



BUSTED

Let down by leaders of state's Jews

AT A TIME when Delaware's Jewish community and its non-Jewish friends need guidance in evaluating the recent massacre in Beirut, the top echelon of the Jewish Federation of Delaware has dismally failed us all.

All last week, the international and national press and the Delaware press were discussing the pros and cons of the senseless slaughter of men, women, and children in Beirut.

In Israel, thousands of Jews were voicing their anger at Prime Minister Menachem Begin and particularly at his war lord, Ariel Sharon, demanding their resignation and an independent full-scale inquiry into what happened in Beirut and who was responsible.

At the same time, Israeli newspapers were also demanding the resignation of Begin and Sharon. Also rabbis in various parts of the country and national columnists, including William Safire who has been a strong supporter of Israel, its Begin government and Ariel Sharon, have come out with strong criticism of Israel's involvement in the slaughter, indirect as that involvement may have been.

So naturally, the obvious question in Delaware was: Where does the Jewish Federation of Delaware stand on this very acute question?

The Jewish Federation of Delaware, composed of every Jewish agency in the state, is traditionally called on to provide guidance in problems affecting Jews and the state of Israel. One arm of the Jew-

ish Federation of Delaware is the Community Relations Council, which is supposed to provide such leadership.

But it was not until last Friday, when a News-Journal reporter prodded Delaware's Jewish leaders, that the federation expressed its view on the Beirut killings. It seemed to me that the Jewish leadership would have already been prodding the News-Journal papers to publish its views on the tragedy.

What did the leaders of the Jewish Federation of Delaware come up with eventually?

A statement by Paul Fine, president, expressing concern "at the many and serious accusations being directed at Israel in terms of its supposed responsibility for the massacre."

Even while Fine was saying that "the facts are still not known; therefore we are in complete agreement with those who are urging that a full and just inquiry be made of this event in order to document and ascertain the facts," sufficient facts had already been revealed that the Israel Defense Force could not really be absolved from all blame.

Up in Hamden, Conn., Rabbi Robert E. Goldburg had already written a letter to the New York Times, calling for Israel to atone for its present leadership.

"At the same time", Rabbi Goldburg added, "the Pope and all Christians as well should join in the atonement for the atrocities committed by the so-called Christian Phalangists."

And there is Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg of Temple Emanuel in Englewood, N.J., who commented last Monday, the solemn day of atonement, "They (Jews) will ask God and man for pardon but this is granted only if they clear themselves first of sin. This cannot happen so long as Israel, the center of the Jewish world, is led by those who refuse to acknowledge guilt. Israel is a great and moral country; it deserves better leaders."

In Wilmington, Michael Goldman, an attorney who is chairman of the Jewish Community Relations Council, commented chiefly about the pope having received PLO leader Arafat and merely mentioned that an investigation of the Beirut massacre should be undertaken.

A little more humility on the part of Begin and Sharon wouldn't harm them in the least at this particular time.

Anyway, with all the informational sources available to the Jewish Federation of Delaware, it seems to me that at least a more realistic consensus of views could have been reached before a News-Journal reporter called for comments.

I've been advised by a friend not to discuss the Beirut controversy in the secular press lest it continue to

generate more intensive waves of anti-Semitism in the United States. "Don't make trouble," I'm told. That is an ostrich-in-the-sand ailment.

Already newspapers with vast circulations deal out strong criticism of the Begin-Sharon combine. Widespread television coverage showing the dead in Beirut is not helping the Jewish cause a bit.

It is difficult to ignore or shove under the rug the detailed day-by-day report in last Sunday's New York Times of what happened in the refugee camps of Beirut.

The New York Times editorial Sunday stated very bluntly:

"(Israel) is a society that refuses to let its leaders avert their eyes from the blood of innocent Palestinians. Along with pained friends the world over, Israelis are struggling to hold their government to standards that no one in seven Moslem murderers in Lebanon."

Until the details of the massacre are revealed in an in-depth investigation, Jews will have to live with the opening of David Shipler's report in Sunday's New York Times: "After the events of last week, Israel may never again be able to feel the same way about itself. The belief, the conviction that Israel was somehow different, somehow special amid the brutality and hypocrisy of the world's nations, was profoundly shaken if not swept away."

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