assessing the Lebanon situation, he said Israel has paid a very heavy price but he stressed the positive results including:

- Peace in the Galilee. The population in Kiryat Shemonah has grown by 25 percent since 1982 and the kibbutzim are flourishing, he reported, because no shells have fallen in these areas since the Lebanese invasion.

-The PLO is split, occupied with inter-fighting. It cannot operate against Israel from Egypt, from Jordan, from Syria. Only in Lebanon does it still attempt operations, but even there the Christians and Shiites are fighting back.

-There has been a dramatic reduction in terrorist activities. If the Shiites and the Southern Lebanese Army can coexist, there is a fair chance of continued relative quiet in this

area. "No Israeli government," Mr. Meridor said, "whether Labor, Likud or National Unity, would tolerate a return to conditions as they were in 1982. I hope the day will not come when we must use the army again but if we cannot live in peace in northern Israel, we will do so."

Commenting on the recent prisoner exchange, the speaker stressed that the released terrorists were state-sponsored by the Arabs - unlike the underground Italian Red Brigade or the German Bahder-Meinhoff. "When freed," he pointed out, "they were received as heroes in Libya, in Syria and in Lebanon."

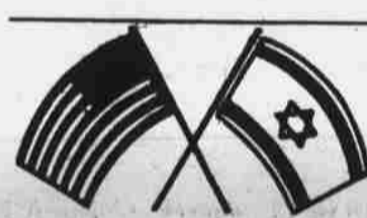
Mr. Meridor expressed cautious optimism on the problems of Israel's economy. "Speaking as a hawk," he said, "we cannot continue to give more than one-quarter of our GNP to defense."

Acknowledging the risks involved in making such cuts, he predicted that the Labor and Likud parties can solve the problems by working together.

One of the major problems, he said, has been the Israeli government's over-involvement in the country's economy. "The government tells business how to operate, where to invest. We must move away from this thinking...we need fewer strings to our people."

Mr. Meridor pointed to Israel's accomplishments in the last 37 years. "Would anyone have believed then," he asked "that we would have a country of 3.5 million people and be a major power in the Middle East?"

Questioned about the future of Soviet-Israeli relations, Mr. Meridor said he doubted any improvement in the immediate future but cited the U.S.S.R. as the loser when it broke relations with Israel after the 1967 war.



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Photograph By Marvin

Danica Shafer, daughter of Jared and Claire Shafer, was called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah, recently. Dr. Louis M. Lederman, Rabbi, officiated. Hazzan Simon Bergman, Cantor, chanted the liturgy.

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