



The Jewish Establishment's 'Unity Pledge'; Will Sacrificing Israel to Obama's Re-Election Cause Blowback?

By Stephen Steinlight, November 17, 2011

It's axiomatic something good is happening on every occasion when the Jewish Establishment suffers a sharp, humiliating public rebuke in its effort to impose its political will on Americans who are Jews and care deeply about issues of great moment to Jews, such as the security of Israel. It's proof many in the community have withstood decades of propagandizing by an increasingly leftist and unrepresentative Establishment whose pretense to speak in their name looks ever more hollow. It also demonstrates that they've refused to succumb to ceaseless moral bullying by political leftists in the pulpit. In short, a great many can still think for themselves, are able to discern a cheap political ploy no matter shrouded how it is in high-flown rhetoric, and are getting angrier and angrier about the Establishment's evident preference for its "progressive" domestic policy agenda, including open-borders immigration, over the security of Israel.

The serious present falling out, which should not be dismissed as a mere tempest in a parochial teapot, is important, perhaps even a defining moment in a growing rebellion against the Jewish Establishment for its transparent role as a cornerstone of the left wing of the Democratic Party. It also marks a rare moment when the Establishment appears to be backing down in the face of a grassroots conservative uprising.

Those hearty souls who read or skimmed my recent long blog, "[No Schadenfreude for Cassandra](#)", may recall its discussion of the "civility" campaign launched by JCPA, the umbrella organization of Jewish Establishment agencies with public policy agendas. It also sponsors an annual meeting where official Jewish Establishment positions are taken. That these gatherings are called Plenums – the only other place where such meetings were so denominated was the former Soviet Union – is indicative of the prevailing atmosphere of enforced political conformity; the taboo against honest debate notwithstanding the presence of all those supposedly talky over-opinionated Jews; and outright hostility to dissenting voices.

But the mind-numbing tranquility of traditional Plenums has been broken by rambunctious arguments over Israel, which have grown only more heated in inter-agency meetings, in published communications between them, and in the pages of the Jewish media. The temperature of these debates has risen in direct proportion to the growing presence of strongly leftwing delegates who question the Zionist enterprise itself. Some have joined the international chorus of hypocritical critics of Israel who hold it to

standards applied to no other nation state, are advocates of Palestinian grievances; while others are openly sympathetic to the goals of the Palestinian national movement – despite the fact it is predicated upon and has a necessary corollary the annihilation of Israel. This internecine warfare between traditional Zionists and the new post-Zionist globalists (who are invariably also post-American) may have one positive outcome: it will likely hasten the demise of the left-liberal open-borders Jewish Establishment and will undoubtedly cause considerable re-shuffling of the deck furniture as the Titanic begins to sink.

My take on the "civility" campaign was that it was fraudulent. It was not so much an attempt to promote a culture of tolerance for opposed views – there is zero tolerance for conservative views at the Plenums and censorship isn't considered an issue. It's also the case that some views are clearly beyond the fringe and toleration for either well-intentioned suicidal policy recommendations or what amounts to conscious identification with the enemy is hardly a virtue. Holding views that represent an existential danger to Israel ought to disqualify them from being part of any entity that allegedly exists to promote Jewish interests. But the actual purpose of the "civility" campaign is to shield Israel's harshest critics and even enemies from deserved censure. A logical alternative would be to request that those whose views are so inimical to the Establishment's stated mission to leave or else be purged.

But such a commonsense step could never be taken by the Jewish Establishment. Views on the left, especially when articulated in the language of "peace," "toleration", and "anti-racism" – despite the fact that this is code language for appeasement and surrender – are seen as especially deserving of vigorous defense. This stems from the false dichotomy that is a foundational principle of the Establishment: Jews can have no friends on the right and should have no enemies on the left, even when those on the left are in the process of disemboweling you.

I had no doubt the "civility" campaign, appalling in itself, was but the first move in a larger effort and another shoe would drop before too long. It did, and with a thud. Building on the transparent insincerity of the "civility campaign", a new equally bogus enterprise was launched. Like the "civility" campaign, its real purpose was concealed beneath unexceptionable rhetoric, but in this case the gap between a false ideal and tawdry reality was even more obvious.

The "civility" campaign was Act I. Act II was a clumsy attempt by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), organizations of the liberal left and for all intents and purposes components of the Democratic Party coalition, to try stifling rising Jewish criticism of and deep dissatisfaction with the Obama administration's barely-concealed hostility to Israel by promoting yet another seemingly non-political campaign, this one flying under the rubric of "The Unity Pledge on Israel."

The ostensible purpose of the "Unity Pledge" is to avoid making Israel a "wedge issue" in the 2012 presidential election. In a predictably pro-"Unity Pledge," piece in the left-liberal publication *The Forward*, there is not a single ray of sunlight between the promoters of the campaign and the article. [One passage reads:](#)

The groups' National Pledge for Unity on Israel initiative aims to rally bipartisan support for Israel while preventing Israel from becoming a wedge issue during the next election season.

The pledge is aimed at other national organizations, elected officials, religious leaders, community groups and individuals.

"America's friendship with Israel is an emotional, moral and strategic bond that has always transcended politics," it reads in part. "Support for Israel has never been merely a plank in a Republican or Democratic Party or candidate's platform. It is a core American policy that serves our nation's most fundamental national interests.

But two leading Jewish conservative organizations weren't buying it. The Emergency Committee for Israel (which had already tangled with the AJC, which had attacked a newspaper ad the Emergency Committee ran that criticized the Obama administration's handling of Mideast policy) and the Republican Jewish Coalition saw the "Unity Pledge" as [a naked attempt to interfere with political expression](#) and freedom of speech by pre-empting the right of Republican critics of Obama's policy towards Israel to raise questions about it in the presidential campaign:

"An open and vigorous debate on the questions confronting our country is the cornerstone of the American electoral process" the Republican Jewish Coalition said in a statement. "Allowing the American people to see where candidates stand, pro and con on critical issues, is the hallmark of our free and democratic political system."

The ADL released a statement in reply shortly afterwards that only served to reinforce the perception that the intent of the exercise is to shield the Obama administration from Jewish anger. In a statement which appears in [a story from the JTA](#), ADL's states:

The ADL said the National Pledge for Unity on Israel was "not intended to discourage raising questions about a candidate's support for Israel," as some groups have charged.

"In the best tradition of American political debate, we strongly encourage measured and thoughtful expressions of different points of view regarding U.S. policy toward Israel," the ADL said. "What prompted ADL and AJC to launch this initiative was a desire to ask participants in the political discourse to avoid harsh and personal rhetoric or tactics in the form of attacks on political opponents' positions on Israel.

It is very difficult to translate "harsh and personal rhetoric" as meaning anything other than open and direct criticism of President Obama.

If the ADL believes its summons to bogus "higher ground" has made any impression on those who regard Obama as no friend of Israel, the following statement from the Emergency Committee for Israel, [quoted in the *Forward*](#), makes it clear that it will not be silenced:

"This attempt to silence those of us who have 'questioned the current administration's foreign policy approach vis-a-vis Israel' will re-energize us," the coalition said in a statement. "Nor, incidentally, should those who support the administration's approach to Israel be bashful about making their case."

Among series of tough attacks on the ADL/AJC misadventure in political censorship have appeared at *Commentary* magazine's site. These have been so withering they've caused Abe Foxman, ADL's uncrowned king, to start backtracking on and seeking desperately to find inoffensive ways to rationalize what was a blatant attempt to preemptively squash freedom of expression in advance of a presidential campaign. Among the most effective pieces in *Commentary* have been Jonathan S. Tobin's – one quite irenic given the provocation – "[Unity Pledge for Israel Doesn't Pass the Political Smell Test](#)", in which Tobin declares:

While much of the language of the pledge is unexceptionable, certain elements of it as well as the way it has been promoted by ADL head Abe Foxman seems aimed more at silencing any effort to hold the Obama administration accountable for some of its attacks on Israel's government and determination to tilt the diplomatic playing field in favor of the Palestinians.

Angrier and more abrasive is Tobin's blogging colleague Omri Ceren, who plays the bad cop in "[More Jewish Unity Pledges For You to Sign](#)". He has no intention of granting Foxman any quarter. Ceren remembers the sleazy role Foxman and the ADL eagerly played during the 2008 presidential primaries and campaign in declaring all of Obama's associations "kosher" in order to protect his candidacy. It should be remembered the Anti-Defamation League, like the Southern Poverty Law Center, goes after virtually any one that strongly opposes its policy preferences – immigration is a leading context – attacking them as white supremacists, xenophobes, or Islamophobes. But it bent over backwards to declare Obama and all his associates, including the notorious Rev. Wright, to be purer than Caesar's wife. Having been personally slandered in the past by an ADL spokesperson (she was content to allege I was probably a racist on the basis of no evidence whatever) for disagreeing with Abe Foxman's fanatical support for open-borders immigration, of course I take personal pleasure – but also see it as a matter of simple justice – that his this episode has revealed Foxman's lack of ethics or objectivity in his supposed high calling as fighter against hatred who, in fact, targets some and defends others entirely on the basis of political criteria – that is to say, how far to the left they are. As Ceren scathingly notes:

Having shilled for Obama during the crucial months when coverage of his radical anti-Israel mentors might place doubt on his pro-Israel intonations – the ADL specifically declared in 2007 that there was no evidence of any anti-Semitism from Jeremiah Wright, before discovering otherwise a year later – they now don't want anybody to talk about it. If the classic definition of chutzpah is the kid who kills his parents and then asks the judge for sympathy because he's an orphan, a close second has to be the Jewish organization who helps Obama get into office and then asks the Jewish community not to talk about it because unity is important.

Unsurprisingly, only a conservative trench fighter who correctly sees politics as a blood sport like Andrew Breitbart could do full justice to the leftwing hypocrisy and attempted manipulation on such blatant display. The most no-holds-barred attack on Jewish Establishment chicanery appears at his site, BigGovernment.com. In "[Shame on the ADL and AJC for Putting Progressive Politics Before Israel](#)", Jeff Dunetz not only places the appalling episode in full contemporary context, but also does what is normally considered outré even for critics of the Establishment: he goes back historically and underscores how the Jewish Establishment previously sold out Jewish interests on the altar of "progressive politics" – in this case the sacrifice of European Jewry in the service of the deification of FDR. The attack is historically accurate and morally legitimate, though for those unfamiliar with Jewish Establishment behavior in those dark years it may come across as extremely harsh. It is harsh, but the critique is on-point, and it bears directly on the historically familiar gambit the ADL and AJC attempted.

Dunetz is out for blood, and he's right to be. He's prepared to grant ADL and AJC this much only: he places the text of their fraudulent "Unity Pledge" in his piece. But he's otherwise unsparing. I've written at length that the deepest motivation for the Jewish Establishment's open-border's immigration policy is irrational, a neurotic effort to atone for its failure to do anything to rescue European Jewry by illogically supporting the mass immigration of anti-Semites, thus recapitulating the injury of harming Jews. Freud termed this behavior "repetition compulsion."

Because his anger resonates strongly and is unusually courageous in forcing the Establishment to face up to the fact that its present ignominious behavior echoes its worst historical failure, I quote him at length:

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the American Jewish Committee (AJC) have never tried to hide their leftist leanings. In fact at times each of the groups have put its progressive politics ahead of its duty to the Jewish Community. Now these groups have a message to the Jewish Community, If you don't support Barack Obama, **Shut The Heck Up!**

Amid the attack on the Obama administration for its singular hostility to Israel, comes the haunting history lesson with its equation of the sins of yesterday and today:

This is the most anti-Israel administration in the 63 year history of the Jewish State. Israel is at a crucial point in her history, she is surrounded by terrorists who are appeased by most of the world, and her historic friendship with the United States is being abused by a President who, because of incompetence or intention, is throwing the Jewish state to the wolves.

Although the prose in their pledge is pretty, its real purpose is to shut up Jews who wish to point out the failings of Barack Obama's Israel policy. These organizations have a vested interest in ensuring that the Jews continue to vote Democratic and re-elect this president—**Political Power**.

These same two groups never opened their mouths when Sarah Palin was dis-invited from an Anti-Ahmadinejad rally by Jewish groups trying to get Obama elected in 2008. When President Obama invited George Soros' anti-Israel group J-street to Presidential meetings, the Zionist Organization of America was disinvited because unlike the rest of the organizations the ZOA is conservative, no one in either group stood up for bi-partisanship.

Perhaps the AJC doesn't really believe in the progressive politics it eschews and simply wants to "go with the flow," their history is marked with a desire to stay under the radar.

When Jews were dying at the hands of the Nazi' the AJC discouraged open talk of the Holocaust, afraid that if Jews spoke out it would create a backlash lead to heightened anti-Semitism in the U.S. (Cohen, Naomi Wiener. *Not Free to Desist: The American Jewish Committee, 1906-1966* (1972), a standard history).

From 1949 to the Six-Day-War in 1967, the AJC described theme selves as "non-Zionist" afraid that support of the Jewish State would create charges of dual loyalty in the United States.

When we enumerate the most vociferous and extreme proponents of amnesty and open-borders' immigration in the United States, groups that form the core of our opposition, the Jewish Establishment is as central to that cabal as are the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Immigration Forum, a Center for American Progress, the Cato Institute, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the billionaire foundation universe. Short of their very unlikely conversion to our side, the best we can hope for is they either accord the issue reduced centrality or that they implode. While immigration is the holy of holies for the Jewish Establishment in terms of domestic policy, Israel is THE holy of holies. Ordinary American Jews have already registered their strong disapproval of the Jewish Establishment's position on immigration, as any Establishment apparatchik capable of reading survey findings knows. The gap is wide and widening. While unlikely, it is not altogether impossible that at some point the moribund Establishment will recognize it cannot maintain its full-court press on immigration if it does not wish to see itself increasingly at loggerheads and detached from the community whose views it claims to represent.

The battle over Israel policy will inevitably become more heated, divisive, bloody, and ugly. Whether the Establishment is capable of surviving, or at least surviving in its present form, given the profoundly fractious nature of this debate is an open question. It will, at the very least, need to focus on Israel policy with much greater effort. Given the seriousness of this crisis and the logistical limitations of its member agencies, immigration advocacy will perforce be a casualty. It's far too early to say whether there will be a change in position – I'm skeptical, to say the least – but we may well see the end of the Jewish Establishment's full-court press on immigration.

In addition, the Obama administration and its cowardly though disastrous immigration policy, typified by the president's usurpation of immigration policy from Congress, may

find the degree of its Jewish support – especially critical financial support – significantly reduced as a consequence of its treatment of Israel. Obama has become a question mark in the eyes of a significant segment of the Jewish community. If the Republicans choose a candidate that does not turn off Jewish voters in spades, it is possible a significant enough shift in Jewish voting could make the difference in such key states as Florida, New Jersey, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

Who knew? We may end up wishing to express our sincerest gratitude to the ADL and AJC for their arrogant over-reaching, the questions it has raised among Americans who are Jews, and the possible consequences.