

Earl Raab

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SILVER LININGS

There are some obvious strains between the United States and Israel, but it is worthwhile to note that everything is *not* going to *Gehinnom* in a handbasket.

The U.S. House of Representatives just voted solid support of Israel, for example, and did so rather pointedly. The foreign aid bill was passed, with Israel as the single largest beneficiary. Over 2 billion dollars was for Israel, in military sales credits and economic assistance. The aid bill was subjected to a 10 percent cut across the board, but the provisions for Israel and Egypt were exempted. Syrian aid was deleted altogether, partly because of Syria's support for the PLO.

This foreign aid bill was passed handily, 221-147. That vote, as always, under-represents the extent of support for Israel. A number of Congressmen opposed to various aspects of foreign aid, for fiscal or ideological reasons, vote against foreign aid bills in protest, but say explicitly that if Israel's aid were threatened, they would not do so.

Something else happened this time. Congressman Pete McCloskey, from the South Peninsula, proposed cutting Israel's aid by 150 million as a sign of opposition to the West Bank settlements. (He says that the Israeli government spends that amount on the West Bank.) However, he found that he had little support among Congressmen. So he proposed a weaker amendment indicating the "sense of Congress" against expenditure of any of its funds on the West Bank. Again, he found little support, so he just initiated a "dialogue" on the floor of the House.

In that dialogue, the prevailing point of view put the matter in perspective, whatever one may think of the settlements. A typical comment was Congressman Jack Kemp's: "Who has really stood in the way of peace? Is it Israel and the settlements, or is it, indeed, the intransigence of some of the immoderate rejectionist Arab states?" The aid bill passed without any mention of the settlements.

McCloskey, incidentally, finally voted in favor of the aid bill, as he has for most aid to Israel in the past. Indeed, the Northern California delegation of 17 Congressmen voted overwhelmingly for the aid bill. The total Congressional split was 60 per cent in favor, 40 per cent against. The Congressional split in Southern California, with its large Jewish population, was 55 per cent in favor, 45 per cent against. *The Northern California split was 85 per cent in favor, 15 per cent against.* The Jewish community in Northern California has always paid special attention to its representatives in Congress from this area. In illustration, the first regional chapter of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee was set up by us in this area.

The only two Northern California Congressmen who voted against the aid bill were Shumway of the Modesto Valley and Dellums of the East Bay. Dellums's attitudes are friendly towards Israel, but he almost always votes against any kind of foreign military aid as a matter of principle. Philip Burton of San Francisco is, of course, one of Israel's staunchest supporters in Congress; and the other Congressmen from the West Bay -- John Burton, Mineta and Clausen -- voted for this aid bill. The former have customarily voted for the foreign aid bills which include Israel, but it is of note that Clausen normally has voted against foreign aid bills. He reversed himself on this bill which features Israel so prominently. George Miller of the East Bay also has a mixed record in supporting

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foreign aid bills, but voted for this one. As far as this part of the country is concerned, official U.S./Israel relations don't seem to be deteriorating.

There is another note on that score which confounds conventional wisdom. Under the aegis of this community's mass media project, a survey of newspapers in Northern California has been conducted over recent months. The monitors have been people who are very sensitive to negative images about Israel. Their survey showed that 44 per cent of the editorials were favorable to Israel; 15 per cent were unfavorable; and 41 per cent were "fairly balanced." Their survey also showed that 12 per cent of the news stories seemed slanted to favor Israel; 9 per cent seemed slanted against Israel; and 79 per cent were fairly balanced or neutral.

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