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CERTIFIED SANITY

YAACOV HAZAN's radio interview on August 1 has been widely quoted because of his negative attitude to a national unity government. There was however much else that was illuminating in his remarks. He proclaimed that he was a "sane Zionist."

The veteran Hashomer Hatzair leader seems to have fallen into the trap of the unconscious humorist who a few years ago thought up the idea of flourishing personal assurances of their sanity as proof of their wisdom.

The idea caught on: "leftward" from somewhere down the middle of the Labour Party are to be found people who find it easiest to clinch any rational discussion of issues by the simple disclosure: "after all, we are the sane Zionists."

Mr. Hazan stressed that he was not making any value judgments.

There were "good guys" and "bad guys" on both sides. The sane Zionists were simply those who knew what was possible and what was not. The others were impractical people who thought they could impose their will upon the world. He called them "messianics."

This is also a recently coined term to describe those who believe that Palestine belongs to the Jewish people, that it is most dangerous not to take seriously the doctrine of the Arabs (with their 20-odd states) that the Jewish State must be eliminated, that there is hope for peace only if Israel does not weaken herself once more by giving up territory, that indeed giving up territory is a certain prescription for another war.

HAZAN'S interviewer did not press him hard for evidence of the sanity he professed. This might have embarrassed him. After all it was Hazan's party which, before 1948, fought against the idea of a Jewish State, and preached a "bi-national" state with the Arabs enjoying a 50 per cent statutory control.

On another plane – it was Hazan who, in the days of Stalinist rule in the U.S.S.R., proclaimed that the Soviet Union was his "second homeland," a fair description then of his party's world-view. These are only two examples of the credentials available to testify to the Zionist sanity of Mr. Hazan and his party.

In the interview Mr. Hazan stressed that the classification of "sane" and "messianic" Zionists had historic roots. He named several historic "sane" leaders: Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Gruenbaum (Israel's first interior minister). It is relevant to look at Gruenbaum's record. The leader of Polish Jewry, he was an authentic representative of the Zionist establishment school of thought.

His sanity in the middle and late 1930s expressed itself in mobilizing opposition to Jabotinsky's desperate efforts to convince the Jews of Eastern Europe that a national catastrophe was imminent. Their economic and social condition in an increasingly anti-Semitic Europe was beyond hope or help.

"The ground," he cried, "is burning beneath your feet," and he pleaded with them to flee their countries and try to make their way to Eretz Yisrael." (Chaim Weizmann in those very days described the mass of East European Jews as "dust, moral and economic dust in a cruel world" of whom only a remnant was likely to survive – but he offered no plan of action or escape.)

To Gruenbaum's credit, he, unlike the other Zionist leaders, subsequently admitted his grim misdirection of the masses who, a few short years later, became the victims of the Holocaust.

This writer, together with Yosef Nevada, had a long conversation with Gruenbaum in March 1947, at the height of the underground struggle against British rule in Palestine. Several days earlier the British had proclaimed martial law in the country with the avowed aim of "finally" crushing the Jewish underground.

Gruenbaum agreed that on historical grounds and on grounds of national self-respect, the Irgun's policy was correct. Britain had become our enemy and it was logical to fight her. But the fight was endangering the Yishuv. "What shall we do," he asked, "if the British bomb Tel Aviv; if they destroy the Emek?"

I pointed to a war-weary Britain's shattered economy, to the daily agonies of everyday life in Britain, multiplied by the conditions of that terrible winter, her pitiful dependence on American aid, the tremendous sympathy in the U.S. (and in post-Holocaust Europe) for the Jewish struggle in Palestine – and the growing disgust in Britain itself at the shame and expense at her presence, with 80,000 troops in Palestine.

Nedava and I assured him that if only the resistance was maintained Britain would be forced to leave Palestine. We (in Hazan's lexicon) were "messianic."

A week after that conversation martial law, countered by over 60 operations by the Irgun and the Lehi, was shamefacedly withdrawn by the British; and Winston Churchill in the House of Commons fiercely – though reluctantly – echoed the demand of the Jewish underground: "get out of Palestine!" Six months later the British government announced their abandonment of Palestine.

THESE EXAMPLES do confirm Hazan's assertion of the historic continuity of the two schools of thought.

Hazan's most "sane" people were distinguished by being wrong in nearly every crucial situation. Let us take Chaim Weizmann. Hazan did not specify which Weizmann was the sane one. Was it the Weizmann who said in 1919 that he expected Palestine to be "as Jewish as England is English," or was it the Weizmann who in 1930 declared that he had no understanding for the demand for a Jewish State?

Was it not the Weizmann who bitterly opposed any resistance to oppressive British rule and who, that same March of 1947, still spoke of Britain as though she were on our side? Was it not the Weizmann who in July 1947 said that he believed that Jewish agreement to the partition of the country (territorial "compromise") would end the dispute with the Arabs?

The spiritual affinity, the historic continuity, claimed by Hazan stands out starkly. The same mindset of Gruenbaum – and the rest of the Zionist establishment – that opposed evacuation in pre-war Eastern Europe; that, in Palestine, for years opposed the revolt against British rule, that misjudged the transparent British aim to destroy Zionism, that failed, unbelievably, to detect the crucial limitations of British post-war power; that willfully shut its eyes to the depth of Arab determination to prevent the birth of Israel and subsequently in trying to bring about its destruction – that same mindset emerges in almost photographic reproduction in the present-day preachers of "sanity."

Nothing in our collective experience has changed them. Yehoshaphat Harkaby, who did more than any other expert, to expose the depth and the inflexibility of the

Arabs' non-acceptance of Jewish Statehood (and their anti-Jewish virulence) often complained bitterly that Israel's political leaders simply refused to listen to him.

They were dominated by wishful thinking, enmeshed in their mystic beliefs; and so they have remained. If they are completely sane according to Hazan's scale, they preach a return to the 1949 Armistice lines.

If they are not entirely "sane," like Peres or Rabin, they merely pretend that the Arabs (first of all Hussein) will accept two-thirds of Judea and Samaria (but excluding Jerusalem) in "settlement" of their claims; and that precisely a weakened and vulnerable Israel will encourage them to give up their dream of her annihilation.

PERHAPS EVEN more striking is the present "sane" attitude to Egypt. Almost every day we are provided with new evidence that, apart from accepting Sinai, the Egyptians never saw in the peace treaty more than a formal piece of paper. A fortnight ago they added new conditions, for fulfilling the first element of the treaty: the maintenance of their ambassador in Israel – who was to be the daily visible symbol of peace.

Propaganda against Israel in the media (patently designed to maintain a high level of hatred and contempt) continues as though there were not treaty with a clause outlawing such propaganda. Tourism – from Egypt – and trade hardly exist. The military establishment goes from strength to strength.

To give added point to the unabated Arab purpose, Abdul Madjid has been appointed foreign minister. Virulently anti-Israel at the U.N. he was the chosen emissary in 1982 to reveal to a Conference of Arab States in Kuwait the details of Egypt's intentions towards Israel. In sum, they are the traditional prescription for the destruction of Israel by stages – including the return of the "refugees" to Haifa and Jaffa et al. What have the sane Zionists to say to this? Nothing. They "have not heard" of it; and even pretend that they have not been warned. Maybe that is how they "retain their sanity."