

Opinions and Commentaries

The Israel Paradox

By Alan Kronovet

For forty years Israel has fought bravely and in defiance of the odds for both her democracy and world opinion. Five wars and twenty years of occupation later, both are threatened. The need for a democratic Jewish homeland and the occupation of an evergrowing Palestinian population creates the Israeli paradox. The Western World views civil liberties and political rights as the property of all people regardless of race or ethnic background. Israel, however, can not allow its Arab population democratic rights within its borders for fear of losing its Jewish identity. The question then becomes what can be done to help bring about an equitable arrangement for coexistence.

The latest uprisings in the occupied territories create a new challenge for American Jewry. Our support for Israel must remain unwavering. No longer can we sit idly by and watch Israel's place in the world be diminished by dictators and thugs via United Nations resolutions and by the negative popular opinion of the United States mobilized due to television coverage. We, as American Jews, must help Israel find a resolution to

the conflict. Without our input Israel will lose the good will of the American public.

Americans follow the moralism of television. If it seems immoral on the news, then a ground swell of sentiment to correct the apparent injustice develops. During the past year Israel has been losing on the American moralist front. The Pollard case, the Iran-Contra affair and now the uprising, as seen on American TV, have done much to damage Israel's special place in the American mind. Americans want to support Israel and her real concerns for security based on morality; however, the images on the evening news diminish Israel's moral standing.

The nature of the conflict has changed. No longer are the Palestinians an "Arab problem" but now are an Israeli problem. Twenty years of occupation has led to frustration on both sides. Israel and the Palestinians both have waited for the same hero to solve their problem, and yet, the Arab world lacked the courage to come forward and help their Arab brothers and negotiate in good faith with Israel. Because of this abdication of responsibility, the traditional Arab leaders are now irrelevant. The Palestinians in the occupied territories realize this

and so must we.

The riots might not be spontaneous, but no longer are the Palestinians allowing themselves to be pawns for the Arab leaders who have abandoned them. Like all oppressed people they are taking matters into their own hands. Unfortunately violence begets violence and the conflicts arrive into American homes in full "living and dying" color. The images seen on the evening news are similar to the scenes of South African oppression that horrified Americans. The comparison is unfair, but is being made and we should find this very troubling.

The first thing American Jewry must do is stop using the lack of action by the Arab world as a justification for Israeli behavior. Watching Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, on the MacNeil-Lehrer news hour repeating the same old complaints of Jews makes me wonder if our leadership can adapt to an ever-changing political climate. It is true that no major Arab leader has come forth and Israel is still left to deal with the Palestinians. The longer she waits the more difficult it will become.

Some suggest we rule with an even harsher hand, but we have seen the failure of that policy. Others suggest that Israel just leave the occupied territories and see if any Arab comes forth and accepts responsibility. Clearly this would leave Israel in an extremely vulnerable position. The current state of anarchy in the territories would be ripe for an ironfisted military takeover, under the disguise of liberation, by a hostile and threatening Arab leader.

The Israelis should attempt to find leadership in the territories with which to deal. In order to do so, the government can no longer deport those who may have helped instigate the riots. These people may represent an opportunity to find accommodation and perhaps resolution. Fear of the PLO, Syria or Islamic fundamentalism in connection with these uprisings, however valid, will no longer be a justification for the lack of progress in the eyes of the world. Deportation of Pales-

tinians represents missed opportunities for an end to the violence and continues to erode Israel's moral position in the West. Israel must work with Palestinians in the territories to find common ground.

We, in America, have to become involved in the debate. The American Jewish community is more than just a financial resource for Israel. At the time of crisis, our support for Israel must include participation in the process. If we don't help to find a solution we are in danger of becoming ineffectual on the American political scene, which would be more detrimental to Israel than a Palestinian state on the West Bank. Positive movement must be offered by the Israelis, either initiated by Israel herself or through American Jewish influence on Israel, otherwise William Buckley may be correct when he wrote "More of the same, I predict, will lose Israel over time the basic sympathy one feels for it."

Israeli Embassy Marked Martin Luther King Day

The Embassy of Israel in Washington hosted on January 12, a special tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. This is the fourth consecutive year that the Israeli Embassy held a commemorative program and reception in Dr. King's memory. As in previous years, this year's program was held with the cooperation of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Federal Holiday Commission and the Jewish National Fund of America.

The ceremony included a presentation by the Jewish National Fund, in which it honored a number of prominent civil rights leaders with special certificates, recording for posterity the trees that have been planted in their names in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Forest in the Galilee. The list of honorees includes figures such as Benjamin Hooks, Executive Director of the NAACP and James Farmer, founder and former Executive Director

of CORE. In addition, there was a ceremonial "torch passing" from the current generation of civil rights leaders who knew and worked with Dr. King, to the future generation.

The gathering was addressed by Ambassador Moshe Arad, as well as by Congressman John Lewis of Georgia.

As in each of the previous years, as many as 500 guests attended the reception, including diplomats, local dignitaries and leaders of the black and Jewish communities.

"Martin Luther King, Jr. will long be remembered and admired in Israel as a univer-

sal symbol of reconciliation, as an articulate friend of Israel and Zionism, and as a strong opponent of racism and anti-Semitism," stated Asher Naim, the Embassy's Information Minister, who served as cochairman of the tribute, together with William Lucy, International Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employee (AFSCME). "We hope," Naim continued, "that the programs that we have been sponsoring will serve to recall his legacy, and be a fitting tribute to Dr. King's memory."

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