

Sh'ma

a journal of Jewish responsibility

7/136, SEPTEMBER 2, 1977

When jews differ and when they agree

Chaim Herzog

(The following are the concluding words of Ambassador Herzog's statement to the June 1977 meeting of the Central Conference of American Rabbis. [The title and the sub-title were added by Sh'ma.] While addressed to Reform Judaism's special problems with policies of the State of Israel, these remarks seem to me to speak in far more encompassing terms. — E. B. B.)

I mentioned at the opening of my remarks the historic response of American Jewry during the past few weeks to an attempt by those who would wish to drive a wedge between this great Jewry and the people of Israel.

I know that there are members of this body who as they contemplate present developments in Israel will have many questions in their minds. I would urge them to see these developments in the correct historic perspective. Nobody is asking them to agree with everything. Nobody is suggesting that there should not be a debate. There is no attempt anywhere to indicate that your movement should not try to impress its views and to try to influence the makers of policy in Israel. But let us beware of any attempt by our enemies from without and from within to try to create a rift within the two major elements of world Jewry today, Israel Jewry and American Jewry. Debate, yes by all means, but dissension and division, never. Throughout history it has been the policy of our enemies to set Jew against Jew in order to destroy Jewish unity and the Jewish people.

We must as a people continue to resist the sordid attempt to divide between Jew and Jew.

To this distinguished group I would say as questions arise in your minds, the problem is not exclusively one-sided.

It is not I who says this. This thesis was propounded by a well known colleague of yours Arthur Saul Super of Johannesburg. In an article only last week on this subject in the *Jerusalem Post* he stated:

"But the real fault lies with the proponents of Reform Judaism themselves. They have woefully failed to impress on Israelis the vitality of Reform as a spiritual force in the life of an old-new nation struggling to come to terms with itself and with the outside world."

You doubtless recall Ben Gurion's reply to your leaders in his time urging you to bring about a powerful aliya movement of reform Jews who would then exercise their influence in Israel.

As you contemplate this problem you cannot ignore the fact that fully fifty per cent of the immigrants to Israel from the free world and particularly from the United States today are Orthodox Jews and in particular Orthodox youths. You cannot ignore the fact that in our own Israeli society over fifty per cent of the youth volunteering to go on settlement whether it be in the administered territories or in established Kibbutzim and settlements in Israel are products of the Orthodox Youth Movement.

In other words when voicing your concern please do not ignore certain facts which are very relevant to the issue today.

That is why it is so important that your movement assumes an active role in the Zionist movement and becomes involved as a constructive element in our national movement.

Let us Unite behind our People and its Ideals

In speaking to you I am addressing a group of leaders of Jewish thought and opinion dedicated to the immortal principles and values which have preserved our people over 4,000 years, of trial and vicissitude, of struggle and attainment of defeat and victory, of a great human experience such as no people has ever known.

We face the world in dignity and with a renewed consciousness of the inherent greatness that we as a people represent. Our approaches and philosophies to problems and issues are frequently varied and opposed one to the other. Our inherent strength lies in diversity. We have been strong over the ages not despite our difference in philosophy and approach but because of them. Because there is an overriding, all pervading unity of the Jewish people which transcends everything. You know the feeling when Jews from different environments and backgrounds meet in some far away place off the beaten track. You have

sensed the knowing look, the smile of recognition, the tell-tale word in Yiddish or Hebrew. That special feeling of recognition and oneness.

If you visit a tank unit on the Golan Heights today you will find in the same tank a *Yeshiva* student with peyot, a product of a Mapan left wing *kibbutz*, a newly arrived Russian immigrant learning what being a Jew is all about, an oriental boy, the son of Libyan parents.

They all have different ideas differing philosophies. But they are all dedicated to one purpose to operate that tank best so that Israel may be defended against its enemies.

We are all as it were members of that crew differing perhaps in outlook, but united in our common purpose that of the defense of our immortal heritage and of our people, united around the concept of the Jewish people as expressed in the State of Israel.

May that concept inspire you at this conference so that the immortal message of Judaism may go out to the world from a proud determined and united Jewish people.

(As we approach the Day of Judgment, it seems appropriate to ponder some unusual instances where Jews have become involved with the law. Maynard Wishner analyzes the greater Chicago Jewish community's confrontation with the American Nazi Party. This is followed by excerpts from the rehearing of the suit which congregation Beth David, Miami Fla. brought against Richard and Nina Kaufman for non-payment of their dues. Rabbi Uri Thernal, Perth, Australia, who has brought suit against certain officers of his former congregation, examines the values involved in a rabbi taking such action. — E.B.B.)

American nazis and the first amendment

Maynard I. Wishner

The attempt of a small group of misfits, posturing in storm trooper uniforms and draping themselves in Nazi banners, to march in the Village of Skokie, has stirred deep emotions in that northwest suburb of Chicago. Its 40,000 Jews out of a total population of 90,000 include thousands of Holocaust survivors and their families.

Conventional tactical wisdom on the part of mainline Jewish organizations is based on an awareness that the various so called "Nazi" groups and other organized hate mongers have a strategy of their own. They

seek to capitalize on the willingness of the media to project their image and their message to millions of viewers, listeners and readers. We know that the flow of financial support for these groups is almost directly dependent on the amount of media exposure they are able to achieve. Thus, our agencies have traditionally counseled the avoidance of the creation of "media events" that seem to feed directly into the strategy of the enemy. This counter-strategy sometimes called the "quarantine method" has generally served the Jewish community well.

But the announcement of a planned "Nazi" march in Skokie was not to be an occasion for dispassionate, communal tactical planning.

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