

Divided Loyalty

The concept of divided loyalty has been resurrected by the case of Jonathan Jay Pollard as a challenge to the authenticity of Jews as Americans. I confess that I, too, am guilty. I am not only loyal to two countries, I am loyal to three. I am an Anglo-Jewish immigrant to the U.S. and therefore I have tri-vided loyalty! I would like to think that if Britain was in a state of war and surrounded by enemies, and I could supply her with vital information to save her brave citizens and soldiers, that I would do so. In fact this is precisely what happened in World War II, between 1939 and the time the U.S. entered the war in 1941. Of course, President Roosevelt was very cooperative in supporting Britain during that terrible period, but it is certain that U.S. secrets were leaked to Britain by sympathetic Americans, contrary to U.S. law.

As a Jew I share a strong identification with Israel, the only sovereign Jewish country in the world. Do most American Jews act clandestinely in support of Israel? Of course not, for we make no secret of our active support for Israel. Apparently the U.S. has been withholding vital information from Israel, and, with Israel's narrow margin of security in the Middle East this appears to me to be inconsistent with the actions of a good ally. It is true that neither Pollard nor I can know all the factors involved in the sharing of particular secrets. But, I would like to think that if I had been in his shoes I would have done the same thing. Many American Jews may feel intimidated from saying so, and many may vociferously disagree, but that is my hope, no less than for Britain under the same circumstances.

I hope that I would not have been quite as foolhardy as Pollard seems to have been, and I doubt that I would have trusted the Israelis as much, but the stakes were high, and once the decision is made the choices narrow. Under the circumstances anyone who breaks the law and spies must expect to receive a severe penalty, and not expect the country for which he spies to accept responsibility. In this case Israel is apparently prepared to sacrifice Pollard for the importance that they place on the U.S. relationship. However, the fact that the verdict for the Pollards was as great as those meted out to spies for America's enemies is

quite shocking. I would hope that Israel would act behind the scenes to eventually effect a release of the Pollards to Israel. Does anyone think that the U.S. does not spy on Israel?

The times are long since past when Jews will be intimidated by charges of divided loyalty and the re-hashing of the canards of the past. We have suffered and learnt too much for that. So, just as my divided loyalty to Britain does not decrease my loyalty to the U.S., neither does my support for Israel. I can be just as critical of Maggie Thatcher's policies as those of Shimon Peres, and Ronald Reagan.

My loyalty is to an America that acts as an honest ally to those democratic countries around the world with which we have basic mutual interests.

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