

ב"ח

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חבר הכנסת

רחוב השומר 81, טלפון 78-7663

בני-ברק

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Rabbi Iam
Jewish Center 131
West 86th St.
New York City.

Dear Friend,

I am enclosing a copy of a speech I delivered in the Knesset on May 24th on the subject of "Black Panthers". This topic has aroused intense interest in Israel and has lately been in the forefront of our minds.

You will observe that in my remarks I mentioned our Sde Chemed Children's Village - a school in which you are an active partner - as a school which provides at least one answer to the problem which has agitated the country. The 300 children of Sde Chemed prove that youths who could become Black Panthers can be wonderful children from every standpoint. To get the positive results we all seek two conditions are essential: there must be suitable place for the children to receive a good education and what is offered the children must be given to them with love, as it is in Sde Chemed.

I hope you find my remarks of interest. I shall, of course, be happy to receive your reaction and any suggestion you may want to offer on this vital subject.

With greetings from Zion, I am,

Sincerely,

S. Lorincz
Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Knesset

The Black Panther phenomenon is cause for great worry and concern. We must take it as a serious warning signal. Who could have imagined that young Jews would find it in their hearts to throw Molotov cocktails at other Jews and that Jews - not Arabs - could give voice to anything as terrifying as "Let there be shooting, hand grenades, and the spilling of blood - a lot of Jewish blood"! And this to happen at a time when we are at war with those who are bent on spilling torrents of Jewish blood!

As one of our prophets said, "We must seek and examine our paths".

We must examine the problem at its roots and find a solution for it. We must be prepared to pay the price - any price - required to uproot the evil. I am certain that if we seriously apply ourselves to the problem, we shall meet with complete success.

It is said - and it has been echoed in this very hall by previous speakers - that one of the causes of Black Pantherism is poverty. But we know that wealth no less than poverty presents a challenge to the individual - one, because it allows the person vast opportunities for self-indulgence and the other, because it robs him of the opportunity for self-fulfillment.

It is clear that a well-ordered society should not reconcile itself to grave discriminations in its economic, educational and social life. To the maximum extent we must remove the disparities and the inequalities which exist among our people and especially among our youth. But by no means will I concede that social hardships by themselves are sufficient to give rise to Black Pantherism. Assuming that a child has been properly reared, poverty may be a stimulant and an incentive to study and progress. As our sages of blessed memory have said, "Observe the poor for from them will come the Torah".

Our Black Panthers are, in my view, the unripe fruit of secular education, an education which has systematically uprooted faith in God, has destroyed the respect for parents, has been indifferent to the Commandments, including the Commandment "Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother", and has left a vacuum in the hearts of many of our children. The children of the Oriental communities have been taught that their parents are primitive because they are devout, and that children must be more "progressive" than their parents.

And how they have progressed! Indeed, they have outdistanced their parents! They have been deprived of a world of happiness and of spiritual satisfaction

and have been given nothing in their stead. The Government has not been conscious of this development and took no notice of the problem even as it became progressively worse.

We of the Agudah have discharged our parliamentary obligation. We have warned the Knesset at every turn. In fact, in a large percentage of our appearances before this body we have addressed ourselves to this problem. I, personally, have the privilege of being the first person to have presented to the Knesset the serious problem of large families and the hardships and perils they face. But the Government reconciled itself to the fact that there are many children who come under the Compulsory Education Law who do not attend school. The Government has reconciled itself to the fact that many of our youth are rejected by the Army because of unfitness. The Government reconciled itself to this situation without seeking a solution.

The people who deal with this problem should consult the teachers of our people, the teachers who were responsible for the education of our people for 4,000 years and who succeeded. Those teachers are our rabbis and the heads of the Yeshivot. The new teachers who throw up their hands in despair and admit failure, must now say, "Show us the path we must take".

The problem must be attacked on all fronts, - - on the education, economic and social fronts. One thing we must do is establish as many youth institutions as possible. Every child now wandering aimlessly in the streets must be provided with appropriate education.

In meeting the challenge of the problem we must have a dedicated corps of volunteers. We cannot hope to solve social problems by turning only to the Ministry of Welfare and the Police.

I have experience with a hobby involving the Sde Chemed Children's Village. In Sde Chemed there are 300 children. Ninety percent of them are children of Oriental families whose social situation is in every respect as bad as that of the families from which the Black Panthers come. Yet, in Sde Chemed I have seen what can be done with this youth.

Sde Chemed is not a rich school. To give you but one example, the children in the vocational part of the school study in a basement intended as a gymnasium. To my knowledge there is no other school in Israel which operates

under such handicaps. Yet, the children do not feel they are discriminated against. They study dilligently while they wait patiently for a suitable building for their studies. The children of Sde Chemed have the incentive to study and can compete in scholarship with any pupils of whatever origins, and are as well behaved as any children in the land.

What, you will ask, is the secret of this success? The answer is the love and devotion the children receive from their teachers and counsellors.

Yes, we must give our children love. But we cannot - we dare not - abdicate our responsibilities and close our ears to the warning signal we have received. We must offer love. But we must be firm with those who misbehave, incite others, cause disturbances and defy the law.

We must not be concerned that what we shall do is unpopular so long as we know that what we do is right.

Have faith in the Lord and love your fellow man. That is the solution to the Black Panther problem and the problem of the confused youth of whatever kind.

Address by Rabbi Shlomo Lorincz, delivered in the Knesset on May 24, 1971.