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American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Directors  
Conference speech. 17 October 1956.

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HAF. Speech 10/17/56

AJDC COUNTRY DIRECTORS-CONFERENCE  
October 17th, 1956.

Rabbi H. Friedman's Address

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I should like, before beginning this report, to express the thanks of the United Jewish Appeal to the JDC for permission to come here and annually destroy the JDC conference. What was once a very good, professional, working session has now become a melange of Americans and Europeans and one never knows exactly to whom one is speaking. Having made the invasion and having apologized for it, we really express our deep thanks for all of the inside knowledge and inspiration which we gain from it.

Mr. Warburg said that I would try to give you a quick review of the whole campaign. We conducted this year three kinds of campaigns simultaneously. We had what we called the regular campaign, and then the special fund campaign, and then a bank loan, which took place almost on the side in between the other two. In 1955 — and I give you this figure in order to make comparative sense with other figures — the communities in the United States, who raise their money in the Spring part of the year, raised 85 million dollars, which is not all destined for us. They raised 85 million dollars. In the Fall, those communities who make their campaigns after the High Holidays raised 15 million dollars. In 1956 the Spring communities which raised 85 million dollars have this year so far raised 81. Four million dollars of outstanding money that has not yet been raised lies mostly in the communities of New York, Chicago, and one or two others, where it takes until the end of the year to complete a campaign which begins nine or ten months earlier. The Fall communities which raised 15 million a year ago have this year reached 12.6 million, and they still have two months of work ahead of them. It is, therefore, anticipated that they will raise the same amount. What is the UJA share of this money which is raised in federated, overall campaigning? The UJA share in 1955 was 58 million. We anticipate that the UJA share in 1956 will be the same. It's early to tell because not all the communities have made their allocations, but if they are running at approximately the same rate, we anticipate running at approximately the same rate of division. As far as the special fund campaign is concerned, the total amount pledged to that now stands at 19 million. This is the extraordinary effort which was made by the collective will of the community; and there is still some to come — not very much — from Fall communities who are still in the process of campaigning. The special fund goal was set at 25 million. Some people say that if we reach 20 million it will be extraordinary; some people say we should have reached the 25 million mark. Everyone here, in the American group at least, has participated in that and can make his own judgment as to whether it's good or bad. I think it's good, albeit short of its goal. The loan project, which I said was the third campaign that went on simultaneously, was quite an interesting thing. Early in 1954, almost three years ago now, the UJA, through the communities of the United States, went to the banks and borrowed 65 million dollars. By the beginning of 1956, 30 million of that 65 had been repaid. Naturally, what do we do



when we repay money to the banks? We go to the banks to borrow more than we repaid. Having repaid the 30 million, we then asked the communities to go back to the banks to borrow that 30 plus ten more — to try to borrow 40 million dollars. The figure at the moment is 39.6 million, and then there are still several communities whose loans are not yet completed. There's no doubt, therefore, that we reached the 40 million dollar goal, and that was easy because borrowing money is always easier than getting people to give money.

Now, to sum up this part, I know that you cannot mix all things together, what you raise by pledges and what you borrow from banks. But if you add up the whole cash income — I want to give you a cash picture now as the last statistical item — up to October 12th, a few days ago, the UJA has received in cash so far this year from the regular campaign 41.7 million. It has received in cash 8.8 million from the special fund. It has received in cash 39.6 from the bank borrowings. Therefore, the total amount of money to the UJA from all sources so far this year is 90.1 million dollars and I think that is a very large amount of money.

I would like to make one observation that's very important for us all to understand. In a certain sense the JDC made the special fund possible by agreeing to give up any share in it, so that people could understand the emergency nature of the money which had to be directed in its entirety to Israel; and by giving up its share the JDC underlined the emergency character of that fund. Therefore I say that in a certain sense the JDC really made it possible. And this I think is not known, but it is one of the additional things to the everlasting credit of the JDC.

Let me take two or three minutes to tell you something about how all this money is raised. It began a year ago on November 18th, with a meeting to which we gathered, by some measure of force, abduction, coercion, bribery and seduction, 400 of the leading Jewish personalities of the United States. Some came easily, the rest came. That meeting set the tone, gave the mandate, opened the green light for the special fund. And from that meeting beginning on November 18th dozens of men volunteers, lay leaders, the best men in the community — and that's always the clue — scattered themselves across the whole broad United States, visiting city after city, to get each Jewish community to take its share of this burden. No one can sell anyone else to do something unless he himself is a convinced and vocal spokesman, and our spokesmen went out on the road like salesmen. We had a great conference again in December; we had a first fund-raising meeting in January at which Governor Lehman was the guest of honor, and that first dinner produced 17 million dollars. That's the second clue that we've learned. The first clue: use your best people; the second clue: crack out at the beginning with the best gifts you can get to start, because that sets



the example. And then it went. Then we went down to Miami, after the Governor Lehman Dinner, and we had a meeting in Miami Beach. It happens to be a place where a few Jews congregate every winter. And there, from Miami at the end of February, March April, May, people were brought, speakers — and that's the third thing that I would suggest — speakers were brought from Europe and from Israel, the JDC people from Morocco and Tunisia, Israeli people, Jewish Agency, generals in uniform — because this was very much in people's minds this year — all of the things which are required in order to demonstrate the urgency of the needs, through people who work to solve the problems for which the money is being raised. That gives it the stamp of authority. They know why they're asking for the money, because they know how they spend the money.

And then I won't bother you with the details, but just to add one last fact. This fall, for the first time, we have started a series of meetings all over the country in which we are going to the leaders of the communities and, for a change, not asking them for money; but instead we are going to attempt to orient, explain, educate, make friends, go into the details of the program which you cannot always do when you are at a meeting where you are pressing hard for money. There must come a time when you go to people not for money but for explanation. And that first series of meetings this September worked out very well. So I would add that as the fourth ingredient in the recipe. You must educate the people to the purposes for which the money is being given.

Now all these figures and all these campaign methods are very important. But in a certain sense they have no real significance whatsoever unless there is behind them a deep philosophy and a very deep motivation. I received a letter the other day from one of the leaders of a European Jewish community who said: "We all greatly appreciated meeting you, because we came to see the sincere Jewish soul of the UJA, which sometimes gets lost behind the accountancy." If the soul gets lost behind the accountancy then the accountancy is not worth very much. I think the soul is more important than the accountancy, and I think it is this soul which is the explanation of why the Jews of America go on raising this kind of money year after year.

Many of you have read the poem, or heard of the poem, by the great poet Auden who wrote the title, "The Age of Despair". This is an age of despair. We live in a terrible century characterized by wars and brutal human destruction. Even worse than the human destruction is the fact that the world has lost its soul, has lost its sense of direction, has no goals. Everyone is seeking for something in which to believe. Everyone is having difficulty finding the eternal truth. Existentialists preach



despair. Religious leaders even preach sin and disgrace and falling from grace and dark doctrines. They retreat, the whole Protestant world has retreated from the battle line, no longer seeking to give faith and hope to people but instead saying that people are evil and people are sinful and there is no solution. The wonderful thing about Jews is that they do not retreat. They may be smashed, they may be beaten, they may be cut, wounded; they do not run from the fray hiding behind a mystique of doubt and gloom. The reason for this is, I think, that the Jewish people has always had several firm things in which to believe. They have believed in themselves; they have never doubted the reason for their existence; they have an underlying conviction of the worthwhileness of their message for all mankind. Ambassador Dillon, who spoke here the other day, said the same thing in one sentence. He said, "The Jewish heritage is a firm pillar of the civilized world". We have always felt that we have something to teach; therefore we have always felt that it was worth fighting for our survival.

Hitler understood it. He knew why he wanted to destroy us. He wanted to remove us as a civilizing force in the world. The effect of Hitler on European Jewry is well known. The effect of Hitler on American Jewry is not so well known. The effect of Hitler on American Jewry was twofold: it strengthened the consciousness of Jews in America to live as Jews and it strengthened the ties between American Jews and world Jews. And for this we must thank him. Jewish consciousness in America has grown much stronger in the last decade. I want you to know that in these last ten or twelve years the American Jewish community has raised among itself, and spent, hundreds of millions of dollars for synagogues, centers, hospitals, all kinds of institutions. Some people have said that all of this frantic building is simply part of the great physical complex of America where everything has to be bigger and broader and higher and that you build buildings to hide some kind of inferiority. It could be said that the vast synagogues for which all the money is spent are empty, and it could be said that the big community centers are just bowling alleys and recreational places without Jewish content. It could be said, and there is undoubtedly some truth in those charges.

But on the other hand I submit that any careful observer will see that there is a search going on in America for deeper Jewish values. When a community knows that it does not have enough teachers — not just Europe, but the United States does not have enough teachers — when a community knows that it should struggle to produce a Jewish literature and a Jewish scholarship; when a community knows that it must experiment with its religious forms to attract the young people; when a community creates week-end institutes for young people to sit at the feet of teachers; when a community expands its day schools; when a



community increases the number of rabbis it is training; when a community builds a bigger professional Jewish social service class to staff all of the federations; when a community worries what happens in the suburbs around the big cities where more Jews are going; when a community does these things it is not just building buildings. It is searching deeper for Jewish values.

The wonderful, thrilling, exciting, beautiful thing to see is that this American Jewish community has never forgotten for a moment its obligations to the world outside of itself. If hundreds of millions have been spent on its own growth and building, hundreds of millions have come over here, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of millions in this decade. There is a certain sense of pride. You hear American Jews say, "We helped to clean out the DP camps; we helped to build Israel; we helped to transplant populations from Iraq and Yemen and Rumania, when we could get them; and we helped, we helped, we helped." This is a good feeling they have, which means to me these are good people, not isolated. And I would like to say to them in the presence of the Europeans that I am sure that when they come to face the problems which are looming up ahead they will face them with the same vigor and stamina and determination as they have shown in the past. They will not leave in the lurch the rest of world Jewry. They know something now about Morocco, this big problem on the agenda of the year to come. The collective will of the Jewish world is that emigration should continue from Morocco. Of this I'm sure. The collective will of the Jewish world is, therefore, to pay for that. And we have heard much that inside Morocco there will be a great body who will not be able to get out, for whom more and more and more services will have to be plowed in. We watch the problem of integration, which is not clear. But trying to prevent that community from assimilation and disappearance and adaptation into the Moslem world means that we must build for it more and more barriers of Jewish protection, so that if they can't get out at least they can live in, in honor and in dignity and in independence. This is on the docket for the year ahead, as is a new area of the world. We read in the newspapers in the United States that the Jews in Poland are not afraid now to go to the Israel Embassy and register for emigration. They line up in the streets in Warsaw. If they come out we must be prepared to stand behind them as their firm support. This is a new one. And when in the morning we get to Israel we will be confronted in the first hour with all of the problems which make up the contemporary tension that exists there. Let's not talk about Algeria, which is growing more forcefully upon our attention. Let's not talk about all of the things which have a legitimate claim. Let's take the big ones: the Morocco, the Poland, the Israel. And it's perfectly clear to me, Gentlemen, that our needs in the year ahead are going to be infinitely greater than were our needs in the year gone by; and as well as we did in the year gone by — and I speak of 1956 almost as gone — it is clear to me that 1957 will place a heavier burden which must evoke from us a heavier response. There's no alternative. Every man, then, must think in his own mind and in his own community of



how he translates those needs and of what he does about them himself, and then, through his example, with all the others whom he influences.

I'll finish now simply by saying this. Auden might call this an age of despair. And perhaps it is for much of mankind. This is not an age of despair in Jewish life. We do have a direction. We are not floating aimlessly. We know what we want. All of you know what you want. Why do you work so hard? You do it because you want to rebuild Europe. You do it because you want to help build Israel. You do it because you want to save Jews from death, from destruction, from assimilation, from disappearance. You do it, whether you can express it or not, because you have something in which you believe. You do not despair. You believe. You have a philosophy of survival. That's the dream. The stars, the vision. More power to you. On your broad shoulders much has rested. On your broad shoulders more burdens are yet to be placed. There is a Jewish soul behind the accountancy. It says he who saves one life, it is accounted to him as though he has saved the whole world. Each of you has saved more than one life; each of you, therefore, has saved more than one world. Thank you very much.



DRAFT

ADDRESS BY RABBI FRIEDMAN: FIFTH SESSION OF COUNTRY DIRECTORS CONFERENCE 1956

II. All these figures are tremendously important, and yet they have no real significance unless there is behind them a clear philosophy and a deep motivation. I received a letter the other day from one of the leaders of a European Jewish community, who wrote: "We all greatly appreciated meeting you, because we came to see the sincere Jewish soul of the UJA, which sometimes gets lost behind accountancy." I think it is always true that the Jewish soul behind the accountancy is even more important than the accountancy itself.

We live in a terrible century, characterized by the poet Auden as "the age of despair". It is not just that the world has been brutalized by wars and mass human destruction. Even worse is the fact that the world has lost a sense of direction and is floating in this century with no clear goals.

Everyone is seeking for something in which to believe and everyone is having difficulty finding the eternal truths. Existentialists



preach despair, and even religious leaders retreat into the dark area of preaching sin and disgrace. Thus they retreat from the real battle line, which should involve a search for giving man hope and ringing a clear bell which can lead to some worthy purpose.

The wonderful thing about Jews is that they don't retreat.

They may be smashed and beaten, they may be cut and wounded, but they do not run from the fray, hiding behind the mystique of doubt and gloom. The reason for this, is I think that the Jewish people has always had several firm things in which to believe. They have believed in themselves; they have never doubted the reason for their existence; they have an underlying conviction of the worthwhileness of their message and they shall remain alive for ever. Ambassador Dillon understood that the other day, when he said in one sharp sentence: "The Jewish heritage is a firm pillar of the civilized world." We have always felt that what we have to teach the world is worth protecting. This is the clue to the secret of our existence.

Hitler understood it and tried to destroy us exactly because he felt impelled to remove a civilizing influence from the world. The



effect of Hitler on the body and soul of European Jewry is too well known. He almost destroyed the body. He certainly did not destroy the soul.

The effect of Hitler on American Jewry is less well known, but I think it is clear that he did two things in America. He strengthened the Jewish conscience among American Jews and he strengthened the ties between American and world-Jewry. For this we must thank him.

What do I mean when I say that the Jewish conscience in America was strengthened? We see it most clearly in the decade since the end of the war. During these ten or a dozen years, the American Jewish community has been in a state of growth and renaissance. Since 1946 American Jews have raised among themselves and spent approximately \$300,000,000 (M) on synagogues, hospitals, community centers, old age homes and other institutions which were designed to express the Jewish spirit of survival. It might be said that all of the frantic building is simply part of the complex of America for physical growth without any spiritual content behind the growth. It might be charged that these vast synagogues are largely empty and that



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these huge community centers are simply recreational areas without any Jewish program. And there is undoubtedly truth in these charges.

On the other hand it must also be seen by any careful observer that there is a search for deeper Jewish values going on parallel with this physical plant expansion. There is a knowledge that we are shockingly short of teachers; there is a struggle to produce a Jewish literature and scholarship; there is vigorous experimentation with new religious forms which will attract the youth; there are week-end institutes in rural surroundings where small groups of interested people sit at the feet of Jewish scholars; there are summer camps for children, devoted to Jewish education; there is an expanding day-school movement; there is a growth in the number of rabbis being trained; there is a constant search for more and more professional Jewish civil servants to supply the needs of constantly expanding community federations; there are the needs of Jews in suburbs which are growing around all of our major cities; etc. etc.

I am not sure in my own mind, therefore, whether it is entirely fair to make the charge that the great building program which consumes so much money and energy is entirely hollow. I would hope that the educational,



cultural and spiritual growth of the American Jewish community would not lack behind its physical growth. And because I would hope that this is true, I am optimistic about the future of Judaism and Jewish survival in a friendly America. Whether Hitler provided the impetus, or whether it came from other sources, I think it is fair to describe American Jews today as being oriented in the direction of separate and distinct existence in a country where it would be terribly easy for them to merge all differences and disappear into the majority.

Therefore, if the American Jewish community wanted to concern itself solely with its own affairs, to continue this trend toward Jewish expansion and survival, that might not be wholly bad, because if Judaism can grow in depth and breadth in the United States, that would certainly be terribly important for the long-range historic objectives of the Jewish people and faith.

But the wonderful thing to me, the thrilling and exciting thing is, that while American Jews have been concerned with their own affairs, they have not forgotten for a moment, certainly not in this very same last decade, the needs, hopes and aspirations of Jews in Europe and Israel. If

they spent \$300,000,000 on themselves in the past decade, you should know that they have spent for overseas needs during the very same decade over \$900,000,000 through the UJA alone. This does not include the hundreds of millions of dollars which have been sent to Israel in other forms, through the Bond Organization, capital investment by private Jews, and separate and specialised interests such as the University, the Weizmann Institute, the Hadassah Medical Program and many other organizations.

The decade has really been a saga of the human spirit in which we have tried to wipe out the memory of Hitler through the singing voices of immigrants going to the new land and the singing voices of children in Jewish classrooms all over the old continent of Europe. One is moved to speak in these poetic terms, because this has really been a great drama of stubbornness, refusal to die, determination to grow.

*outline  
problems ahead (see other sheet)  
say we will meet the needs*

If I said that this was an age of despair, as far as mankind in

*finish with this  
paragraph as  
peroration*

general is concerned, I do not think it has been an age of despair in

Jewish life. We do have a direction. We are not floating aimlessly. We

*Morocco (emphasis  
with writing and some  
integration -  
will be forgotten)*

know what we want. Why do all these men, the ones here today in the American

*Poland  
Israeli security*



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delegation, and the countless thousands of others not here, work so hard?

Why do they give their money and their time. They do it because they want

to rebuild Europe. They do it because they want to help build Israel.

They do it because they want to save Jews, as Jews, from death, dis-

appearance, assimilation. They do it, because, whether they can express it

or not (and Americans are shy of using grand terms to describe their own

motivations) they feel they have something in which they believe, and this

is the philosophy of Jewish survival.

summary