

DEFENSE — NOT REVENGE

THERE HAVE been many outside of Palestine who wondered how long *Havlaga*—the self-imposed restraint of the Jewish Community in the face of repeated outrage—could endure. There have even been some who doubted the wisdom of this discipline. When the first act of retaliation took place; when six Arabs were shot on November 14th by the Jews, it was feared that the long, tragic endurance of the Palestinian community had at last snapped. However, there were no grounds for this fear. The immediate reaction of the *Yishub* showed that we were faced with an isolated anti-Jewish, as well as anti-Arab, act, which in no way indicated a change of temper or conviction on the part of the Jewish community as a whole. Every responsible Jewish body in Palestine condemned the killings in terms which left no doubt as to the stand of Palestinian Jewry in regard to Jewish terrorism. The Jewish Agency and the *Vaad Leumi*, the Jewish National Council, expressed their abhorrence of such retaliation in statements of moving eloquence. The memorable words of Dr. David Yellin, whose son was slain by an Arab terrorist a few weeks before, spoke for Palestine Jewry: "When an Arab was killed after the slaying of my son, my whole family was shocked for we all felt that the murder of one innocent son cannot atone for the murder of another innocent son. We are proud that even in the most difficult days an Arab could pass unafraid and unmolested in Tel Aviv itself and in Jewish quarters of other cities." These are noble and magnanimous words. What is perhaps even more remarkable than the moral grandeur of one individual, is the fact that this utterance represents the ethical stature of 400,000 people tortured and goaded for nearly two years. It is easy enough for us who sit apart in safety to understand that terror must not be fought with terror; that it is neither righteous nor politic to combat violence with a counter-violence which strikes not the perpetrators of the crime, but the innocent. It would also have been possible for us to understand, though not condone, a wave of retaliatory acts. Unwillingly, we would have understood the bitterness which drove a desperate community to the madness of vengeance. But we have been spared the necessity for this understanding. We have been spared the graceless task of counselling fortitude and calm to human beings on the firing line. We have been spared the shame of urging lofty sentiments on the victims of evil. The shock evoked by the first Jewish outrage to occur in almost two years, shows clearly enough how profound a part the conception of *Havlaga* plays in the spiritual life of the Palestinian community. It is more than strategy—a fear to let loose uncon-

trollable forces on the population—though the element of common-sense naturally figures. It becomes obvious on reading the Palestine press that the sense of horror felt by the Jewish community was evoked not merely by the criminal folly of the Jewish terrorist, but chiefly by his brutal immorality. No innocent son must be slain to avenge another innocent son.

There is little doubt that the Arabs were killed by a political group which has more than once endangered Palestine and Zionism by its reckless disregard of the discipline and will of the *Yishub*. Jabotinsky is reported to have expressed his satisfaction at the outrage: Jews should "hit back." Jabotinsky knows well enough that they "hit back." They hit back with valor and intelligence every time that they are openly attacked. A raid on a *kvutzah* is not met meekly. But there can be a question only of hitting, not of hitting back, when a shot is fired at random, when its purpose is not to repel an assailant, but vengeance. Self-defense is one thing; anonymous revenge is another. Palestine Jewry has not sunk to the level of jungle savagery and desert blood-feuds. It has not striven to emulate or equal the Arab terrorist. It has created its own noble and heroic pattern of conduct, a pattern which is, in a sense, a contribution to the spiritual history of man. The overwhelming majority of Palestine Jews who have achieved the difficult mastery of themselves under agonizing provocation have the right to expect a similar self-conquest from others. Jabotinsky has done harm before, but the opportunities for havoc which now offer themselves to an irresponsible and inflamed mind are infinite.

In this connection one should remember that a considerable part of the Arab press has also protested against continued violence. Both *Al Jamin al Islamia* and *Ad Difaa* have come out with protests against terrorism as a method of struggle. This attitude, together with the appeal issued jointly by the Arab and Jewish merchants of Jerusalem is a hopeful sign. Perhaps the indignation of the Jewish community at Jewish terrorism has had an effect. Agriculture is not the only contribution which the Jew may make to the reconstruction of Palestine. The municipal council meetings of Palestine now begin with a roster of the dead fallen in the past week. And the roster concludes with the words "may these be the last." We too repeat as we read the lists of the victims, "may these be the last." And if these be not the last, we know that the Jewish struggle will continue fearless, but pure, as before.