

science; helping spread and gain access to clear water; to grow more food; to help prevent the spread of AIDS; to help entrepreneurs start new businesses; to train students to use computers; and to work with non-governmental organizations to protect our environment. Above all, Volunteers leave behind skills that allow individuals and communities to take charge of their own futures.

In our increasing interconnected global community, Peace Corps volunteers also promote greater cross-cultural awareness, both in the countries in which they serve and when they return home. As they work shoulder to shoulder with their host communities, Volunteers embody and share some of America's most enduring values; freedom, opportunity, hope, progress. It is these bonds of friendship and understanding that they create and that can build the foundations for peace among nations.

And I can personally testify that the best service that is given to the Peace Corps is the continuation of service to our communities when we all come home. Today, because of the anniversary of the Peace Corps, thousands of returned volunteers are visiting schools and local communities throughout the United States, sharing the knowledge and insights gained from their experiences abroad and passing along the value of service to others.

As we have learned around the world, the best way to support a democracy is to help development at the local level. Meanwhile, America's, young and old, single and married, would like to serve their country, humanity and democracy. The Peace Corps is one of the most effective mechanisms for uniting these two ideals. This is an asset we should not let go to waste.

On this 40th anniversary of the Peace Corps, please join me in honoring all Volunteers, past, present, and future, and in celebrating four decades of service to the world. The Peace Corps has served its country well, and we should all be proud.

HONORING RABBI ISRAEL  
ZOBERMAN

HON. EDWARD SCHROCK

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 1, 2001

Mr. SCHROCK. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I honor today Rabbi Israel

Zoberman, spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Chaverim in Virginia Beach. He is also the President of the Hampton Roads Board of Rabbis, and Chairman of the Community Relations Council of the United Jewish Federation of Tidewater. I submit the following article that was written by Rabbi Zoberman into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The evolving scenario in the State of Israel, ill-boding to its very security, erupting when Chairman Arafat chose to respond with violence to Prime Minister Barak's far-reaching concessions on the verge of concluding peace, has resurrected fundamental issues of a bitter conflict. Paradoxically, while the sole sovereign Jewish entity is stronger than ever, militarily and economically, it remains vulnerable. The profound division in Israeli society concerning the Peace Process or lack thereof, is a critical factor. In addition, its laudable democracy, the only such progressive manifestation in that part of the world, is a source of vibrant exchange and growth as well as a dangerously fragmented reality.

As a member of a recent JCPA (the Jewish Council for Public Affairs) national solidarity mission to Israel, I was exposed to the unique variety of the Israeli experience unlike no other. What other capital in the world besides Jerusalem is subject to hostile gunfire without a powerful response to attacks on traumatized civilians? Touring the Gilo suburb now famous for drawing gunfire from the neighboring Palestinian village of Beit Jala, we saw the installed protection walls and the encamped unit of Israel Defense Forces which returns fire. Appreciatively greeted in the local elementary school, we learned first-hand of the adverse impact upon young and old. The complex, ironic and surrealistic nature of the situation was highlighted by remarkable Orthodox Adina Shapira, a law student who co-created with a fellow Palestinian a United Nations award-winning project for volunteering Israeli teachers, including herself, to instruct Arab children in the West Bank. All that while her two brothers who are combat soldiers have quite a different perspective. The professional briefing by General Yaalon, IDF's Deputy Chief of Staff, made clear that restraint is exercised in face of planned assault irresponsibly using children as pawns.

In the midst of rising concerns, Israel remains a welcoming home and safe haven for endangered Jews and those yearning for the Jewish context and fulfillment that only Israel can offer. How touching it was in the town of Katzir near the Israeli Arab community of Um-El-Fachem where disturbances occurred, introducing myself to the amazement of a young boy from Kazakhstan, as sharing the same background.

A highlight was the night rally we were fortunate to attend in Ramat Gan for the three kidnapped Israeli soldiers, including Benny Avraham from Pardes Katz, Tidewater's twin city. Ephraim Sneh, Deputy Minister of Defense, addressed the emotionally charged gathering which included the soldiers' families. We urgently continue to call for their release distributing blue ribbons.

In the heated political debate, the message to our delegation by Ariel Sharon, leader of the opposition Likud party, and now Prime Minister-Elect, included empathy for the condition of the Palestinians. I dared ask him if he would have visited the Temple Mount had he known that it would be exploited by the Palestinians. Responding with a wry smile, he retorted, "They always have excuses." What is certain is that we are entering an uncertain period of great risks in which both Sharon and Arafat will be severely tested, affecting their long enduring peoples, the entire region and beyond. There is a dire need to overcome a most dangerous impasse. If Sharon proves to be a faithful disciple of Menachem Begin, another hardliner turned peacemaker, and intransigent Arafat learns from the equally inspiring example of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat's transformation with admittedly facing now a more complex scenario, that would enshrine them too in a history yet to be written.

The heartfelt presentation of the American Ambassador to Israel, Martin Indyk, focused on the U.S.'s abiding friendship with Israel which facilitates the arduous attempt to bringing closer both sides. While asserting that the warring leaders have a stake in resolution for their own interests, he stated, "violence will not stop altogether in my estimate," with the grave danger of spreading.

Our group's visit to Neve Shalom's unique setting of Jews and Arabs, midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, reminded us of the possibility and necessity for co-existence in a troubled Middle East. Witnessing the shared kindergarten in which the very young learn about each other's traditions was a moving experience, particularly since I was raised in Israel of the 50's and could not even imagine then this kind of joint endeavor which is still an exception. At this fateful juncture may both sides to the tragic historical conflict allow for an emerging new reality of shalom's essential blessings of life, replacing violence with vision and pain with promise.