

August 20, 1993

KOSHER FOR BOTH OR FOR NEITHER

THERE are both madness and method in the irrational behavior of Premier Yitzhak Rabin these last weeks.

There is no sign of moral sensitivity, but one may discern a touch of (unintended) humor. Indeed the joke of the week was the assertion by an (anonymous) member of his staff that "Mr Rabin is a man of his word." (Mr Rabin, be it remembered, assured the electors of the Golan province of sovereign Israel that giving up the Golan was unthinkable: it would endanger Israel's security.) It is precisely in order to help him break that "word" and to negotiate away the Golan (as well as Judea, Samaria and Gaza) that he has been defying his attorney-general and his justice minister.

He is driven by the need to keep Aryeh Deri in the government. Without Deri's Shas party, his coalition - and his plan to give up the heartland of Eretz Yisrael to Arab rule - would be determined by five Arabs. This is a prospect even Mr Rabin (at least for the moment) is not willing to face.

He has meantime introduced a new, more sinister note into his effort to win public support. An essential element of his policy is, after all, to hand over the territory without any Jews. He is consequently going one better than his famously vicious colleagues Shulamit Aloni and Ran Cohen in vilifying the Jews of Judea, Samaria and Gaza (JSG) and in denigrating the residents of the Golan.

This, in preparation for the day when he will order the "removal" of communities of Jews from their homes in the Jewish National Home. (Rabin's phrase for the process was lehorid yishuvim.) His silly remarks about the dangers to security of civilians on the Golan and his malicious, insulting and outrageously mendacious poppycock about the Jewish residents of JSG being crybabies, are reminiscent not only of elements of traditional antisemitic contemptuousness.

They also recall (and this is true of his party's whole policy) the supercilious, hostile attitude adopted in Germany after World War I by the "superior true-German" Jews toward the Ostjuden, Jews who had fled from pogrom-ridden and economically backward Eastern Europe. In the end, Hitler gave them all equal treatment; and - mutatis mutandis - Messrs. Arafat, Assad, Hussein and (yes) Mubarak, look forward to equalization between Ariel and Petah Tikva, between Elon Moreh and Tel Aviv, which represent merely different phases in their peace plan.

Mr Rabin's remarks serve to emphasize the continuing moral deterioration in the debate affecting Israel's very future. It is enveloped not only in extraordinary political myopia in government, but by incontrovertible misinformation, dissimulation and plain lying. Do we not remember, for example, the ingenious assertion by Police Minister Shahal to a group of Golan residents that further opposition to the government's policy of withdrawal is a waste of time and energy because an agreement had already been reached with Assad? And that Assad had agreed that the Jews could remain on the Golan for 15 years under Syrian sovereignty? Even this was untrue - but so characteristic of the cynicism and contempt which informs the behavior of Rabin's regime.

Yet it is hypocrisy that must take first place these days among the characteristics of

Israel's public debate. WHO can forget the uproar made by scandalized journalists and orators and, most of all, by members of the Knesset at the very mention of the name of Maj. -Gen. (res.) Rehavam Ze'evi - "Gandhi" - who believes that the rational most just solution to the dispute between Israel and the Arab nation is the movement of a large segment of the Arab population into Eastern Palestine (Jordan) and other neighboring Arab states. In short, "transfer." Moral revulsion and horror came not only from Mapam and the rest of the left but even from some in the Likud. There were MKs who walked out of the House when Ze'evi was about to speak.

Here was a great demonstration of moral superiority not, of course, only over "Gandhi" but also over almost every Zionist leader of the Mandate period. These included Weizmann, Ben-Gurion, Katznelson - indeed the whole Mapai leadership - when transfer was proposed by the British Royal Commission of 1936-37 and a long, long list of movements, bodies and personalities, including the Conference of the British Labor Party. (Jabotinsky was a notable exception - but he never vilified or boycotted his opponents.)

Now we are in 1993, and the proposition that "for the sake of peace" Jews will "have to be transferred from territory which the Rabin-Aloni government proposes giving away (also "for the sake of peace") is so self-understood that it does not even have to be discussed. What does this mean, if not that the transfer of population is permissible and morally acceptable? Or does it mean that only the transfer of Jews is permissible (and there has been one example in our generation - the forcible expulsion of Jews from Sinai in 1979)? Does this mean, in other words, that Israel accepts the age-old anti-Jewish principle of the "double standard" and is prepared to serve as the prime promoter on a grand scale of end-of-century antisemitism? This is not acceptable. By all criteria of logic, of equity, there is every reason why the proposition that the "Palestinian" Arabs should relocate in Eastern Palestine, or in some other neighboring Arab territory, should be seen as being at least as kosher as the proposition that the Jews of JSG and the Golan will "have to be" transferred.

President Ezer Weizman, who last Sunday expressed commendable distaste for the demonization of the people of JSG, nevertheless hinted broadly to them that they will have to accept expulsion from their homes for a peace which the vast majority of them believe to be a snare and a delusion. Indeed on an issue affecting not only a large segment of the Jewish people of Israel but possibly the very existence of the Jewish National Home; on an issue on which there is, to say the least, a deep division within the nation, among whom there are good grounds for believing that a majority is against surrender of territory and against a transfer of Jews - does not the president see that on such a fateful issue he should be the first, as the president of the whole people, to call for a test of the people's will by a new general election?