

December 25, 1992

## ENCOURAGEMENT TO OUR ENEMIES

TOWARD the end of August 1939, Winston Churchill, then in opposition, learned that premier Chamberlain was hoping to persuade the Poles to submit to Hitler's territorial demands. He thereupon visited foreign secretary Halifax and urged him not to press the Poles to do anything that they regarded as dangerous to Poland's security. When the Israeli government a week ago deported the Hamas terror organizers, Secretary of State Eagleburger publicly criticized its decision and called on Israel to reverse it.

Mr Eagleburger would have done well to embrace Churchill's principles. The Israeli government is accountable to the people of Israel, not to the US government or anybody else. At this moment it is duty-bound to apply the most effective methods for combating a ruthless campaign of murder against its citizens.

Some of us love our government more, some love it less. All of us object to attempts by a foreign government to subvert our democracy - the more so when statements like those of Mr Eagleburger publicly give encouragement and comfort to our enemies. His advice moreover was doubly flawed morally.

If he really believed his advice would be helpful to Israel, why did he not convey it through the established channels of confidential diplomatic communication? Of course we know the answer to the question. Public criticism might conceivably intimidate some timid Israelis, and it might well encourage some others who sympathize with the enemy (Israel, like America and other countries, has its share of such people) and who oppose the deportations. More significantly, Mr Eagleburger was giving pleasure to Washington's Arab friends - like Saudi Arabia, Syria, et al. - who publicly rejoice at every Hamas murder of Jews. We in Israel who study and follow the progress of US dichotomous, carrot-and-stick policy (and the US has no better friends anywhere in the world) know perfectly well that as a rule, at moments of crisis in the Arab-Israeli dispute, Washington's thinking is governed not so much by concern for Israel, but for the ongoing fruitful relations with the Arab states. So it was, for example, with secretary of state Kissinger who in 1973-74 hectored the Golda Meir government into a posture of defeat and retreat after Israel, the victim of Arab aggression, had won a hard-earned victory in the Yom Kippur War.

So it was when Washington pressed upon the Begin government, during the war in Lebanon, to save the skin of Yasser Arafat, who was then enabled to leave Lebanon with a flourish of trumpets. During the Cold War, we were sometimes told that a heavy pro-Arab tilt was needed by the US to counter Soviet blandishments. That motif, real or pretended, no longer exists, and now a new and active element must be considered.

It is, precisely, Hamas. It is surely time that Washington (and indeed the West in general) woke up to the real dimensions and character of the Hamas movement. Some of the dyed-in-the-wool Arabists in the State Department, preoccupied with Israel-bashing, no doubt see Hamas as a mere "cloud on the horizon no bigger than a man's hand" - a purely local, mainly anti-Israel, phenomenon.

If so, they are vastly mistaken. Hamas is building up power bases wherever possible throughout the Arab states. In Syria it has more than a base; the Syrian government

sponsors its activities in Lebanon.

In Jordan it occupies a "respectable" position in public life. In Egypt it is already a cause of great anxiety to the regime. Its veritable patron is the Iranian government - it represents and propagates the "Iranian revolution" - and its methods are revolutionary and violent.

It seeks to dominate - first of all - the Arab "world," it seeks to become the leader of all Moslems. Its ideological purpose is broader. It sees itself as the flaming sword of Islam, designed to exact "vengeance" not only on Israel, but on the "West" at large.

Its rhetoric and its texts embrace that historic purpose; and it will be served by the tremendous unending build-up of sophisticated arms in Iran and - as it hopes - in the Arab states as well. It will not be long before the reach of those arms includes Europe. Washington should also wake up to the fact that the Arab states, all vulnerable to the Islamic ideology (and, in any case, sharing its annihilationist policy toward Israel), are also potential partners for a future military threat in the region.

If and when such a threat develops, not only Syria as a willing ally but the Gulf area will be sucked into the fundamentalist orbit. Certainly Israel is the only state in the region strongly motivated and militarily adequate to resist militant Islam's intention to overrun the whole Fertile Crescent. Such - briefly - is the new and developing prospect in the Middle East.

It may be providential that its outlines are becoming visible precisely at this time - when a new regime is about to take office in the US. The first imperative for the Clinton administration would seem to be not to fall into the easy trap of "continuity" but to study in depth the whole problem, its history and its ramifications; it must be determined to avoid any repetition of the egregious blunders and facile illusions which predominated in past US Middle Eastern policy. It should at the same time be possible to demand of Prime Minister Rabin that he too initiate a process of rethinking.

The events of the past few days, characterized by the almost complete unanimity in the Arab world of sympathy and support for the murderous Hamas attitude toward Israel themselves emphasize how illusory is the long-harbored outlook of the Labor Party. There is not a single Arab prepared to make a compromise. There are among them only different degrees of tactics and timing for bringing about the complete Israeli territorial surrender.

Every Israeli concession takes them a step forward in that direction, and Israel's only hope of peace - and even that remote - is a determination to maintain and enhance our security in the whole of our homeland.