

Soros a Zionist? That would be great

The present right-wing leadership of the American Jewish community does not reflect majority thinking

By DAVID KIMCHE

A great amount of nonsense has recently been written about the efforts of some Jews in the US to establish a parallel organization to AIPAC. These “unrepresentative left-wing American Jewish groups” have been accused of being anti-Zionist, of undermining the State of Israel, even of treason. Nonsense.

I had a chance of meeting some of these so-called traitors during a visit I made last week to the US. They are imbued with a feeling of concern for what is happening in Israel. As one of the most vocal and active members of the group put it, “Our uppermost worry is for the security of Israel. If we do establish a new organization, it will be by definition pro-Israel, conscious of Israel’s security above all else. It will be bipartisan, centrist.”

They do not see a new organization as being a rival to AIPAC. On the contrary, they see it as a broadening of Israel’s message. “We need another organization to broaden the political debate,” I was told, “to broaden what can be said and what can’t be said, to broaden the scope of being a friend of Israel.”

Indeed, some of them have supported AIPAC financially and otherwise for years.

They are extremely conscious that the present right-wing leadership of the American Jewish community does not reflect the thinking of the majority of American Jews, many of whom are estranged from being actively involved in Jewish affairs for that reason. A recent poll showed that the majority of American Jews are progressive in their thinking, and vote for the Democrats. Two-thirds of those polled feel closeness to Israel. A majority say they are more open to compromise than the top Jewish leadership in the US. That majority believes that settlement activity should be stopped, and supports the establishment of a Palestinian state, and that reflects the belief of most Israelis.

FAR FROM being “unrepresentative” as one columnist in this newspaper put it a few days ago, these people I met a week ago reflect majority thinking among the American Jewish community much more than many of its official representatives.

Their detractors have singled out one person in order to place a mark of Cain on all of them: George Soros.

Soros has, in the past, distanced himself from everything Israeli, or has, at best, been highly critical of Israel. He has now decided to identify himself with pro-Israeli, progressive activists. His presence is controversial, but if he has converted to Zionism, that can only be commended.

AIPAC has, in truth, been highly effective in pushing through Congress Israel’s messages, and in blocking anything that might be construed as anti-Israel. It has been a vital ally in advancing Israel’s policies in the United States. There can be no doubt that without AIPAC our position in

Washington would be very much weaker. Yet over the years AIPAC's messages have become increasingly hawkish, its modus operandi ever more aggressive, to such an extent that after the elections on Tuesday, the new Congress may not accept so easily the imposed parameters with regard to everything dealing with Israel that exists today.

An additional organization could go a long way in shoring up Israel's position. Its call for the administration to be more active in promoting the peace process would be in line with what most Israelis want.

THE PEOPLE I met with believe that unless America becomes actively reengaged in the peace process Israel will very soon be engulfed in yet another war. Gaza, Lebanon, Syria are all possible flash points and above it all is the long shadow of a nuclear Iran. Renewing peace talks is, in their eyes, a matter of great urgency, and this can only be done if the US becomes much more actively involved.

That is their principal message, and they haven't decided yet whether to deliver it as a separate organization or not. That is a message that should be heeded not only in the portals of power in Washington, but also in Jerusalem.

The difficulties are easy for everyone to see. Hamas is not a partner, but Chairman Mahmoud Abbas is. We should be working out with him the parameters of renewed talks in preparation for the return of Cpl. Gilad Shalit. And the US, for its own interests, should be pulling out all stops to bring such talks to fruition.

If the efforts of the American Jews that I met last week will help to bring that about, then we should welcome their initiative and give them the support they deserve.



YOUTHFUL AMERICAN Jewish supporters of Israel. (Ariel Jerozolimski)