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Articles, "Editor's Comments," CCAR Journal, reprint, 1968.

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The statistics are exciting. A visit is dramatic. Since becoming a state Israel's population has trebled. In the same twenty-year period the value of her manufacture increased tenfold. Everywhere you look you see busy factories, the scaffolding of new construction and green hillsides where just a brief time ago there was rock, emptiness and the bedouin and his goat. In two decades Israel has created a modern and agreeable mini-state on land which for centuries had lain uncultivated. If all this heroic effort had not been well recorded Israel would be called a miracle—and perhaps she is.

Twenty years of full-throttle accomplishment deserves an exultant anniversary. But this May Israel could not organize a simple Independence Day parade through her capital without certain diplomats precipitating an international incident. According to their complaint such a parade violated the terms of 1949 Armistice Agreement. Cold-eyed diplomats suddenly became hot angels energetically defending a text which had been made a dead letter by a thousand guerrilla raids and General Nasser's repeated pledge of unremitting belligerency, backed by his multi-billion dollar stockpiling of arms. U Thant and his secretariat were at their enigmatic best when it came to explaining their loud protests over a parade and their long silence over pillage and murder.

The parade was held. The Israelis enjoyed a momentary taste of the forbidden pleasure of victory. The parade went off without significant incident

and without the ambassadors of the major Western powers in the reviewing stand. The financial and political interests of oil investors, the banks, merchant-fleet men and large exporters have prevented any major nation from simply and naturally accepting Israel's full sovereignty.

Israel is small. Nations with democratic traditions who are instinctively sympathetic have citizens who profit from the Near-Eastern market places, own the ships which pass through the Suez and the refineries which pump the black gold of Arabia. Towards Israel such nations inevitably react schizophrenically. Conscience cries: 'Support Israel!' Capital cries: 'Appease the Arabs.' Nations without democratic traditions see only the contrast in size, population and mineral wealth between Israel and Pan-Arabia. So, without compunction, they provide arms, train soldiers, organize world-wide anti-Israel propaganda and give Arab rhetoric the muscle which renders it dangerous. Towards Israel these nations are indifferent—even as they are indifferent to human life.

Israel has fulfilled all the normal requirements of sovereignty. She offers protection to her citizen. She has achieved a goodly economic progress, maintained the integrity of her political forms and provided her residents with an unusually high level of schooling, social service, legal protection and culture. Yet, on this Twentieth Anniversary her sovereignty is not only denied by her enemies, but narrowly circum-

scribed by her "friends." How many Western nations have their embassies in Jerusalem? To be blunt about it, Israel's survival remains problematic.

A long red shadow hung over this Yom ha-Atzmaut. Eleven months before Israel arms had known great victory. In the interval the world dissipated a golden opportunity to press negotiations. Russia provided the arms for a fourth round and massive economic and political support. At Khartoum the richer Arab oildoms voted Nasser and Hussein a monthly belligerency allowance. Some of us rationalized that it is spiritually healthier for our people to know the anxiety of survival rather than the arrogance of power. Jeshurun waxed fat is an ungainly beast; but the very search for a good face only pointed up our heartache.

Would that the time of tranquility were at hand, but it is not. Nations negotiate only when they stand to benefit from negotiation. Armed to the teeth, encouraged by political support and fiscal credits, Egypt, Syria and Iraq can only be hurt by any change in the status quo. The undeclared war against Israel is the only emotion which keeps Nasser and his ilk in power. Let peace come and the Arab poor will ask some basic questions about domestic reforms that have been shelved because of the cost of foreign adventures. Let peace come and the great nations will not be so pressing with aid and credit. Peace is a long way off and the saints in residence among us who have been suggesting that Israel make some unconditional and unilateral gesture of withdrawal

would do well to think more of the safety of Israel's two and a half million people than of the good impression their speeches may make with the local Rotarians.

If we can not feel secure, we need not despair. In our fast-paced world a serious break in Sino-Soviet relations, the end of the war in Viet Nam, or unrest in the Eastern Satellites could transform contumacy into conference in just the time it takes for the Politburo to make a decision. For the central fact of Middle Eastern tension is that the struggle has become Sovietized. Russia supplies the arms, the technicians, the strategy consultants and calls the shots. What would an East-West detente or another outbreak of Arab squabbling do to Russia's interest?

The Prophet Zechariah described us as prisoners of hope. The capacity to see light at the end of the tunnel has preserved us from apathy and madness; but there is a certain bracing virtue in reminding ourselves that the holy land is not protected by a divine shield. This is the third Jewish commonwealth. The first two went down in flames. Jeremiah's Temple sermon is still much to the point. To admit the contingency of Israel's survival is to understand her government's decision to sit tight on all military gains until a mutually agreeable and enforceable treaty has been hammered out. Israel withdrew unilaterally in 1957 and had only another round of violence to show for her reasonableness. An Israeli Prime Minister must think of the lives of his people rather than of the murmur of apprecia-

tion at a local ministerial alliance luncheon.

What would happen if Israel were defeated? In the short term, I suppose, Jews would be overwhelmed by world sympathy. There would be big name rescue committees and our brotherhood-nicks could take pride in the numbers of non-Jewish pledges to Palestine relief which were sent in unsolicited. Congress would be pressured to grant visas to those refugees who could be reunited with their families and would probably agree. Germany would welcome a few thousand back to the fatherland. The survivors among the oriental Jews would be a problem and they probably swelter in tent camps for a few months or years while diplomats negotiated with the Arab governments for their readmission to poverty.

For a while we would be involved in frenetic activity. There would be emergency drives, volunteer medical teams would be sent and there would be political activity of all types. Our "statesmen" would testify before international fact-finding commissions. A few hot-heads would band together to reconquer the land and be caught and be tried amid great publicity. Then, I am afraid, we would be overcome by a mounting and suffocating sense of defeat. Inevitably the pace of our communal life would slow down for the lack of constructive focus. When our young would ask: "why remain Jewish?" there would be no tangible answer. Rabbis would teach. Sunday School classes would meet. But the children would ask: "Why learn Hebrew?"; adolescents would ask: "Can

we turn on the withered glories of history?"; adults would ask: "How can I pray to God who is so distant as to be indifferent?"; and we would have few acceptable answers.

I do not believe that world Jewry could survive just now such a trauma; and if our visceral response to last May's jugular threat had any meaning, the overwhelming majority of Jews seem to share this apprehension. Nor is it germane to argue that this people Israel has known many defeats and survived them all. This is quite true, of course; but that was while men still believed that God had good reason to exile and to punish. Since the holocaust we no longer tacitly accept suffering as part of God's educational curriculum. Over the centuries Israel believed that God would relieve the midnight by commissioning a Messiah. If it comes, the Messianic age will be a human achievement; even as Zion was rebuilt by human effort. After such a defeat, we would be too few, too impotent politically, too scattered to be capable as a people of meaningful accomplishment. The world's population has exploded while we were being eliminated.

Let me reverse the argument. For all of its insufficiencies Diaspora Jewish life is far more vigorous and confident today than it was thirty years ago. Our communities consisted then of a few social agencies (many of them aggressively un-Jewish) and a few congregations. Today we have organized Jewish communities. More Jews are being schooled. More are affiliated. The rate of assimilation has slackened and the

degree of involvement is comparatively high. A generation ago we were becoming like all others. Today assimilation interests only a small proportion. Why? The answer is clear—Israel. Israel gave us the dignity of crucial activity. We began to manage our own destiny. We were no longer simply enduring the violence of the angry seas. We were doing our thing. Israel gave the world a new Jewish stereotype and gave many Jews a new self image. Interest in Israel stimulated every other communal concern and gave the Diaspora a chance to develop adequate structures. As yet the task of creating a voluntary religious nation has hardly begun. To capture the imagination of our young and to sustain the involvement of our adults we still need the energies generated by Israel. You can not organize a Jewish community on Martin Buber and the urban coalition. Some day, perhaps, the Diaspora will have its own viable élan as it once did in Babylon, Spain, and Eastern Europe, but that time is not yet here and until then the strengthen-

ing of Israel must be the priority of Jewish life—for Israel's sake and ours.

It is time we develop and placed programs encouraging Aliyah in our schools. It is time we rethought the goals of our Hebrew curriculum and seriously encouraged the sense of peoplehood in our schools. Surely, for the emergency we can set aside all those paeans to Reform Judaism which emphasize denomination rather than nation. It is time we taught our clerical friends less theology and more Mid-Eastern politics and policy. The *Mid East Report* ought to be as prominently featured in our libraries as *Dimensions*. It is time we asked our Congress people not only for a warm congratulatory telegram on our anniversaries but for their vote on foreign aid and their influence on the matter of stopping jet plane sales to Jordan. Our soul brothers are in Israel, and it is time we talked openly and unapologetically of the solidarity of the Jewish people and took an unabashed advocacy role in behalf of our people.