

תזמורת אחת ובה כלים רבים

מלקולם הונליין

Steve Cohen is not banned by the Presidents Conference, as he mentioned and the fact that we don't invite him does not mean anything. He has made a unique contribution to the Jewish community and has given sociologists a good name. We are in debt to him for his incredible research.

I am always very jealous of people who can approach the issues with which we deal from an academic platform. It reminds me of the joke about Dr. Michael DeBakey, the famous heart surgeon. He had his automobile fixed and the mechanic, lying under the car, said to him: Dr. DeBakey, I do the same thing you do, I change the valves, I move the organs around. How come you make the big dollars? Dr. DeBakey turned to him and said: Just try doing it with the motor running.

We have to work with the motor running. There are people who study it and whose findings are very relevant and important, but the real world is often very different.

In a radio interview I had before coming here, the interviewer asked: tell us in one word how is it in Israel? I said: good. He said: O.K. in two words? I said: not good. I think that is probably the only way that you can really sum up what is going on. The only thing predictable today is that nothing is predictable and that we live in one of the most complex and important times in recent history, maybe even in the last 60 years. Forums like this one are important to sort through the complex time, the maze of events, the flow of information and to try and put things into context and into perspective. One of the things that make us unique as Jews is the

way we approach history. We do not just read history, we experience history. Our year cycle is not only geared to ritual observance, it is meant to be experiential. We experience what previous generations went through, not because we enjoy dwelling on the Jewish past troubles (צרות), but because we want to learn the lessons of the past, to prevent similar suffering from future generations. Jews look back in order to look forward. Remembering, זכירה, is unique to Judaism, because it applies to the future. We remember the future, because we know that what we do today determines the future. Remembering is a notion that goes through all our holidays. We celebrate Pesach זכר ליציאת מצרים. In שבועות, we remember מתן תורה. The word זכר is the key word on יום השואה. It is not נקמה, it is not revenge. It is: remember! Remembrance is central in Jewish life; it gives us a perspective to understand the world in ways that other can not.

This is the reason why for 12 years we have tried to make the case about Islamic fundamentalism to presidents, to leaders of Congress, to secular leaders, religious leaders. Seven years before the invasion of Kuwait we warned about the danger of Sadam Hussein, while the United States was providing him with weapons and arms, even with Antrax. Without the sense of זכירה the policy turns to be reactive rather than proactive. We, Jews, react to events in America; and if American policy makers had listened, we could have stopped Sadam Hussein without spending a 100 billion dollars and having multi-nation coalitions. Because the Western world lacks our context of understanding, they do not perceive the chaos and see the dangers. Jews cannot afford that, particularly at this cross-roads in Jewish history, when I believe we are on the best times or the worst of times, for all of the concerns we have, facing the global danger.

The former head of the CIA recently called the current crisis World War IV, World War III being the war against Communism. He described it as a global war, which is not less dangerous, even if less obvious. People do not perceive it in all of its realities. Most of the war zones these days are Islamic wars. It seems that except for Iceland and Greenland, there is no part of the globe that has not been touched by it. The manifestations of the global war are not less serious. In the writings of Bernard Lewis or Robert Wistrich, one may see that at the core of Islamist fundamentalist ideology is Nazism. Their ideologies are identical. This war will define the fate of the 21st century, the security of our children and our grandchildren.

For Israelis this was not news. You have faced this war for 100 years, as Prime Minister Sharon told me today. At least for 50 years the State has been fighting on the forefront without an international coalition, without tens of billions of dollars. You fight against it alone. Now Americans see themselves on the front lines, particularly American Jews. It is a new reality, one with which they have not yet come to terms.

A recent study showed that young Jews still have not overcome the trauma of September 11, 2001, or come to comprehend it. It was far beyond the experience of American history. Pearl Harbor was thousands of miles away. Here, for the first time, our cities, our borders, even our mail boxes were vulnerable. This is a new reality for Americans which they are only beginning to confront.

Victory in this world may be hard to define, but failure will be very obvious. This is a cancer that has to be uprooted in its entirety. It requires a proactive rather than reactive approach, one like that the President of the US has finally initiated.

At the time when the United States is the sole super-power in

the world, the role of those who live in the US, and particularly of the Jewish community, becomes all the more significant. This is why a discussion like the one we are having today is of special relevance.

Americans as a rule have no patience for history. We want to embrace everything in 30 minutes, not more than 60 minutes, or mini-series, nothing longer. That is not the way the world works. As a result, the predominant trend is ignorance, lack of knowledge. Our elected officials don't know facts. They have no sense of history or geography. Most high school graduates do not know where New Jersey is.

This brings me to the sensitive subject of the American-Jewish political power. I know that American Jews and even Israelis do not like the term and are embarrassed by it. They do not like to see articles about it in the New York Times, or the Wall Street Journal.

We know, I hope it does not go out of this room, that Jewish power is a myth. Our job is to make it a legend. Jewish power is like a muscle. If you exercise it properly, you built it up, if you abuse it, you destroy it. There are those who have damaged Jewish power, willingly, sometimes unintentionally. Anti-Semites are created because Jews are power. Jews become victims when they have no power. I believe that this is the most sacred thing to the Jewish equation of ערבות. This is Jewish power, not the dollars. It is the fact that we have been privileged that there is the השגחה פרטית and that we ended up living in a country that enables people, even minorities who comprise 2% of the population, to raise their voices and influence. This is the uniqueness of the American democracy. This democratic system invites lobbying. And as most Americans do not care about foreign policy, minorities can influence the policy makers – whether they are Greeks who lobby

for Greece, Turks who lobby for Turkey, or Armenians who have had tremendous success in the Congress. It has certainly been true for the Jews. Those who care have influence, disproportional to the size of their community.

2% of American's news coverage deals with international affairs and less than 25% of Americans say they follow foreign affairs at all. For many people, foreign affairs is a reality they can not understand.

However, during the last ten days I was interviewed three times, on the BBC and other channels. All bring up the ultimate question: the Jewish lobby. No matter what we could have been talking about, the Jewish lobby becomes the main issue. They are obsessed with it, and I have confronted them many times about this obsession. They can not understand why America should be so pro-Israel, unless there is some sort of a conspiracy. This takes on even greater significance, particularly because America is so powerful.

Jewish power is growing, not diminishing and it is becoming more sophisticated and more informed. Abba Even once said that in World War II Jews had influence in many places but had no power. Today Jews have power because the world says we have power.

Power in politics is based upon perception, not reality. Amongst ourselves we know the reality. As long as the rest of the world does not know, we have power.

Last week the President of Madagascar visited me in my office, together with most of his cabinet. At the end of the meeting I said to the Minister of Finance: I understand you are Jewish. He said: Oh yes, I am Jewish. I said: Really? And the Minister of Trade, who sat next to him, said: I am Jewish also. The head of the

Chamber of Commerce, who was sitting next to the president, said: We are all Jewish. I said: All of you? And the president said: The whole country. So I said: Why are we wasting all this money in Israel, we already had a country. Who knew? I called the Foreign Ministry and said: Does anybody know that we have another Jewish State? Are we representing both? Nobody knew. They sent me 40 pages of documentation about the Jewish history. According to their story, after the destruction of the First Temple, when Jews came back from Babel, they made a right turn at Cyprus, ending up in Madagascar. When Jews came back after the destruction of the Second Temple, Jews went to Ethiopia and some of them continued to Madagascar.

You wonder how they see the world. Do they have not enough צרות, do they need this too? The answer is that they look at the world and say to themselves: who has the power in the world?

When the Prime Minister of South Korea came here and announced diplomatic relations with Israel, he turned to Shimon Peres, who was at the time the Foreign Minister, and surprised him with a question: will you introduce us to the American Jewish Community?

It is all because the world perceives us as powerful. Nobody asks how many troops the Pope has. The Pope has power because the world says he has power. We have power because the world says we have power. The question is: do we use it responsibly? Interesting is the fact the National Security Council of Israel determined that this is part of Israel's security essence.

The entire world marvels at it. It is not just Madagascar. When the Prime Minister of China came to New York, he asked to meet only with one group, that was us. I asked him, if it was because all the Jews are eating in Chinese restaurants. He said that there are

two great powers in the world: the Chinese people, 1.2 billion, and the Jewish people, 12 million. Later he said: I know there are less of you, but you are so powerful, you are so important. Every country envies this asset (except Israel). The only place where it's diminished is in the Israeli media. The only place where it seems not to be appreciated to have this kind of an asset, in a country that gives minorities the right to be involved and influence, is Israel.

The Jewish community in the US shifted from the individual, who dominated for the first 200 years, specifically after World War II, to organizations. It seems to be shifting now again away to more individual activities, to a different commitment to organizations, though not all organizations are diminishing. It seems also that the number of those who are more politically oriented is growing. And that has been expressed in a number of ways in terms of the organizational influence.

This political power places itself in America in two levels: the Administration and Congress. We do not deal with the Supreme Court. The current Administration is friendly, some describe it as the most friendly, though Bill Clinton's and Ronald Reagan's were also described as the most friendly. In light of many discussions I have had with him, I have no doubt that George W. Bush, driven by religious values, is sincerely committed to Israel as well as to the war against terrorism.

If anybody would have said when Bush was elected that Prime Minister Sharon will be visiting the White House so many times, nobody would have believed it. Bush understands the importance of the war against terrorism. It seems he understands the importance of Israel, which was only re-enforced during the war in Iraq, which God willing, one day, when historians write it, the credit will be given to all.

During the last few weeks we have seen the level of military cooperation. I visited the Patriot missile base, when they were here. It was totally different than in 1991. It was a mutuality of commitment. It was mutual commitment to defend each other, rather than just America sending here troops with missiles. I believe that this relationship becomes more and more enhanced.

The Congress is in fact the best Congress we have ever had. More than half of Congress members are people who were born after the **שואה** and after the creation of the State of Israel. They do not know what it meant for Jews not to have Israel. I have taken more than 100 senators and Congressmen to visit Israel. There is not one, when you take him to the balcony of the King David Hotel, who would not ask: now, where is the West Bank. They think it is a financial institution. They have no clue of the geography, they are not educated. But contrary to all the predictions, including our own, they are more supportive than their predecessors. When 88 senators and 370 members of the House signed letters, including the majority Republicans, against their own President, to express concern about the Roadmap, it was not a reflection only of the Jewish Lobby. It reflected the fact that the message that we put out, the legitimacy of the concerns we express, resonate with them and with the American people. Today two thirds of the American people support Israel, the largest number in 20 years, except for a brief period in 1992, during the first Iraq war, when the support climbed to 79%. This is five times more support than that given to the Palestinians, despite all the distorted media coverage. But we can not take it for granted. We can not assume that it will continue. The fact that the Republicans and Democrats compete over the support of the Jews and over Jewish money is very positive, and we want both to know that we

are not in their pockets. The days when people were strongly reluctant to vote for the Republican are over. Jews do not vote labels anymore, rather they vote for the individual. They look for the values that people represent. But for most American people the Middle East is like Northern Ireland, they have difficulties to distinguish between the opposing sides. There has been an increasing moral equivalency in the presentation of terrorism and those who fight against terrorism.

We identify with Israel, we are concerned about Israel, some of us even love Israel. We have the unique addition of a Christian community, tens of millions of whom are very devoted to the Jewish community in many ways. Some among us are concerned about the philosophy of the Christian community. I agree that in the future there might be a reason to worry. Right now we need their support. Tens of millions of people write to the President, participate in marches and demonstrations. 200,000 came to that demonstration in Washington, which was on the front pages of the newspapers in every country of the world except Israel. It was the largest demonstration ever organized for Israel, with the participation of the President's personal representative, with thousands of Christians, blacks, Hindus and others, who expressed solidarity with Israel. They fear for Israel's security and their own security. When the Imam in Gaza declared that Jews wherever they were should be killed, it was a message to American Jewry as well.

When Anti-Semitism in Europe broke out, it reached the US as well. The FBI reported about one thousand incidents of racial crimes. A hundred cases against Jews and 490 cases against Moslems. From the media coverage, one would believe that Moslems were far more at risk than Jews in this regard.

Our community was never monolithic, and it certainly is not

today. I believe our diversity is the source of strength and it is part of our security. Nevertheless, the guiding principle has to remain unity, אחדות. Our strength lies being unified, though not necessarily homogenous.

When יעקב blessed his children, he called us. He said: You are a nation in a community of nations. In the outside world we always have to be a united people, גוי אחד, even if among ourselves we are קהל גויים. Through the ages, every great miracle that has happened to the Jewish People, from הר סיני until now, was when Jews stood together. United, the Jews can overcome every challenge. The whole exceeds the sum of the parts.

The Roadmap could be divisive. As we get into the process, and if, God willing, it succeeds, we may be more divided as we face the critical issues. The Oslo affect in Israel remains as does the September 11 affect.

The media is also an important component. It shapes policy, not only reporting it. It shapes perceptions. There is less trust in the media, but we have to remember that this is an important part of the perspective that has been created.

We have to offer opportunities for the orchestra of the Jewish People. They do not have to play the same instruments, but we have to play the same tunes for to create a pleasant music. We have to create room for people to vent. This is one of the things the President Conference has done, but unfortunately we are one of the few umbrella organizations of the Jewish people that are still active.

We are united by the dangers, by Anti-Semitism, terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, by incitement. We recognize that it means us. We saw it in Geneva this past month. We saw it in the Durban Conference. They make no distinction. They mean all of

us. They consider the mere existence of the Jewish people an enemy. If the Jewish people and the people of Israel struggle together, we will be victorious together or defeated together.

The Iraq war reminded us of that as well. The fact that we are able to fully participate in a democracy and to express our universal interest as well as our particular ones, gives us the access to political power the Jews never had before.

The question is how we apply it in this critical time of great challenge and great importance. Ordinary people can do extraordinary things by using the influence that has been granted. We witnessed it during the struggle for Soviet Jews, for Ethiopian Jews, for Yemenite Jews, for Iraqi Jews and most recently in saving the 13 Iranian Jews. When we mobilize the whole world, 65 countries, including almost every Moslem country, we can accomplish a lot. Many people know, that I coordinated the efforts around the world.

In 12 countries last year Americans were killed, from Bali to Yemen, including Israel and Lebanon. Where was the reaction? Christians were massacred in churches in Pakistan and Indonesia. Where was the outcry? The world has changed in 60 years, but the Jews have changed. We have learnt the lessons of the past; we are a different community in that regard.

We have extraordinary leadership, much better than we give ourselves credit for. There is no community in the world that can be compared to it. Jews around the world standing together are a tremendous force. It is time for European Jewry to mobilize. We are trying to educate them and work with them to create a lobby in Europe, because Europe is going to play a more important role in the coming years.

There was recently a Moslem Jewish gathering in Kazakhstan.

Leon Levy, the past Chairman of the Presidents Conference, and other leaders of the American Jewish community met with representatives of six Moslem countries, in front of 250 diplomats and media from all over the world. The message was clear: Jews are accepted and Jews are perceived to be important. They recognize the significance of the role that we play. We have true demographic realities to confront that Steve Cohen mentioned in his speech. The core is more active, but young Jews are waiting longer to have fewer children. It means that we have to work harder to make sure that young can marry. There are a million singles in Israel, who want to marry and do not have the opportunity or have not yet found the way. This is real challenge that all of us have to face.

We also have financial problems. The community has more need to care for the elderly. The biggest challenge is apathy, indifference and ignorance.

I cannot tell you what the future will bring. The Chinese say prophecy is very difficult, especially about the future. But I have no doubt that Israel will be more and more important in its centrality in Jewish life. We know we are not equal partners as long as our children are not on the front lines, and we do not give 50% of our income to support the Jewish State. But we bring with us Jewish political power. We have a mutual responsibility to enhance our common resources for our common state. This generation created miracles, for which their grandparents and great-grandparents prayed but did not זכה to see.

We remember the words that Mosheh told Yehoshua, when he passed on the leadership: חזק ואמץ Be strong and have good courage. He did not tell him to go out to the gym and work out. He meant to be strong in convictions and have the courage to carry

them out. This is the time when our courage and our convictions will be tested. With the proper leadership recognizing the mutuality of our faith and the uniqueness of this moment, future generations will be able to look back and thank us for making a better world for them.