

Status Of Israel: Shaky But Not Lost

By Earl Raab

("Candid Comments" Columnist)

The crowd that jammed into San Francisco's Veterans Auditorium last Sunday was grim. And with good reason. Israel is in a more precarious position than it has faced since the creation of the State. This does not mean that Israel is going to be destroyed. All is not lost, by a long shot.

But the situation is precarious.

It's precarious because the Arab nations decided that they are

going to take the road to war once again, not the road to peace. They made this decision at their conference the other day. Their decision was made clear by the intolerable demand that Israel must negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Arab decision for war was based on the ascendancy of oil.



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The Arabs were reassured by the collapse of all the Western nations except the United States, in the face of the P L O demand. The Arab decision for war was also based on the massive arms supply which the Soviet Union is happily providing. The Arab decision for war was also partly based on the belief that the United States would stop short at some critical point in supporting Israel—because of oil and because of the internal condition of our country.

That may be their mistake. It is not at all clear that the United States is going to "sell Israel down the river." If the United States loses this round to the Soviet Union, we might as well pull up our shores and wait for 1984. This loss would historically mark the sharp decline of the United States, the decline of democratic life around the world, the definitive moral bankruptcy of the world, the end of the possibility of world peace. The majority of the American political leadership knows these truths, the defeated Fulbright to the contrary notwithstanding, and will not collapse as easily as some fear. There's too much of our own national interest at stake.

Meanwhile, the top priority of the organized San Francisco Jewish community, is to support that current American position, and the understanding of America's self-interest stake in the preservation of Israel. We have reason to be deeply concerned, but we cannot allow generalized anxiety to take the place of activity.

Some of that generalized and paralyzing anxiety is felt by people who are not closely enough involved with the organized Jewish community to know what is actually being done ... the constant educational work being done with all the Congressmen in this area, and other political leaders. That is where the real action is ... The constant educational work being done with those in this area who most influence the public leaders: labor leaders, business leaders, religious leaders, mass media leaders ... the mass of informational material that is going out to these people, to schools, to every source of organizational life ...

Aside from the category of the paralyzed, there is the category of the "hot-doggers." Hot-dogging, in ski parlance, describes those who don't get any place in particular, but who get a kick out of doing somersaults and other exotic tricks. In social action, hot-doggers are often those who just don't want to do the hard work that's required. Here's a partial hard work check-list, for example:

Have you written or wired your Congressman on the P L O issue? If you don't think that is the most important single thing an individual can do, then you haven't talked to a Congressman lately.

Have you written a letter-to-the-editor commenting on the issue? The newspapers receive many more than they publish—but the more received, the better the odds.

Have you taken the occasion to talk to your friends, neighbors, business associates? Have you asked them to send a letter, sign a petition?

Have you become well-informed enough to handle the above activity? Do you know the difference between the P L O and the Palestinian Arabs in general? Do you know what a "Palestinian" is? Can you quote Arafat on Israel? Can you explain the American self-interest in the Middle East? That information is available, well-packaged, from the JCRC, or many of the organizations that belong to the JCRC, whichever one you belong to. That organization can also extend the individual activity check-list for you.

The situation *is* serious and precarious. The situation is *not* lost. Israel is *not* supine. The United States has *not* defected. Intensive supportive work *can* be done to help keep that from happening, if it is workmanlike and not just hot-dogging. Much of that intensive work *is* being done. More needs to be done. Individuals *can* help, if they are willing to do the hard work.