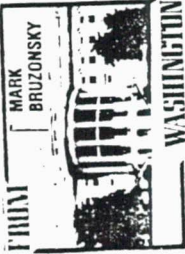


West Bank settlements the Palestinians and other issues—Mann in a storm



# Confusion and division—endemic themes of American 'united' Jewry

AN INTENSE ideological controversy has erupted within American Jewry over Israeli attitudes toward the West Bank and, indirectly, over Israel's intransigence toward the Palestinians. Alon Morei, the settlement temporarily halted by the Israeli Supreme Court, sparked the latent ten-

sion. When the chairman of the umbrella organisation known as the Presidents Conference of Major American Jewish Organizations, Theodore Mann, publicly stated a few weeks ago in Israel that American Jewry stands

united in defence of the legality and necessity of West Bank settlements, he incited revolt.

Mann had led a delegation of representatives from eight important American Jewish groups to Israel to protest against the overnight creation of Alon Morei near Nablus.

But after a few hours with Prime Minister Begin, Mann emerged to make a statement which seemed more an endorsement than a critique — though he never specifically mentioned Alon Morei.

"The total consensus in the American Jewish community is that settlements in Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan are

legal," Mann insisted. Later he added, "I won't change my mind about it (the legality and the need for settlements in all the territories), no matter how many times my good friend Jimmy Carter says the settlements are illegal."

The Israeli government headed by Begin was so overjoyed by Mann's attitude that regular TV programming was interrupted to broadcast his statement.

When another American Jew visiting in Israel — Leonard Fein, editor of *Moment* magazine — criticised Mann in a TV interview,

the Prime Minister's Press Adviser, Shlomo Nakkidimon

phoned the TV actually in the middle of the interview with Fein and demanded to have the following statement read:

"As one who attended the Premier's meeting with the American Jewish delegation (led by Mann), I wish to emphasise that the delegation expressed the full support of the majority of American Jewry for the government's policy."

Fein was among the more than 60 prominent American Jews who then signed a public letter to Begin denouncing Israel's West Bank settlement policy. The letter was to appear as a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*, but due to last minute pressures it

was decided instead to publish the letter only in Israel.

Meanwhile, two other American Zionist leaders, incensed by Mann's comments, directly challenged him. Professor Allen Pollack, President of the Labour Zionist Alliance, and Frieda Lemman, President of the Pioneer Women, both constituent members of the Presidents Conference, stated:

"There is no consensus in the American Jewish community or even in the Conference of Presidents regarding the Israel government's settlement policy. There are deep divisions in our community as there are in Israel, as is understandable in the face of so controversial a policy."

What may be the most impressive ideological challenge, however, came from Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a man with impeccable Zionist credentials.

Hertzberg is not only a past President of the American Jewish Congress, but is currently a Vice-President of the World Jewish Congress, professor of Jewish his-

tory at Columbia University, founder of the American Jewish Policy Foundation, and a renowned author of such books as *The Zionist Idea* and *Being Jewish in America*.

In a provoking speech at the Georgetown University Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on June 21, Hertzberg warned that the second Jewish Temple was destroyed by the overzealousness of the Jews of that era.

Begin's "messianic politics... won't be stopped except by force majeure," he confided. Right-wing Zionism's settlement activity "is not going to be stopped by ideological debate," he added. "It's going to be stopped only by the inner dialectic of the political process," he insisted with an eye to U.S. pressures.

Many in the audience were reminded of the pleas made for many years by even a more senior Zionist statesman, Nahum Gold-

man, who has suggested to American presidents, the need to lay down the law with the Israelis

when it comes to continuing Zionist expansionism.

In his talk, Hertzberg went on to warn both sides firmly that they "must go beyond convictions with pragmatic attitudes or else be saved."

"When Satan wants to destroy the world," Hertzberg added, "he seduces man into destroying the world by putting it into his head to do what is clearly a good and he deed and to do it at the wrong time, in the wrong context, and thus be totally destructive."

The challenge to the fanatics of Israel's Gush Emunim was strikingly felt.

Since this distinguished Rabbi emerged as the liberal conscience of moderate American Zionism his open letter to Prime Minister Begin which appeared on the front-page of Israel's leading daily *Ha'aretz* on June 17, is of special significance.