

opinion/editorial

U.S. support needs evaluation

As the policies of Prime Minister Menachem Begin grow more reckless, it's clear that the United States needs to re-evaluate our support for the Begin government.

The United States has long been Israel's leading ally, but it is getting harder and harder to swallow the rantings of Begin.

Narrowly re-elected this summer, Begin campaigned throughout Israel whipping his followers into a political frenzy. The campaign against Shimon Peres of the Labor Party was full of invective and self-righteousness.

This culminated in the June 7 attack on the Iraqi reactor near Baghdad that Begin claimed was necessary to prevent Iraq from using nuclear weapons against Israel.

Israel has said it will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East but will not be the last either.

Begin's blatant political opportunism in the timing of his attack worked to his advantage as it cut support from the more rational candidacy of Peres. A country suffering from an inflation rate of 120 percent is susceptible to easy answers and the Israeli's chose Begin's.

Begin called the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear plant a "defensive action." But if his logic were carried out daily, countries throughout the Middle East and the world would be dropping bombs on each other to prevent an attack.

This schoolyard mentality will only drive the tenuous situation in the Middle East closer to another war.

Begin must learn that his cries of "Never again" serve a good political purpose, but lose their meaning when viewed through the current international situation.

The Reagan administration chose to go along with the condemnation vote in the United Nations knowing it would have little effect.

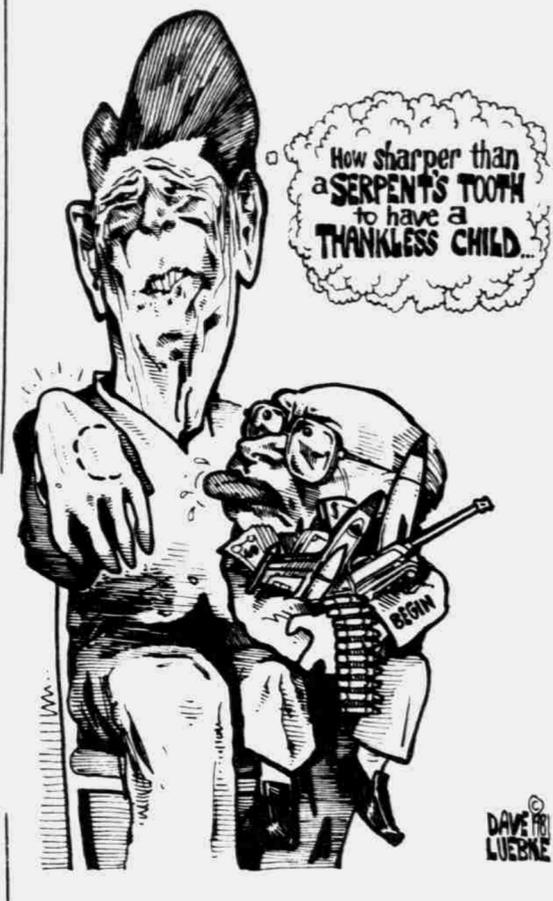
The administration then suspended the sale of 16 U.S.-built jet fighters similar to the ones used in the Iraqi attack. The subsequent investigation into the use of the planes resulted in the administration being unable to determine whether the planes were used offensively or defensively.

Clearly, the administration found itself between a rock and a hard place.

To find the Israelis responsible would have required firm action from Washington against one of our allies. But to let Israel get away with such an act of international provocation would have cast doubts to the validity of the United States' ability to intervene in the search for peace.

But now that the administration has cleared the way for Israel to receive the jets, Begin should be a little grateful to the United States for our support.

The election is safely behind him, but his majority of one in the Knesset may prove to cause more problems for Begin than if he had been defeated.



Initial heresy now ACLU orthodoxy

Roger Nash Baldwin came out of that Boston Unitarian tradition in which one is encouraged to dissent first, and ask questions later. In that milieu, it has always been an honor to be called a heretic. So Baldwin, born in 1884, grew up practicing, and defending, heresy.

During World War I he served a term in prison as a sort of conscientious objector. Nobody ever accused him of lacking guts.

Joseph Sobran

But it was hard for anyone as patrician as he was to get himself arrested: he practically forced his attentions on the police, pointing out he had as much right to be jailed as his fellow radicals of humbler stock.

It was also during this period that he formed the National Civil Liberties Bureau, precursor of the American Civil Liberties Union, for the purpose of protecting leftist radicals from persecution and prosecution, as the case might be.

He had caught the left bug from the anarchist Emma Goldman, who later exiated him for continuing to admire the Soviet system long after her own disillusionment. The '20s were the ACLU's Golden Age: the Scopes trial, Sacco and Vanzetti, a socialist movement basking in the hopes radiating from the new, improved Russia.

Baldwin was sure his ideas were those that would shape the future. He wasn't altogether wrong — nor altogether happy — when he saw how that future was turning out.

In those sunny days, though, free of doubt, Baldwin spoke cheerfully of the "class struggle" and frankly admitted the apparent inconsistency of supporting civil liberties in free countries, while defending socialist dictatorship in Russia.

The inconsistency, he contended, was only apparent. "When that power of the working class is once achieved,"

he wrote, "as it has been only in the Soviet Union, I am for maintaining it by means whatever." He defended Stalin's repressions as late as 1934 on grounds that "no champion of a socialist society could fail to see that some suppression was necessary to achieve it."

Meanwhile the ACLU, which had originally included people like Norman Thomas, Helen Keller and Felix Frankfurter, had opened its arms to Communists. One of them, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, managed to be an official of both the ACLU and the Communist Party of the United States of America — an odd sort of interlocking directorate.

Actually Mrs. Flynn had been on the ACLU's governing board from the start, and remained there until 1940, when the left, sundered by the Hitler-Stalin alliance, had an internal showdown over the issue.

Baldwin at last recognized that there was more bad in Hitler than there was good in Stalin, and forced the Communists to resign.

After World War II Baldwin helped Douglas MacArthur design a new constitution for occupied Japan, a distant outpost for Unitarian missionary work. As Baldwin looked on from retirement, the ACLU has moved back toward the left and has abandoned its old aloofness from politics.

Meanwhile, constitutional scholarship has found more and more evidence that the Bill of Rights was never intended to mean what socialists and liberals wish it had meant.

Alexander Hamilton opposed ratification of the Bill of Rights precisely because he feared the kind of misconstruction the ACLU would later indulge on a grand scale, twisting the enumerations of certain rights into a more general disparagement of liberty.

It is the perverse triumph of Roger Baldwin that his rhetorical gimmickry has made it possible for leftists, who favor maximal government, to masquerade as libertarians, who favor the minimal state.

The ACLU today supports things like forced busing — in the name of "civil liberties." Baldwin's heresy has turned out to be a rigid orthodoxy.

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Availability of gun helps breed crime

Following the shootings of John Lennon, President Reagan and Pope John Paul II, there were the expected exhortations for some type of gun control policy in the United States. As was also to be expected, with the passing of the initial emotional reactions, no steps were taken to stop the proliferation of violence in society.

Americans have become so jaded that even the most outrageous events cause little concern over what has gone wrong. Each time a public figure is shot, the degree of public indignation lessens.

It does not matter where you stand politically, the shooting of a president has tragic connotations.

It is not as if positive actions are impossible. There are already limitations on the types of weaponry a person may legally own. There are regulations requiring gun permits in many areas.

roger nimps

The argument that guns do not kill people, peopledo, and that if guns were not available killers would use knives, bats, etc., is not reason enough to make no effort to curb the spread of violence.

Gun control advocates do not contend that their policies would bring about the end of violent acts. It would simply be made more difficult for such acts to occur. There would be one less instrument available. At this time, it is too easy for *any* person to obtain a gun.

Those who believe that they need their guns to protect themselves and their property, appear to have given up on the mechanics of societal living, like official law enforcement organizations, etc. For these people there can only be a movement towards anarchy.

The point is not to have a weapon when attacked, but to create a community in which attacks do not occur. Besides, a readily available gun is just as likely to harm its owner, or some other accidental victim, as it is likely to save the television set from a prowler.

It can also be suggested that the loose availability of guns helps breed crime, rather than protecting the individual from crime. An atmosphere is created in which the gun becomes acceptable, even attractive, and there is essentially only one violent, function for the gun.

On the surface, there seems to be a foundation for some type of gun control action in the United States.

Public opinion polls continually show that a majority of Americans favor handgun registration. Many Americans are also tired of seeing their leaders become sitting ducks, or captives of their offices.

But the affection for owning guns permeates our nation, from the frontier tradition, to the odd feeling of security it gives some.

There is also that group known as the National Rifle Association, which could give the other lobbies in Washington lessons in organization, finance and power politics. Not even a rather mild form of gun control, handgun registration, has gotten by these obstacles.

Perhaps, since there is such a determinism within gun owners to keep their weapons, we should do as one lawyer has suggested, and make the owners legally responsible for their guns. (They are already morally responsible).

Everyone could keep their guns, even buy more if they desired. They would only have to notify the authorities that they have that particular gun.

Then, if any crime were ever committed with that weapon, they would be liable to the same charges as the criminal. Prospective owners would have to shy away, meaning there would be fewer guns around.

Persons who already have guns would have to guard them more carefully. The onus would be placed on those who feel the need to have a gun.

Obviously, this is an absurd solution, but it fits the present situation, and it emphasizes the impact that a gun can have. What rationale is there in allowing our cities and suburbs to become armed camps?

At the very least, handguns should be controlled, or are they needed for hunting too?

Gun control requires legislation, and a massive shift of the attitudes we have about guns. It will not end crime, or even shootings, but it will be a progressive step towards that end.

Hopefully, action can be taken without the dramatic impetus of another assassination attempt.