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Project Nishma, 1988-1989.

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American Jewish Archives website.

February 23~~e~~, 1989
18 Adar I 5749

Mr. Tom Smerling
Project Director
Project Nishma
1225 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Tom:

You may use my name on your Committee Sponsors list as indicated on your letter of February 10.

However, my appearance on this list does not impost that I join as a signatur to any of your public statements or private communications. I assure that these will be cleared prior to their issuance so that we have the choice of either joining in or opting out.

Cordial greetings.

Sincerely,

Alexander M..Schindler

PROJECT NISHMA

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Let Us Listen נשמע

CO-CHAIRS

Theodore R. Mann
Earl Raab
Henry Rosovsky

February 10, 1989

SPONSORING COMMITTEE

In Formation

Rabbi Alex Schindler

PROJECT
DIRECTOR

UAHC
838 Fifth Ave.
New York, NY 10021

Tom Smerling

Dear Alex,

Thank you for joining us as a co-sponsor of Project Nishma.

The events of the recent months have made Nishma's goal of broadening understanding about Israeli security more important than ever. Behind the headlines the fundamental question remains: Can Israel withdraw from territory now under military rule without compromising security? If so, under what conditions? Project Nishma presents the views of Israeli military experts on this issue.

The community's response to our programs has been extremely encouraging. Most importantly, we have reached some leadership audiences which have not been formerly exposed to this analysis. To date we have:

* Assembled over 70 co-sponsors representing a distinguished cross-section of Jewish leadership.

Enclosed: Cosponsor list. Please see the note below regarding your name and title.

* Conducted "leadership consultations" in New York, Washington, Chicago, and Baltimore with Generals (res.) Aharon Yariv and Ephraim Sneh. Yariv and Sneh presented their view that a properly safeguarded peace agreement can make Israel stronger and safer. An average of 40 community leaders attended each consultation. Local JCRCs cosponsored two of the events.

Enclosed: a sample invitation insert.

* Produced a packet of short articles by Israeli military analysts making the argument that the territories are not essential to Israeli security. We will distribute the packet to congregations and other Jewish organizations across the country.

Enclosed: a sample document from the packet.

* Initiated information collection for an "Israeli Speakers' Clearinghouse" to provide continuing access to expert speakers.

* Contracted with Steven M. Cohen to produce a concise summary of American Jewish attitudes towards the peace process.

* Convened an informal steering committee to oversee the project. The second meeting will be in late February/early March.

* Raised over \$50,000 from Jewish individuals and family foundations.

In early spring, funds permitting, we will arrange additional leadership consultations, perhaps with Yehoshafat Harkabi, who will be in the United States for several weeks.

Thank you, again, for your participation. If you have any questions feel free to call our office. We will keep you informed as the project progresses.

Sincerely yours,



Ted Mann



Earl Raab



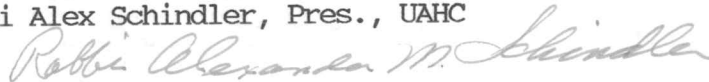
Henry Rosovsky

PLEASE CHECK YOUR NAME:

Our new letterhead will include the names of Project Nishma's cosponsors. We will indicate clearly that organizational affiliations are for identification purposes only.

We want to be sure that your name and title/organizational affiliation appear as you prefer. Your name and title appear on our records as follows:

Rabbi Alex Schindler, Pres., UAHC



Please contact our office immediately if you wish to make a correction. (We may abbreviate titles due to limitations on space.) If we do not hear from you by February 24, we will print the name as it appears above.

NISHMA CO-SPONSORS

Abram, Ruth
Alperin, Mimi
Band, Jordan
Bell, Daniel
Bernstein, Marver
Bikel, Theodore
Bookbinder, Hyman
Borowitz, Rabbi Eugene
Breslau, Joel
Bubis, Gerald
Cherkasky, Dr. Martin
Chiel, Rabbi Samuel
Cohen, Jonathan
Cohen, Sheldon
Fein, Leonard
Freedman, Robert
Gittelsohn, Rabbi Roland
Goodkind, E. Robert
Gordis, David
Gordis, Dr. Robert
Goren, Dorothy
Goren, Osias
Greenberg, Blu
Guberman, David
Gunther, Richard and Lois
Gurin, Arnold
Kaufman, Ron
Kelman, Wolfe
Klutznick, Phillip
Kosberg, J. Livingston
Kweller, Goldie
Landa, Esther
Lelyveld, Rabbi Arthur
Levine, Jacqueline
Levitt, Norma
Lipset, Seymour Martin
Lowell, Stanley
Malkin, Peter
MANN, TED
Minow, Newton D.
Morgenthau, Henry
Moses, Alfred
Newman, Racquel
Novack, William
Pelavin, Michael (as of Feb 25, 1989)
Peretz, Marty
Perlman, Robert
RAAB, EARL
Reck, Joel M.
Reisman, Bernard
Ritz, Esther Leah
ROSOVSKY, HENRY

Ruskay, John
Sanders, Edward
Saperstein, David
Schindler, Rabbi Alex *and*
Schulweis, Rabbi Harold
Shapiro, Harold
Silverman, Ira
Solender, Sandy
Stein, Mary Ann
Stein, Rob
Stern, Saul
Thursz, Daniel
Volpert, Richard
Vorspan, Albert
Walzer, Michael
Weinstein, Lewis H.
Wieseltier, Leon
Zeltzer, George M.
Zucker, Henry

PROJECT NISHMA—"LET US LISTEN"

This Leadership Consultation is part of Project Nishma, an independent, six-month educational project on Israeli security. Project Nishma is sponsored by an ad hoc committee (in formation) of more than sixty Jewish leaders from across the United States.

The events of the past year have generated much concern and discussion in Israel and in the American Jewish Community. Many Israelis are re-examining assumptions about the relationship of the West Bank and Gaza to Israeli security and discussing various proposals. Though widely-divergent opinions are thoroughly aired in Israel, the full range of Israeli views is not always heard with equal depth and clarity in the American Jewish community.

In particular, we believe that it is important to hear first-hand the views of senior retired Israeli military officers, such as General Sneh, who have concluded that Israel's long-term security interests may best be served by pursuing a negotiated settlement that satisfies stringent Israeli security conditions while providing for withdrawal from territory now under Israeli military rule.

To facilitate this discussion, Project Nishma is convening private consultations with Jewish leadership in several U.S. cities. These consultations will provide opportunities to hear how Israeli military analysts view the security question, and to discuss differing ideas in an informal and confidential environment.

In each community, a small group of top Jewish leaders representing a wide range of perspectives will be invited to participate. We look forward to your participation.

Ted Mann

Earl Raab

Henry Rosovsky

Project Nishma Co-chairs

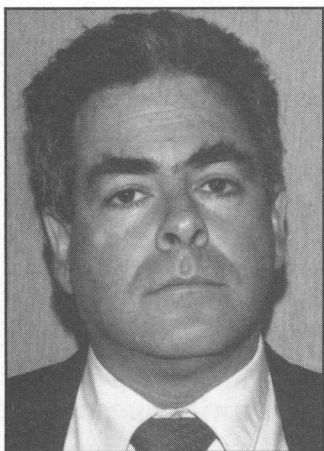
Project Nishma is independent of any institutional affiliation and is supported by grants from Jewish individuals and family foundations. Sponsors participate as individuals, not representatives of organizations.

JEWISH LEADERSHIP CONSULTATION ON ISRAELI SECURITY AND THE TERRITORIES

You are invited, along with a select group of other leaders in our community, to a private consultation with Brigadier General (Res.) Ephraim Sneh, an expert on the West Bank. General Sneh will discuss the strategic implications of alternative political and military arrangements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

This is an informational meeting; there will be no solicitation of funds.

BRIGADIER GENERAL (RES.) EPHRAIM SNEH



During Brigadier General (Res.) Ephraim Sneh's distinguished military career he held diverse staff and command appointments. He was appointed Governor of the Civil Administration in the West Bank from 1985 to 1987. Gen. Sneh participated in the Entebbe rescue operation in 1976 as chief of the medical team. From 1981 to 1982 he

served as commander of the South Lebanon area.

Upon his retirement from the army in early 1988, Gen. Sneh became Director General of the Golda Meir Association, an organization which conducts programs on democracy and democratic values in Israeli high schools. He is also one of the founders of the Council for Peace and Security. The Council, representing the majority of Israel's retired generals, evaluates alternative security arrangements in the territories.

The separation of political and security borders provides the only approach to a settlement

THE NUMBER ONE issue in the political discussions in Israel concerns the strategic importance of the West Bank to Israel's future. Many factors – historical, emotional, religious, ethical, demographic, etc. – have helped to influence the different positions over the years, but we shall limit our discussion in this short analysis to the military aspects alone.

Unfortunately, we have to be aware that for a very long time to come, there will be a possibility of an Arab attack from the outside. Even if a political settlement is reached, we must always face the fact that the Arab side has not given up its original "strategy of phases," and that it may initiate renewed political as well as military moves in order to achieve its goal – the destruction of Israel.

Furthermore, as long as the Arab Middle East suffers from instability, it would be extremely naive and irresponsible to base Israel's very existence on the goodwill and good intentions of an Arab leader or regime that may disappear from one day to another. The viability of any political agreement will depend on genuine Arab interests; on their very careful calculation and understanding that if they violate the agreement, it may have dangerous results for them. Those results may be far more painful than the meagre chance of destroying Israel by a surprise military attack.

ISRAEL'S PROBLEM is how not to forgo any possibility of a political settlement without incurring immense security risks.

From the political point of view, it would be totally wrong to adopt the pessimistic position that "Israel has no partner for a dialogue." Such an attitude was always wrong, and was never the adopted policy either of the Zionist movement or of Israel.

Our world is facing a permanent process of change. Nothing is static. Any argument that there is no chance of peace only because there was no genuine Arab desire for it yesterday, or even today, may prove to be completely wrong tomorrow.

On the contrary, our assumption should always be that, sooner or later, the necessary changes will take place, and that we should be extremely careful not to miss any opportunity. The dramatic visit of President Sadat to Israel in 1977, just four years after the Yom Kippur War, is the best justification for such an attitude.

WE HAVE to realize also that such

Strategic depth and peace

Shlomo Gazit

a change may never occur if the Arab side knows that, as far as Israel is concerned, there is nothing to discuss, and Israel is offering merely "peace for peace."

If Israel is planning to enter negotiations with such an approach, then there is no opening for any possible compromise in the future. What many Israelis do not understand is that for the Arabs, peace with Israel is not an asset, is not what they yearn for (as we in Israel do).

On the contrary, peace with Israel is the very high price they will have to pay in order to obtain some very vital interests of their own, interests that only Israel can provide.

These are, of course, the return of territories which Israel has been occupying since 1967, and the granting of political self-determination to an Arab population at present under Israeli military rule. And there are interests that could be dealt with only after a revolutionary change in national priorities, moving from a policy of military action to an era of economic and social development.

Moreover, things are never static. If there is no dialogue, if there is no move towards a political settlement, there is only one possible outcome: escalation, leading to a most dangerous and very costly war, which Israel would be undertaking under most unfavourable political conditions.

And one last argument. There is no guarantee – even if Israel were to do its best to promote such an agreement – that there is any chance at present of reaching a political settlement and avoiding war. But if Israel has to face another major war with the Arabs, it is of the utmost importance for every one of us to know, for every soldier and family to be reassured, that we have done our best in our endeavours to reach an honourable settlement, and that we are not to be accused of not trying to advance peace.

HOW FLEXIBLE can Israel afford to be in any future political discussions?

Our strategic depth is based today



on just over 60 kilometres between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. If we compare this with the former 14 km. between the Green Line and the sea, this is an enormous improvement. We have multiplied our strategic depth by four, and we have also added a physical obstacle that did not exist in the past, i.e., the need to cross the river as well as the mountain ridge of the West Bank.

It would be absurd to claim, however, that the present strategic depth of 60 km. provides us with foolproof security. Such a claim would be as irresponsible as a policy advocating a fallback to the 1967 Green Line as our defence line while relying on the goodwill and genuine intentions of our Arab partner to the agreement.

Following the Six Day War in

1967, the Israeli cabinet introduced a very important definition, separating "political borders" from "security borders."

This separation is as valid today as it was 21 years ago, and provides the only possible approach for a future settlement in the Middle East. It offers maximum flexibility for a political compromise, while posing the minimum risk to Israel's security as long as the threat of war exists.

From the Israeli point of view, the future political borders should allow for most of the area densely populated by Palestinians to be handed over to Arab sovereignty. This is the only solution that might be acceptable to the other side. On the other hand, Israel's security border would have to be based on the Jordan River.

Such a security borders would deter the Arabs from attempting a surprise attack and would give Israel, if a war were nevertheless initiated, a reasonable chance of having the upper hand.

Two elements, vital to that security border, would have to be incorporated in the agreement.

The first is the complete demilitarization of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. No local Arab military forces would be allowed in those areas (except for a small gendarmerie responsible for internal security); and no outside Arab forces would be allowed to move in. One has to realize that an Arab offensive against Israel, initiated from the 1967 borders, might prove to be a military threat leading to catastrophe.

The other element is that Israeli forces would be responsible for guaranteeing the demilitarization, and would be allowed to use military force if there were an attempt to violate the agreement. No time-limit should be attached to this responsibility; it will have to continue as long as may be necessary.

WE IN Israel have prolonged experience of international observers and peace-keeping forces. Israel should never agree to base its very existence on the performance of such forces in case of a crisis. Their effectiveness only persists as long as both parties are prepared to fulfil an agreement.

An international force will always be guided by political considerations, not necessarily coinciding with the original spirit of the agreement – whether it be the secretary-general of the UN, a Security Council resolution, or a foreign government that is responsible for

its presence. There is no possible guarantee that in an emergency, political considerations will not override an agreement.

There is nothing wrong, however, in allowing an international force to be deployed in the area in addition to the IDF presence, to satisfy Arab fears of Israeli violations of the agreement. But this force should never come instead of an IDF presence.

The vast majority of Israeli military experts agree that the IDF's presence in the West Bank is a vital necessity, and this for a very long period after the signing of a political agreement and its implementation.

The vast majority of those experts will agree on the vital need for viable "security borders." Where they disagree is on the political issue. Should Israel insist that the security borders also be our final political borders?

WHOEVER ADOPTS a policy of *Af sha'al* (not one inch to be given back), of *Eretz Yisrael Hashlema* (the complete Land of Israel), adopts a position that no Arab party may ever accept. The consequences for Israel should be crystal clear.

- It means a demographic problem which will become increasingly critical for Israel. Israel will be losing its Jewish majority in the not-too-distant future, and we would face a continued and unavoidable Palestinian uprising.

- It means that the voices within Israel advocating the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs in the territories, and making *Eretz Yisrael "Araber rein,"* will become stronger and stronger, and the only dictators of policy in the future.

- It means that the strong differences and disagreement within Israel will become increasingly critical, possibly even leading to a most painful civil war.

- And it means that even if Israel succeeds in evacuating most Palestinians across the border, we shall not improve our condition or solve our problems in the long run. A new war, facing the broadest Arab military coalition under extremely difficult internal and external conditions, will be unavoidable.

In such circumstances, no attempt to make our security borders identical with our political borders will guarantee our future and our existence. This will be true in spite of the strategic depth we will enjoy along the Jordan River.

The writer is a former head of the IDF Intelligence Corps.

PROJECT NISHMA

OK to co-sponsor -
But double check

Let Us Listen נשמה

INITIAL SPONSORS

Theodore R. Mann

Earl Raab

Henry Rosovsky Alex Schindler

UAHC

SPONSORING COMMITTEE

838 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

In Formation

October 24, 1988

Dear Alex,

The events of the past ten months have generated concern and serious discussion in Israel and the American Jewish community. Many Israelis, and American Jews who care deeply about Israel, are re-examining assumptions about the West Bank and Gaza and the relationship of these areas to Israel's security.

Widely divergent opinions have emerged in Israel, and we believe that it is important for American Jews to be informed of the full range of Israeli perspectives.

In particular, we believe it is essential that American Jews hear the views of Israelis who have concluded that Israel would be strengthened by pursuing a comprehensive peace agreement that would entail withdrawal from territory now under Israeli rule while satisfying stringent Israeli security conditions. Some new Israeli voices, including senior retired military officers, are saying that negotiation of such a settlement would enhance Israel's long-term security.

This perspective deserves a thoughtful hearing and discussion within the Jewish community. To foster this, we are proposing an independent six-month educational project, to be called Project Nishma -- "Let Us Listen." The project has four components:

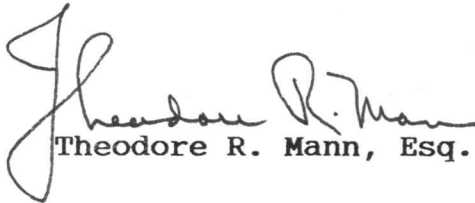
- * assembling and distributing an information packet of materials from authoritative Israeli sources.
- * conducting a national tour by a top Israeli military analyst, Maj. Gen. (res.) Aharon Yariv, for private consultations with Jewish leadership.
- * organizing a clearinghouse for Israeli speakers on this topic.
- * commissioning a study, chaired by Earl Raab, of the best methods to reach those who are uncertain and seek more information about this issue.

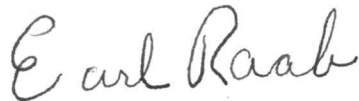
The enclosed proposal describes the project in more detail.

We hope that you share our concerns and will join us as a cosponsor of this project. This is not a solicitation of funds, and we are not requesting endorsement of any public statement. The sponsors' names will appear only on the letterhead and literature introducing the programs to the Jewish community.

We look forward to your support on this timely and important educational effort. You will be called soon to answer any questions you may have and to receive your response.

Sincerely,


Theodore R. Mann, Esq.




Earl Raab



Henry Rosovsky

*Tom Smerling
called
11/1/88.*

*Let this sleeping up
nicely good, responsible
people.*



10/16/88

PROJECT NISHMA:

AN EDUCATIONAL PROJECT ON ISRAELI SECURITY

SUMMARY

This is a proposal for a four-part educational project in the Jewish community from November 1, 1988 — April 1, 1989.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE/RATIONALE

The events of the past year have generated concern and serious discussion in Israel and the American Jewish community. Many Israelis, and American Jews who care deeply about Israel, are re-examining assumptions about the West Bank and Gaza, and the relationship of these areas to Israel's security.

Widely divergent opinions have have emerged in Israel, and it is important for American Jews to be informed of the full range of Israeli perspectives.

In particular, it is essential that American Jews hear clearly the views of Israelis who have concluded that Israel would be strengthened by pursuing a peace agreement that would entail withdrawal from territory now under Israeli rule while meeting stringent Israeli security conditions. Some new Israeli voices, including senior retired military officers, are saying that negotiation of such a settlement would enhance Israel's long-term security.

This project provides educational resources to stimulate informed and thoughtful discussion of this perspective within the American Jewish community.

SPONSORING COMMITTEE

An ad hoc sponsoring committee of 30-55 Jewish leaders will be formed to sponsor this six-month project.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The project will provide four resources:

1) Information Packet -- Fall 1988

A collection of short articles by respected Israeli analysts, including a concise question-and-answer booklet, will be produced and distributed to congregations and other Jewish groups throughout the country. A video-taped discussion by Israeli military analysts will also be made available.

2) Leadership Consultation Tour -- Winter 1988

An authoritative Israeli military analyst -- Maj. Gen. (res.) Aharon Yariv -- will hold private consultations with top Jewish leaders in 5-6 American cities. He will present the case that Israel's long-term security interests would be best served by a negotiated settlement that allowed Israel to withdraw from territories now under Israeli rule, while ensuring security through stringent safeguards.

3) Israeli Speakers Clearinghouse -- Winter, Spring 1989

To facilitate access by Jewish groups to qualified speakers on this topic, staff will maintain an up-to-date file of information about resident and visiting Israeli speakers. The clearinghouse will be publicized to Jewish organizations, and current information will be made available to program planners on a continuous basis.

4) Commission to Study Jewish Opinion -- Fall, Winter 1988

A small commission of Jewish leaders and public opinion analysts will study American Jewish opinion on the question of territorial compromise.

They will first analyze existing survey data to clarify the pivotal fears, concerns, and conditions which qualify support among Jewish opinion-leaders for a peace agreement involving withdrawal from territory. Next, the commission will run a series of focus groups to validate findings and test alternative educational approaches.

The final report will clarify the conditions under which most American Jews would support a peace agreement, and recommend educational approaches likely to be most effective in reaching those who remain uncertain.

This proposal is subject to review and revision by the sponsoring committee.