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## ZIONIST PRINCIPLES ARE NOT FOR SALE

THE primary issue facing those in the American Jewish community is not complicated. Some of them do not like Israeli government policies; yet one could expect unanimous opposition when they see the US administration twisting Israel's arm, trying to dictate to Jerusalem what Israel should or should not do. The effect of persistent pressure by President George Bush and Secretary James Baker on Israel to "freeze" the establishment of Jewish communities in Judea, Samaria, Gaza and Golan is to undermine Israeli sovereignty and subvert Israeli democracy.

If American Jews, who claim to be alert to Israel's interests, fail to utter a loud and clear protest, they are willy-nilly encouraging that pressure. Shortly before World War II, Winston Churchill, disturbed by reports that Poland was being pressed to surrender to Hitler's demand and thus "avoid war," appealed urgently to foreign secretary Lord Halifax that he not press the Polish government to make concessions which it regarded as inimical to Poland's security. This is a central criterion of sovereignty: the right and the duty of a government to determine where lies the national interest of its country and the people by whom it was elected.

If tomorrow the Israeli people were freely to elect a government which decides on a defeatist policy, that equally would be an expression of sovereignty. Until and unless that happens, it is Israel's absolute right to have its present policy defended against coercion and subversion from any quarter, however elevated. A visiting US senator was recently reported in *The Jerusalem Post* as saying that George Bush has never been so fierce on any subject as he is on the subject of "settlements." How is one to explain this fervency, this evidently overpowering desire of a foreigner to keep Jews out of territory that is part of their historic national homeland? One of Bush's fellow Americans has offered a light-hearted explanation: "Bush is not an antisemite. It is only that he loves some Semites more than others." There have been, and no doubt still are, Very Important Persons in public affairs who harbor racial and other prejudices. There are antisemites among them. Usually they do not parade their prejudices; they keep them under control.

That is why the members of the Jewish delegation that went to appeal to the president for the loan guarantees for Israel were so shocked at his outbursts - in terms vaguely reminiscent of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. There was, it will be remembered, other evidence of such a fixation in the president's mind: his behavior in relation to the Gulf war. The story that if Israel retaliated against Iraq's missile attack the Saudis would pull out of the war was nonsensical from the beginning.

The pressure on Israel from the outset aroused the suspicion among some of us that his motive was to be able to say afterwards that his soldiers had risked their lives in defense of Israel. Lo and behold, that is precisely what he did. There are a number of pragmatic reasons for the US official preference for the Arabs over the Jew, a preference that goes back many years.

Economics, business, markets, oil - these are the most moral arguments against Zionism. Their impact can be measured by the billions of dollars that have poured into American coffers over the years, mainly from Saudi Arabia. True, the

preference has had its ups and downs.

Israel was perceived after 1967 as a formidable regional power, as a bastion against Soviet expansionism - and those factors played their part in the balancing of advantages. Preference, however, has persisted; and now, in our day, it has attained unprecedented proportions - virtually an alliance between the US and the Arabs against Israeli interests. EVIDENCE of anti-Jewish bias in the American administration does, it seems, pose a problem for many Jews, particularly among those perceived by the administration to be leaders of the community.

Such a problem existed in extreme form during World War II; but whatever excuses may be offered for the admittedly poor performance then of US Jews on Jewish issues, there is no justification today for American Jews to be cowed. Moreover, the demand they should be making - that Washington stop bullying a small nation over an issue vital to that nation's security - is in complete harmony with American perceptions of sovereignty, democracy and decency. Thus there can be no doubt that this dignified stand would win widespread support in the whole of American society.

That stand, however, should be accompanied by a bold assertion: "If the administration is not prepared to provide the loan guarantees Israel requires without pressing Israel to accept political conditions, then we, the Jewish citizens of the US, undertake to find the means to solve that problem." This message should be accompanied by another, to the government and people of Israel: "The campaign to open the gates of the Soviet Union to a mass exodus of the Jewish population was conducted by the Jewish people throughout the world. As was befitting, US Jews were in the forefront, in the spirit of 'We are a people, one people' invoked by Herzl. "Now that our wishes and our prayers, have been fulfilled, and we find ourselves in the midst of such an exodus to the national homeland, we recognize the common responsibility of the whole Jewish people in sharing with Israel the financial burden of their proper absorption; and we shall take immediate steps to begin implementing this undertaking." This is the dignified and politically correct solution to what is, after all, not an insuperable problem.

And many members of our people feel the same way. Many wealthy Jews together can provide the means. One important personality has made a proposal in this spirit: On September 6, 1991, Kenneth Bialkin wrote a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Bialkin is the president of the Jewish Community Council of New York, embracing the large variety of Jewish organizations, religious and secular, functional and political, in that city. In his letter, he asserts that it would be "just and fitting for the US" to provide the loan guarantees to ease the burden of the heroic absorption of Soviet and Ethiopian olim." He goes on to say, however: "If it should develop that the availability of loan guarantees should be conditioned upon a change in the principles you have adopted regarding participation in the international peace conference, or upon a change in the settlement policies established by the government of Israel, I would urge that Israel forgo the loan guarantees instead of compromising your principles. "Israel, with the assistance of its friends throughout the world, will somehow manage to absorb the new immigration and to achieve an improved economic environment.

It will not be easy, perhaps, but we will all have to work harder to achieve that result. "Policies and principles which define the purpose and aspirations of the people of Israel and which further noble Zionist objectives should not be for sale."