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Rinzai
c/o Hotel Rajneesh
1115 SW 11th Street
Portland, Oregon 97205

To whom it may concern:

Over the past six or eight years I have read many of the writings of Rajneesh and have heard his tapes. Some of my friends have become his disciples.

Although I have never met Rajneesh in person, I am convinced that he has exceptional ability, that his stay in the United States would be of considerable benefit to our country and would contribute to the general welfare.

I am not a disciple of Rajneesh but as Music Director and President of the Symphony for United Nations, I am deeply interested in world peace and improved understanding among all peoples. It is my belief that Rajneesh teaches this understanding of the oneness of humankind and contributes largely to the need for awareness of world unity.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Eger, President
Symphony for United Nations

JE/cf



Is It Good for the Jews?

MY TURN/JOSEPH EGER

Menachem Begin reminds me of my father. They look alike, talk alike and come from the same orthodox tradition. My father was so orthodox that, when the eldest of my six sisters married a non-Jew, he "sat shivah" and ordered my mother also to perform the rites for the dead.

My sister was mortally wounded by this rejection. She would surreptitiously visit me, her baby brother, as I played in the streets. My tiny heart could hardly contain the anguish and compassion I felt for her and, at the same time, for my good parents. She obediently died a few years later—of colitis, which many psychologists connect with repressed grief or anger.

Survival was the big and only question in my family when I was growing up—economic survival and survival of the Jews as a people. My grandmother judged all but strictly family affairs by one criterion: "Is it good for the Jews?"

Is Begin good for the Jews? The answer must be "No," though there is plenty of history to rationalize Begin's motivations and mindset.

In 1951, I moved to Israel to play first horn in the Israel Philharmonic. I was deeply moved to see Jews holding their heads up; in Israel we had become warriors who won the land, then farmers who turned the desert into a garden. I felt a new dignity.

Adventure: I returned to Israel in 1972 to lecture and conduct. A musician in the Haifa Symphony approached me after a rehearsal and invited me to accompany him to the West Bank. Israeli friends thought it dangerous and counseled me not to go. One said, only half facetiously, that I might be invited to an Arab tent and on turning to leave might find a knife in my back. But my sense of adventure and curiosity prevailed. We set out by foot since there was no transportation across the "border."

The two of us, an Israeli and an American Jew, were alone for three days among Arabs. My companion, born in Palestine, spoke fluent Arabic and had many Arab friends. We talked with peasants, farmers, people in the streets, in buses and cabs. We spent a fascinating afternoon with one of King Hussein's former generals and one of his doctor sons. We encountered gracious hospitality everywhere. Shopkeepers plied us with their specialties, calling us their

"Jewish cousins." Several times they refused to take money. The only reservations we encountered were from some Arabs who felt a familial hurt at being treated as second-class citizens by childhood neighbors. I left the West Bank with the impression that there was (*then*) a reservoir of good will among the Palestinians waiting to be tapped. I saw neither knives nor tents.

Back in Israel, I told friends about my experience. Their reaction shocked me. They seemed reluctant to hear positive things about people they had been taught to view as enemies. Most preferred their myths. They were suspicious when I suggested that the Arabs I met were fine, cultivated people. I soon learned to keep quiet.

We must open conversations with our Palestinian neighbors and treat them with respect.

When I returned to the United States, it was worse. Could I be a traitor because I had had friendly experiences with the enemy? Again, I kept quiet, except among carefully chosen friends.

I can no longer keep silent. I care too much about my people, as well as my Arab friends. Moreover, *all* peoples have a vital stake in the Middle East today. A conflagration there would ignite the world.

Just as my father's beliefs unwittingly contributed to the death of a loved one, so is outdated political orthodoxy contributing to the destruction of our own people. Non-Jews with whom I have shared my reservations about Begin's policies have been relieved to hear that all Jews do not monolithically support those policies. They recognize and fear the growth of anti-Semitism. The fires are stoked when a Geula Cohen makes the preposterous statement, "The Jews did not come back to Israel to be safe but to build a nation on the lands given to us by the Bible" and forces Knesset support for a new law that unnecessarily antagonizes most of the world.

The crushing burden of armaments and the seizing of land have not provided and will not provide security, either temporary or permanent. Nor will railing at the U.N. and stiff-arming the few dissidents who dare question the present Israeli Administration. Friends of Israel and the Jewish people continue to drop away; oil politics whittle away others. The result has been the accelerating isolation of Israel in the world community and re-emerging anti-Semitism in the Diaspora.

Strength: The Arabs I know want peace as much as we Jews do. The concept of winners and losers is obsolete in the nuclear era. Either we all win or we all lose. The solution for us Jews lies in our *real* strength, which is not in force of arms but in the morality, fairness and justice we learned as children in our chaders (schools). We must stop seizing the lands of people who have lived on them for centuries, Biblical/geographical names notwithstanding.

Above all, we must open conversations with our Palestinian neighbors and treat them with respect rather than indulging in self-fulfilling diatribes which only promote further atrocities. It is naive to think that we can foist any settlement on them without their participation. Instead of chasing the moderates into the arms of the extremists (weren't all of us extreme and even "terrorist" when *our* survival was at stake?), if we Jews were willing to sit down and negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization, we might find more moderates than we expected.

I have read more than one hint from Yasir Arafat himself that, given the right climate for negotiation, the PLO might be willing "to offer Israel peace in exchange for a Palestinian state."

Risky? Sure. But we've tried the other ways, and they're failing. This path won't be easy. I know our counterarguments: "defense," "appeasement and pandering to the PLO will only invite more terrorism," and "Israel can afford to be wrong only once." Perhaps we are wrong and that "once" is right now. We may find, if it isn't too late, that what is good for the Arabs—and for all peoples—is also good for the Jews.

Joseph Eger is currently music director of the Symphony for United Nations.