

EARL RAAB

Candid Comments

President Ford And Auschwitz

Dear President Ford:

It was obvious that you were deeply and genuinely moved by your visit to Auschwitz last week.

As you undoubtedly learned, this was a place at which 20,000 innocent people were often killed in one day. They called this mass murder: Sonderbehandlung ... Special Handling.

There are many meanings to Auschwitz, some not yet fathomed. But one meaning for current affairs is very clear. Auschwitz and the modern State of Israel are inseparable. It would be the sheerest sentimentality to be moved by Auschwitz without relating its meaning to Israel. That meaning began several years before the Auschwitz camp was established, in July, 1938, when a conference was held at Evian-les-Bains, to see the extent to which the enlightened nations of the world would accept refugees from Nazism. The premise of the Conference was soon established; "No country would be expected or asked to receive a greater number of immigrants than is permitted by the existing legislation."



Raab

The results were predictably meager. Australia agreed to accept 5000 a year for several years. Other countries of Europe and the Americas were just as open-hearted. The United States accepted a total of about 65,000 Jewish refugees in 1938 and 1939- and that as a result of special pressures, five times as much as it had accepted in the five preceding years.

The insignificance of the figures of acceptance was pointed up by the one exception at the conference, the tiny Dominican Republic, which agreed to accept about as many refugees as all the other countries put together.

The infamous receiving platform at Auschwitz was swollen many times over by those who should have been elsewhere. Auschwitz is as much a memorial to this rejection by the world as it is to the Nazi mass murder itself. The experience of that rejection is unforgettably built into the experience of Israel.

You went from Auschwitz to Helsinki, Mr. President, where the brutal, unprovoked take-over of whole countries in Middle Europe by Soviet troops was sanctified. Yet, the desire of Israel, pending peace agreement, to hold onto a few miles of buffer, acquired in counter-attack against aggression, is called "intransigent." Intransigent, then, must have been those who wished to flee the shadow of Auschwitz. And intransigent are those resist the over-arming of Jordan (according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff) at a time when arms are being withheld from Israel.

Most Israelis are rather reasonably convinced by Evian-les Bains and

Auschwitz that if they lose Israel, they will not have any place to live. The P.L.O. has clearly stated that the only Jews who can stay in Israel are those who were there before 1948. Maybe that is just rhetoric with which the major Arab nations will not agree. But those Arab nations have not rejected the P.L.O. proposition, nor have they ever consented to recognize the existence of the Israelis by as much as sitting across the table from them in formal conference.

Everyone knows how difficult your job is, Mr. President, and how complicated is the conduct of foreign affairs. But sometimes it is necessary to touch base with the simple elementals. The direct relationship between Auschwitz and the State of Israel is one of those elementals.