

15 October 1982

### Loves that Labour lost

THERE ARE two Israels, according to a London *Times* editorial article. The first: “a beacon of hope, a united people fighting with great gallantry against odds . . . aiming at a society of equality and conscience . . . a land of civilization, of science and culture . . .” Then, however, “there is unfortunately the other Israel, the Israel of the ex-generals, the Israel that has been created not by idealism, but by war. . . . This Israel is increasingly influenced by the defense establishment, by hard men who have spent their lives at war and been shaped by triumph in battle.”

This character assassination could have been penned by the Labour Alignment enemies of the Likud Government. Labour spokesmen and analysts have indeed in recent years persistently promoted the idea of “two cultures” in Israel, one evil and stupid – represented by the Likud establishment – and the other benign, progressive and rational. They themselves, of course, represent the second category, and they believe that they are so perceived by the just and benevolent “world” (represented by newspapers like *The Times*) which loves good Jews.

Alas – the “hard men” of the “second Israel” pilloried by *The Times* are precisely the Labour Party leaders. The article was published 10 years ago (in February 1973) when a Labour Alignment government ruled in Israel.

THE ELOQUENCE of *The Times* was inspired by the unfortunate shooting down of a Libyan airliner by the Israel Air Force. The pilot had incomprehensibly strayed into Israel’s air space and had disregarded the warnings of an Israeli patrol. The Israeli patrol naturally assumed a hostile purpose by Col. Muammar Gaddafi. The circumstances were quite plain, and the Libyan pilot’s blundering performance was confirmed by the subsequent investigation. *The Times*, however, immediately categorized the event as a crime, which the old – the good – Zionists would have “regarded as an atrocity.”

Nor was *The Times* alone. A howl of denunciation and insult went up all over the world. The prestigious British weekly, *The Spectator*, added moreover that the airliner crash would “reinforce the political effects of Israel’s strike deep into northern Lebanon” – and that war might be expected at any time. What terrible people they were, these leaders of the “new” Israel, Golda Meir, Abba Eban and company.

ACCORDING TO Mr. Eban, writing in *The Jerusalem Post* on October 6, this just could not have happened. In an essay of incredible dissimulation, he wishes the world to understand that the relations between Israel and the world were always idyllic – spoiled only by the advent of the Likud. It is the “adventurism of Zionist Revisionism (of the Likud),” he writes, that “the world community cannot absorb,” and “it is a far cry from the days when statements of Israel’s policy and vision were received with enthusiasm and warmth throughout the international system.

Indeed, eight months after the outburst over the Libyan airliner, the European members of the “world community,” watching Israel’s dire distress in the Yom Kippur War, refused to grant American planes, bringing urgent supplies to Israel, permission to refuel on their soil (while continuing themselves to supply arms to the Arab states). Eban obviously does not remember this manifestation of “enthusiasm and warmth” towards

Labour-governed Israel. He also forgets that the then government had paid a price in advance for that “warmth and enthusiasm.”

It had refrained from calling up the army reserves and from taking pre-emptive action which could have blunted the imminent Egyptian and Syrian offensive – in order to prove that Israel was not the aggressor. Does Mr. Eban know, does anybody know, how many Israeli soldiers’ lives were lost through that disastrous and vain sacrifice?

In the end, considerable segments of the institutions and media in the “world community” lambasted Israel as an aggressor, or evinced a hypocritical neutrality.

Nor did this exhaust the deep respect accorded Israel’s “policy and vision.” On October 20, 1973, when Israel had turned the tables after the disastrous opening of the war, Foreign Minister Abba Eban announced that a cease-fire was not even being considered – only victory.

At that very moment U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger, to prevent that victory, was negotiating (behind Israel’s back) with the Soviets an ultimate demand to Israel for an immediate cease-fire.

There were many such manifestations of universal warmth and enthusiasm in the other crises in Israel’s life. The U.S. denied Israel arms when the Arab states, armed by Britain, tried to destroy her in embryo in 1948. In May 1967, Foreign Minister Eban travelled, cap in hand, from capital to capital, asking Western statesmen to honour the obligations undertaken in 1957 after Israel had agreed to withdraw from Sinai and Gaza. He came back empty-handed. Then the Security Council, confronted by imminent aggression by the Arab states against Israel, was rendered speechless by its warmth and enthusiasm for Labour-led Israel – and failed even to pass a resolution.

MR. EBAN writes of Israel’s “diplomatic collapse” – as a result of Likud policy, and that “our place within international organizations, seemingly secure decades ago, is now in question.” That place began to be questioned while Labour was in power. Only, Mr. Eban has seemingly forgotten, for example, that Israel was blackballed by UENSCO for “crimes against culture” a year or more before ever the Likud came to power. He also wishes apparently to erase from public memory the hostile audiences Israeli delegates to the United Nations used to encounter already in Labour’s day.

Most significantly – how can a Jewish leader have forgotten the most vicious, the most far-reachingly dangerous resolution ever adopted against Israel and the Jewish people at the United Nations – equating Zionism with racism, an event which occurred while Labour ruled in Jerusalem? The most disturbing aspect of that debate was not that the resolution was carried by a majority, but that most of the dissenting *minority* explained that they were not so much against the principle of the resolution, they merely regarded it as politically unwise.

The “principle” was, of course, the denial to Israel of the right of national existence. At that moment in time, the only Israeli “vision and policy” the “world community” had experienced for 27 years had come from a Labour government.

A year earlier the UN assembly had transgressed its own constitution and invited onto its platform a specially distinguished international guest – Yasser Arafat, whose farrago of hate-filled nonsense from that forum was greeted with rapturous applause.

THE LAST 10 years have seen a recrudescence of open anti-Semitism and its popular growth in increasingly alarming proportions. The unreconstructed anti-Semite discovered long ago that he could now direct his venom against the Zionist target, the Jewish state.

Into this system the Arab campaign for Israel's destruction dovetailed neatly. In the 20th century, "robbing the Palestinians of their homeland" is a more plausible charge against the Jewish people than "the killing of Jesus."

Throughout the decade there has consequently been a continuing deterioration of Israel's international position. "The feeling grows that if only the Jews of Israel would go away and the Jews of America would stop supporting them the oil problem and the threat of war would vanish," wrote historian Barbara Tuchman (*Newsweek*, February 3, 1975), who added that "Israel is the excuse not the cause" for anti-Semitism.

Momentum indeed increased apace. By 1976 a percipient observer in the U.S. incisively raised the alarm. Norman Podhoretz found he had to warn against the "abandonment of Israel" by the U.S. amid the burgeoning new anti-Semitism (*Commentary*, July 1976).

Since the Likud came to power, the momentum of the hostile campaign has continued to increase. The Likud, like Labour, has had neither the wit nor the wisdom to assess its magnitude, nor to build up a machine adequate to resist its inroads in the world community.

Most significantly, that campaign has since 1977 enjoyed encouragement and support from an Israeli source – an irresponsible and often simply unscrupulous Opposition.

Nowadays, no self-respecting enemy of Israel or anti-Semite will fail to quote "Israeli sources." In sum, as every third-grader knows, the world-wide campaign against Israel and the Jewish people has reached proportions unprecedented since the days of the Nazis.

AT THIS MOMENT a famous Jewish leader, Mr. Eban, announces to the "world community" in effect: "We have no complaints about your behaviour to us before 1977. It was marked by warmth and understanding for our policy and vision. As for your behaviour since 1977, the Government of Israel is to blame for that."

Who can blame the leaders of the "world community" if they use Mr. Eban's article as a certificate of *kashrut*, or at least of mitigating circumstances, for their actions?

22 October 1982

**Israel's image – then and now**  
**By ABBA EBAN**

IN HIS ARTICLE in *The Jerusalem Post* on October 15, Mr. Shmuel Katz tells us two things: *One*: World opinion has always been as hostile to Israel as it is today; and *Two*: "As every third-grader knows, the world-wide campaign against Israel and the Jewish people has reached proportions unprecedented since the days of the Nazis."

I leave it to the "third-grader" to reconcile this contradiction. Everything is the same – and everything is different.

Mr. Katz is totally wrong on both counts. Although there are some virulent expressions of prejudice that must be described as anti-Semitic, the bulk of the international criticism has not been of “Israel and the Jewish people” but of specific acts and attitudes of the Israeli *government*.

And although there were many occasions of alienation from Israel in the past – as I have every good reason to recall – it is morbid and inaccurate for Mr. Katz to describe Israel as having been subject to nothing but hostility in the years of the Labour governments. Anybody who denies the unique and particular intensity of the current crisis today reveals a sad inability to understand the problems of public opinion and political information.

It is particularly ludicrous for Mr. Katz to invoke the Libyan airliner episode of 1973 as “proof” of Israel’s difficulties in pre-Likud days. It is quite impossible for a sane man or woman to regard the killing of passengers in what was patently a civilian aircraft as anything but a tragic error. Criticism of that actions tells us nothing whatever about the basic attitude of the critic towards Israel and the Jewish people. (There was as much press criticism of that act in Israel as abroad.)

Similarly, the UN debate on the monstrous anti-Zionist resolution of 1976 utterly fails to support Mr. Katz’s apocalyptic version of how Israel then stood in world opinion.

I was not close to that debate and have never been able to follow how the resolution reached such success after failing in previous years; but if we study the vote and speeches in 1976, it becomes apparent that all the free, democratic countries voted *against* the resolution, which was only two votes short of failure to secure a two-thirds majority.

Support of Israel was in a minority of UN votes, because Africa is fragmented into 50 votes as against North America which has three (with a large population). But Israel was by no means “isolated” on that occasion either in the votes or in the accompanying press comment.

On the Beirut war our solitude has been almost complete. The salient point today is not the antagonism of our adversaries which may be incorrigible, but the shock of our undoubted friends. Any short list of Israel’s devoted supporters a few months ago would have included Senator Cranston, Senator Jackson Francois Mitterrand, Harold Wilson, George Sill and William Safire, to say nothing of stalwart Jewish supporters, such as Rabbi Alexander Schindler, the leaders of B’nai B’rith, AIPAC and other institutions.

Yet from these quarters there have come severe and pained criticisms of members of the Begin Government together with reaffirmation of admiration for Israel. We used to be able to get from 60 to 80 votes in the U.S. Senate for resolutions favourable to Israel, and Mr. Katz cannot conceivably believe that this is the situation in 1982.

THE PROCEEDINGS of international organizations are not strictly relevant to what I wrote on October 6, since I was describing the fact that we could count on world *opinion* even when *governments* were pulled away from us by the weight of their interests, as they conceived them.

Today, the brunt of criticism comes from public opinion reacting against the Israeli government. Mr. Katz, discomfited by the inconvenient support of dozens of countries for Israel even in the hysteria of the 1976 anti-Zionist debate, finds refuge in the convenient idea that “most of the dissenting minority explained that they were not so

much against the principle of the resolution, they merely regarded it as politically unwise.”

The truth is that they explained nothing of the kind. Mr. Katz cannot tolerate the idea that Israel ever enjoyed any public support, and he therefore constructs a fictitious alibi to fit in with his theory that “the whole world is against us and always was.”

EVEN INTERNATIONAL organizations with their heavy Arab-Moslem-Communist majorities were not hopeless cases in previous years. Mr. Katz recounts the fiasco of the Security Council’s inaction in May 1967. I have nothing to add to what I have written at length on that point; but Mr. Katz seems not to want to remember that Israel could also have successes in those unpromising arenas.

On June 13, 1967 the Security Council rejected, through lack of majority, a resolution condemning Israel’s armed action and calling for immediate withdrawal (S/7951). In November 1967, it rejected (for lack of majority) resolutions by the USSR and by India and Mali calling for our withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 lines. In July 1967 we were able to secure the numerical defeat in the UN General Assembly of a Non-Aligned resolution calling for our complete withdrawal (A/L 522).

It is absurd for Mr. Katz to pretend that the possibility of Israel’s exclusion from major international organizations existed as a tangible prospect before 1977.

Mr. Katz scowls with derision at my statement that Israel used to evoke “warmth and enthusiasm” in large sectors of the international system. The truth is that we used to live on two levels: there was certainly a level of antagonism and hostility, but I insist on the fact that there was also a level of “warmth and understanding.” So far from having been a helpless victim of international outrage, Israel has stood in greater need of support than any other modern state – and has also been more successful in obtaining it than anyone else.

No state in our generation has secured a greater proportion of its strength from outside its own borders. I mean strength in every important aspect – military, financial and politico-juridical.

Likud spokesmen continually tell us with almost sensual delight that “we live in a hostile world.” This was said by Defence Minister Ariel Sharon eight times in a single TV interview last month.

The truth is that the world is neither endemically hostile nor intrinsically friendly. Its hostility and friendship are variables, and one of the factors that influence them is the way that Israeli governments decide, speak and act.

MR. KATZ is obsessed by the idea that the solution is “to build a machine.” My point was and is that for the first time an Israel government, by a Revisionist departure from previous norms, has embraced doctrines which no part of the world community supports. The idea that Israel must exercise coercive jurisdiction permanently over foreign people in every inch of all the territory west of the Jordan has never – and will never – gain any international support at all. There is no such thing on the surface of the globe as a democratic nation that rules without consent over a foreign population more than one-third its own total size.

We were able, only after many years, to secure the acknowledgement of most nations of Israel’s legitimate control of the pre-1967 boundaries. (Even the Soviet Union

acknowledged this in 1973-4, first in an official demarche by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to me and then in a public policy statement.)

It would not be eternally impossible to secure international acceptance of boundary changes necessary for our vital security. But the idea that we should totally override the political identity of the neighbouring people by applying our sovereignty and denying any other in every square inch of what we and others called Palestine in the historic dialogues of 1947-9 is a new doctrine that the international system and world opinion cannot absorb. Nor can at least half of the Israeli people.

Thus, although anything that can be improved in machinery, techniques and the art of expression should be reformed, the fault lies with an unsaleable policy that divides the Israeli people and that cannot, therefore, unite any great part of world opinion on our behalf.

The only favourable comment about Israel that I heard from Israel's friends abroad in a very recent voyage related to the pluralism of our democracy, the freedom of public dissent and the courage of domestic protest. The opposition, far from being "unscrupulous and irresponsible," as Mr. Katz virulently and ridiculously suggests, has done much to repair the disintegrating public image of Israel and to present the spectacle of the humane, serious, rational, lucid and visionary Israel towards which so many of our friends look back with sincere longing and steadfast hope.

29 October 1982

### **Time to say 'enough!'**

MY COMMENTS (on October 15) on Abba Eban's "Dangerous Decisions" article were quite plain. I summed them up by charging him baldly with giving the world community a certificate of *kashrut* for their behaviour towards Israel by telling them, in effect, that we have no complaints about their behaviour to us before 1977, and as for their behaviour since 1977, the government of Israel is to blame.

This is a serious charge, and Mr. Eban cannot deny its grim validity. The facts are all there in black and white. One would imagine that, faced with the implications and possible consequences of his pronouncements for our sorely tried and embattled people, he, as one of its leaders, albeit in opposition, would show at least some sign of contrition. He does nothing of the sort. He devotes most of his next article (October 22) to a "counter-attack" on me, in the patent hope that this will divert attention from the charge against him.

It is possible that he does not grasp its gravity? Wonderfully, in this latest article, he manages to issue a new, specific *kashrut* certificate – to *The Times* of London. Mr. Eban could be forgiven for not remembering when he wrote "Dangerous Decision" that, in a leader on the downing of the Libyan aircraft in February 1973, that paper indulged in a piece of character assassination directed explicitly against the Jewish people and its (Labour) leaders. It proclaimed that there were two Israels – the original civilized and idealist culture, and now the new "Israel of the ex-generals . . . created not by idealism but by war."

But now, with my complete quotation of the obscene passage in front of him, he brushes it aside as "mere criticism of that action, which tells us nothing about the basic

attitude of the critic towards Israel and the Jewish people.” It seems unbelievable, but there it is in cold print. Ten years after the event, Mr. Eban wipes the anti-Semitic spittle off his face, and off Israel’s face, and pretends it was only legitimate “criticism.”

Nevertheless, in the course of his article, he does substantiate the main burden of my charge – though the manner of his doing so does not enhance his credibility. My article had recalled to his attention the hostile behaviour of the international community towards Israel under Alignment government. I had cited only a few salient examples: the UNESCO blackballing, Arafat at the UN assembly, the Zionist-racist equation, the shoulder-shrugging indifference of the Western governments to Israel’s dire danger in May 1967, her abandonment by the shameless European governments in October 1973. And that is only part of the dismal story.

I had to recall it because of the astonishing distortion of historic fact in Mr. Eban’s article of October 6. There he had waxed almost poetic over the idyllic behaviour of the international community towards Israel in the golden days of Alignment government. He had described them as “the days when statements of Israel’s policy and vision were received with enthusiasm and warmth throughout the international system.

Now, in reply to my detailed (though only partial) analysis, he blandly proclaims that “the proceedings of the international organizations are not strictly relevant to what I wrote on October 6.”

I LEAVE it to Mr. Eban to sort out the problem of his credibility. What is more important is that elsewhere in his article, he tells us what he himself describes as the truth. He confesses that “there were many cases of alienation from Israel in the past”; and further on he writes:

“The truth is that we used to live on two levels. There was certainly a level of antagonism and hostility, but I insist on the fact that there was also a level of warmth and understanding.”

How is it that in his earlier article he omitted to mention that there were *any* “occasions of alienation”? Why in that article did he forget the interesting truth about the two levels – insisting, in fact, that there had been only one level, that Israel under Labour was a benevolent world’s blue-eyed boy? Is it because even the enemies of Israel, even anti-Semites, may be whitewashed in the holy cause of belittling and besmirching the non-Alignment government of the Jewish State? Nowhere in his article does Mr. Eban indicate any other motive.

His “attack” on me does bear obliquely on one important question relevant to our argument. He asserts that I have a theory that “the whole world is against us and always was.” This is a fabrication made out of whole cloth.

It ignores everything I have been saying and writing on the subject for years. In Israel and the U.S., I have incessantly promoted the theme that Israel, for a variety of good American (and Western) reasons, both political and moral, has a vast constituency of friends, large enough to provide a security belt against built-in tendencies in U.S. administrations that are inimical to Israel.

Hence my incessant criticism of the Alignment government and more emphatically, of the Likud, for failing to establish adequate machinery to mobilize and activate that tremendous heterogeneous constituency. This complex purpose cannot be achieved except by a powerful, authoritative government information ministry. That is, in

brief, the idea of a “machine” of which Mr. Eban speaks with contempt and which, according to a poll published in *The Jerusalem Post* on September 17, enjoys the support of 87.6 per cent of the people.

The information failure, demonstrated tragically time after time, has been a considerable factor in the easy propaganda successes of the Arabs and the other enemies of Israel; and it is one reason why the situation has gone from bad to worse. The Alignment governments laid the foundations of failure, and the Likud, which continued the process, must bear a large share of the blame. There is one factor, however, which Mr. Eban and his colleagues have no right to overlook: the inspiration provided for Israel’s enemies, and the doubts sown in the minds of objective observers and of friends, by vilifying pronouncements from Labour Alignment leaders, far exceeding the bounds of political criticism, against the Likud and Mr. Begin personally.

This phenomenon accompanied Mr. Begin and his party long before they came to power. Here is a sample of Mr. Eban’s own performance. Shortly after the Yom Kippur War, he was interviewed by the prestigious weekly *The New Republic* (March 23, 1974). After he had declared that had Mr. Begin been a member of the government there would not have been a cease-fire and that “it would only have made possible a government of continual war,” he was asked if Begin could win in new elections. He replied:

*“The people of Israel will never elect a government of that kind, never, because basically the people do not want a policy of endless bloodshed.”*

With reams of such material in their Begin dossier, the foreign media were able, within hours of his victory in the 1977 elections, to disseminate an “authoritative” profile of Begin and the prospective government of the Jewish State. The irresponsible hate campaign has continued to this day. Only a fortnight ago (October 14), Professor Shlomo Avineri, a leading Labour academic, published a scurrilous – and mendacious – attack on Mr. Begin, his background and philosophy, precisely in the *International Herald Tribune*.

MR. EBAN remarks in his article that “the world’s hostility and friendship are variables, and one of the factors that influence them is the way that Israeli governments decide, speak and act.” This is true.

Has Mr. Eban ever asked himself, then, how it came about that the “world” launched such a horrendous campaign of vilification against Mr. Begin the day after the 1977 election – long before he had formed a government at all? And to what extent he – Mr. Eban – and his friends were responsible for the mountain of prejudice built up over the years against the future prime minister?

Does he not sense now into what kind of moral and intellectual bog the reckless dictates of partisan hatred can lead? Will he and his friends not ask themselves now, with so much damage done, whether – without surrendering any right of legitimate criticism – the time has not come to say to themselves: “Enough!”

*Reader’s letter, 31 October 1982*

ABBA EBAN

*To the Editor of the Jerusalem Post*



Sir, – I often applaud Shmuel Katz’s gadfly jabs at moves of policy, wherever they are in the political spectrum

But he strained his credibility in my eyes with his attack on the views of Abba Eban (Loves that Labour Lost, *The Jerusalem Post* Oct. 15). As I expected, he was promptly and roundly put down by the latter (Israel’s image – then and now – *The Jerusalem Post* Oct. 22).

Whether he speaks or writes, Abba Eban is one of our ablest leaders.

I trust Mr. Katz has learned, as others have, that one must think twice before presuming to take on Mr. Eban in a duel of words.

AB KRAMER

Jerusalem.

*Reader’s letter, 5 November 1982*

#### LABOUR GOVERNMENT

*To the Editor of the Jerusalem Post*

Sir, – I read with great interest Abba Eban’s reply to Mr. Shmuel Katz’s article, published in your Oct. 22 issue.

As he points out with great lucidity, Labour governments took great pains to ensure that they could count on “world opinion” even when “governments” pulled away from Israel by the weight of their interests as they conceived them.

Mr. Eban is a master of language and argument. I therefore am unable to understand why his reply did not relate to that part of Mr. Katz’s article which, to my mind, brought out in all clarity the utility of such policies.

In his article, Mr. Katz pointed out that the world community watching Israel’s dire distress in the Yom Kippur War refused to grant American planes to bring urgent supplies to Israel (while continuing themselves to supply arms to Arab States) despite the fact that the Labour government had paid in advance the price in soldiers’ lives, by not taking pre-emptive action.

The Labour government’s action in playing to the gallery of world opinion at a terrible price did not buy us anything when the moment of crisis came, and the “warmth and enthusiasm” that the Labour government cultivated with such assiduity did not avail us one little bit.

Mr. Eban’s reply should have provided an answer to this. In its absence I am forced to the conclusion that the policy of chasing after the “warmth and enthusiasm of world opinion” for Israel has the same value as seeking the proverbial mirage in the desert.

S. F. TWENA

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