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SPECIAL INTEREST REPORT

A digest of news items and articles in the area of The Council's interests

307 Fifth Avenue New York NY 10016 Marcia Friedman • Editor Vol. XIII No. 10

MURDER OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES AS ISRAELI ARMY STOOD BY; HORROR EXPLODES JEWRY'S 34-YEAR CONFIDENCE IN ISRAEL'S POLICIES

The anguish felt by so many Jews during the summer, when the Israeli government determined to "pacify" Lebanon by invasion, exploded into a rage of renunciation this past month over what was seen as Israeli complicity in the massacre of over 300 Palestinian refugees. As bits and pieces of the story emerged in the midst of denials and attempts at cover-up, it was suggested that Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his defense minister Ariel Sharon had invited Phalangist troops into two Lebanese camps not only to root out terrorists remaining after the departure of PLO troops, but also to drive all Palestinians out of Lebanon by having the news of the Phalangist massacre spread through the entire population.

From the first news of the event -- in the *Jerusalem Post* an edition was headlined "Nation In Trauma Over Beirut Tragedy" -- the most grievous and pejorative responses have come from those heretofore supportive of Israel. "I believe that the death of the Jewish people would not be inherently more tragic than the death of the Palestinian people that Israel and its supporters evidently seek or at least accept as the cost of the 'security' of Israel," wrote American Civil Liberties Union official Henry Schwarzschild in *Sh'ma*, noting that "The price of the millennial survival of the Jewish people has been high; I did not think the point was to make others pay it."

In Denver, the *Intermountain Jewish News* editor demanded: "What happened to your conscience, Mr. Prime Minister? Sorry,this time your railing against your or Israel's enemies will not --does not-- do. You failed..."

American University's Amos Perlmutter seemed to prophecy what was to come, In his article in *Foreign Affairs*, written before the disaster -- weeks before -- he said: "Begin and Sharon share the same dream...to annihilate the PLO,douse any vestiges of Palestinian nationalism,crush PLO allies and collaborators in the West Bank and eventually force the Palestinians into Jordan and cripple,if not end, the Palestinian nationalist movement."

In London, esteemed journalist and novelist Chaim Bermant suggested that,when they were asked during the year's most sacred service on Yom Kippur to give to the Joint Israel Appeal,they send money instead to dependents of the victims of the massacre.

Grief over the killings of civilians was part of a more overwhelming sadness expressed on all sides: the pain of knowing that Israel is not, after all, a moral exemplar without equal. "It is a turning point," said a representative of the American Jewish Committee. "It is a turning point," agreed Harvard sociologist Daniel Bell in *Newsweek*. It is Israel which must now be cleansed," the editor of the London *Jewish Chronicle* wrote. "It is the tragedy of this moment in Israel's history that her repute as a nation which places morality and humanitarian concerns above every other consideration rests with those of her people who demonstrate their anger and anguish in the streets."

In a letter to the New York *Times*, David Perlstein said: "For many of us, the Jewish people -- who themselves were victims of an inconceivable act of genocide -- have long merited a unique moral privilege in the world community. The tragedy of Israel has been its failure to live up to this privilege and the higher ideals that led to its birth." In another joint letter signed by Irving Howe,Seymour Martin Lipset,Michael Walzer and Daniel Bell, the writers noted that "all of us must now say to the Begin-Sharon government...you are besmirching the values of the Jewish tradition..." And the newspaper's James Reston commented: "It is not only that [Begin] has been indifferent to the fate of the Palestinians in the Beirut camps,but that he has been unfaithful to the honorable memory of Israel."

The closest to a revelatory comment came from the director of B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, Rabbi James S. Diamond:

> There is a fundamental tension between Zionism,which is essentially a secular nationalism, and Judaism, which envisions a religious way to redeem the human enterprise. The events in Lebanon can serve to strip away the pseudo-messianic veil that has cloaked the Israeli enterprise since 1967. Now the two differing agendas are exposed: of diaspora Jews rooted in Judaism and of Israelis rooted in Zionism.

Virtually every major Jewish group has been calling for an accounting from Israel's government. Whether or not they receive one and what their response will be as an aftermath--these will undeniably affect the course of Jewry in the future. As editor Arthur Waskow has just noted in his journal: "Something has happened that is big enough to affect the whole Jewish people and to raise basic questions about the meaning of Jewish renewal, in America as well as in Israel."

Editor Charges:

MOST UJA FUNDS USED TO SUPPORT BUREAUCRACY

In the *Jewish Spectator*,editor Trude Weiss Rosmarin urged Jewry to reduce contributions to United Jewish Appeal and "redirect" them to local and domestic needs,Israeli institutions and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Citing Israeli scholar Yeshayahu Leibowitz' reference to the "schnorring psychology" engendered by UJA, Weiss-Rosmarin said the "bulk of the Jewish Agency-Zionist Organization share of UJA funds is now expended to support a bureaucracy of Jewish Agency-Zionist Organization functionaries, a swollen bureaucracy of 4,000 employees engaged in projects which were useful before the rise of the State of Israel and during its first decade but which are now