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THE "PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION"

Last week, several hundred people marched up Market Street shouting slogans and handing out leaflets headed: "In the Name of God." The leaflet attacked Sadat and Carter as prisoners of Zionism, and ended with the slogan: "Long live the Palestinian revolution."

Jews often spend too much time making an industry of tragedies in their past; and too little time trying to fend off the tragedies that loom in their future. Too many Jews don't even know who the enemy is.

The enemy was on Market Street last week. If there is another catastrophe in the near future of the Jews, it will come from those people and the forces they represent.

The leaflet stated that the "Islamic movement, the true defender of the oppressed people, is spreading over the world, and the dark age of exploitation, colonialism and dictatorship is coming to its end." There is evidence that their "movement" may indeed be the wave of the future. But the movement is not so much Islamic, as it is nationalism and political ideology overlaid with Islam. The same movement can be found in the Catholic countries of Latin America.

It is a movement which was bound to come, just as the violent upheavals of the 1960s in America were bound to come; both inevitable heritages of long histories of massive injustice. Anticipating the American upheaval, Thomas Jefferson said, in considering slavery: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God's justice cannot sleep forever."

It was this generation's fate to be present when the American explosion took place; and now, too, when the world explosion is taking place. America's took place within a society whose values and institutions may have been able to accommodate it, grow with

it. The world explosion is not so cushioned, is often anarchic or subject to demagogic manipulation.

If there is one symbolic pivot of this movement, it is "the Palestinian revolution," and not just for the Muslim world. Two weeks ago, in San Francisco, a Market Street demonstration with respect to San Salvador also bore anti-Israeli signs.

The "Palestine revolution," by its own working definition, means the dismantling not only of Israel but of the Jewish population in Israel. The "movement" is cemented together by its opposition to America, western democracy, a Jewish state and Zionism (working definition: world Jewry) -- all seen as part of the same package. That movement is Jewish survival's most formidable enemy.

Does this mean that Jews stand opposed to Palestinian Arab aspirations for self-determination? No, but Jews in their right mind must be opposed to the "Palestinian revolution" which has as its target millions of Jews and the democratic world which protects millions more.

The problem is to distinguish between the "movement's" highly freighted "Palestinian revolution," and the straightforward aspirations of Palestinian Arabs. Because we reject the former does not mean that we are callous to the latter. Nor can we afford callousness. Those Palestinian Arabs are not our enemy; that "Palestinian revolution" is our enemy.

Our enemies want to blur that distinction. They are increasingly and witlessly assisted by friends and fellow-Jews who fail to make the distinction. But the chances are that if that distinction doesn't hold, neither will the world.