

TALE OF TWO TRAGEDIES

it is significant how often a headline event which affects America, affects Israel and the Jews as well.

The Korean airliner tragedy has had a global significance, of course. To sustain its civilized values, the world has to express its strong revulsion at acts of this kind. In that regard, the vote for civilized values scarcely won out this time around. It is instructive to mark the difference between the world's reaction to the tragedy of the Korean airliner, as compared with the tragedy of the Libyan airliner shot down by the Israelis in 1973, about which there have been several references in the past weeks.

You will remember that a Libyan airliner was forced down by Israeli planes over the Sinai in that year, and 106 men, women and children were killed in the crash. The Israelis said that Libya considered itself in a state of war against Israel, and that only weeks before, Arab terrorists had publicly threatened to send an airplane filled with bombs to crash into an Israeli city. Against that background, when the Libyan plane did not respond to signals, the Israeli planes caused the Libyan plane to go down, and the tragedy ensued.

Nevertheless, despite the mitigating circumstances, the Israeli government publicly indicated that it had been a tragic mistake, expressed its profound sorrow and offered reparations to the families of the victims "in deference to humanitarian considerations."

Nevertheless, the UN proceeded to consider a resolution to condemn Israel for her action. The United States tried to change the language from "condemn" to "deplore," but that change was not accepted, and the vote was unanimous, except for Israel.

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In the case of the Korean airliner, a resolution was introduced at the UN Security Council which did not even consider the word "condemn," started with "deplore" and scarcely mentioned the Soviet Union. And even that resolution barely squeaked through by one vote, after some American arm-twisting. In such a fashion are human rights captive to international politics.

And in such a fashion is the fate of Soviet Jews captive to international politics. Few Soviet Jews are getting out these days -- a hundred or so a month as against the several hundred thousand who have expressed their desire to do so. And key Jews such as Shcharansky are still painfully in prison. That is a reflection of the low state of relations between the Soviet Union and the United States. And relations have become worse since the Korean airliner.

Strange as it may seem, this is the time to mount the most vigorous protest about the captivity of those Soviet Jews. This is the time to let the Soviet Union -- and the Soviet Jews -- know that we are not throwing up our hands, and never will. This is the time to let the American public and public officials know that this remains an important item on our agenda. Someday the U.S./USSR relationship will shift and we cannot then be in a position of starting from scratch.

So, more important than ever, will be the annual Simchat Torah Soviet Jewry Rally and Street Fair, to be held on Sunday, October 2, 1983 at the Soviet Consulate at 2790 Green Street, from 10 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The Board of Supervisors has closed off the street for the occasion. As many as a thousand religious school students will be there. If you never have before, join them this year in a massive show of solidarity for Soviet Jewry.