

MANNERS, MANNERS...

I think that Israel and its supporters should be ashamed of themselves. They stubbornly persist in violating all historical precedents and accepted rules that govern the behavior of respected nations. Israel pretends that it is puzzled by the hostility and, what they refer to as ‘unfairness’ from most of the world’s nations but they refuse to recognize that it is Israel’s own fault. Israel is an irritation, an anomaly, an annoyance that stands out as a constant reminder to the U.N. and its members that the Jews in general, and Israel in particular, refuse to engage in civilized behavior that has been the norm throughout history.

President Charles De Gaulle of France summed it up best. In 1967, in a speech a few days after the end of the 6-Day War he made it quite clear that the Jews had lost his good will by rejecting his wise advice. He had told Israel’s foreign minister, Abba Eban, that Israel shouldn’t attack its enemies. He warned Israel: “If you attack we shall condemn your action.”

Just two weeks later, rudely disregarding French advice, Israel wiped out the Egyptian air force. This confirmed De Gaulle’s view of the Jews in general, and Israelis in particular: “The Jews, until then scattered about, were still what they had always been, that is, an elite people, sure of themselves and domineering...possessed of a burning and conquering ambition”.

Israel never apologized to De Gaulle and France never forgave it. But France wasn’t alone in being a victim of Israel’s lack of manners. Israel kept disregarding the most basic rules of good behavior by insisting on continuing to exist.

Here are a just few historical examples of proper – non-Israeli - international behavior within the last 100 years:

Ethiopia has existed as sovereign country since 900 B.C.E. King Solomon, an ancient Israeli king was the father of Queen of Sheba’s son whose descendants ruled Ethiopia for the next 2800 years.

In 1936, after almost 3000 years of independent existence, Mussolini’s armies attacked and occupied Ethiopia. The army of Ethiopia’s emperor Haile Selassie was no match for the Italian air force, artillery and chemical weapons. Selassie fled and demanded to be heard by the precursor of the U.N., the League of

Nations in Geneva. His heartbreaking plea for help was broadcast worldwide and resulted in an outpouring of compassion and sympathy worldwide. Still, facts had to be faced – Britain and France, with regret acknowledged and accepted Mussolini's seizure of Ethiopia. Emperor Haile Selassie stayed in exile and it took World War II and the defeat of Italy to restore him and his country. All the participants observed good manners as an example for future diplomats.

In 1939 three more countries disappeared. Three members of the League of Nations, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, were occupied and absorbed into the Soviet Union. Ust like that they were no more. The U.S. refused to recognize their non-existence and kept their embassies open in Washington. No fuss - good manners prevailed.

Parenthetically, there was another country that was supposed to be absorbed by the Soviets under a pact signed with Germany: Finland. Apparently it wasn't schooled in good manners because – like Israel - it decided that it didn't want to disappear. It fought back, bloodied the Russian bear, eventually lost due to overwhelming odds, but stayed independent and free. Terrible manners! De Gaulle must have been furious...

The League of Nations was replaced by the United Nations in 1945 but nations kept decorously disappearing.

Biafra, a small African country, declared its independence from Nigeria in 1967. Its population – the Ibos - was a well-educated, prosperous, capable minority discriminated against by the majority Nigerian Hausas. Biafra's independence was officially recognized only by Israel and 6 African countries, its national anthem was written by Finland's Sibelius, and it received military and economic support from Portugal, France, Rhodesia and South Africa. It existed for just 3 years – 1967 to 1970 – and quietly disappeared. Sad compassionate words were said quietly in many countries and the world went on as usual. Good manners count...

Then there is/was Tibet. It existed for thousands of years, maybe even longer than the Jewish entity in the Middle East. It too disappeared after being taken over by its neighbor China – good manners and China's position in the Security Council dictated that a polite silence be observed by all. Manners, manners!

And so I am embarrassed for Israel and its obstinacy. It refuses to go away quietly and politely. It refuses to take the advice of France and the other Europeans to be nice to those who want it to disappear. It insists on having a good army and even a nuclear capability. It disregards the experts and scholars who explain, politely and persuasively, that Israel doesn't have a right to exist. It has withstood the double standard of the information media that hold Israel to a standard that no one else is expected to observe.

We are a stubborn and stiff-necked people, we the Jews. We refuse to go silent into the night. We may have no manners and we may be a disappointment to many who do not like us.

We will survive in spite of it.