



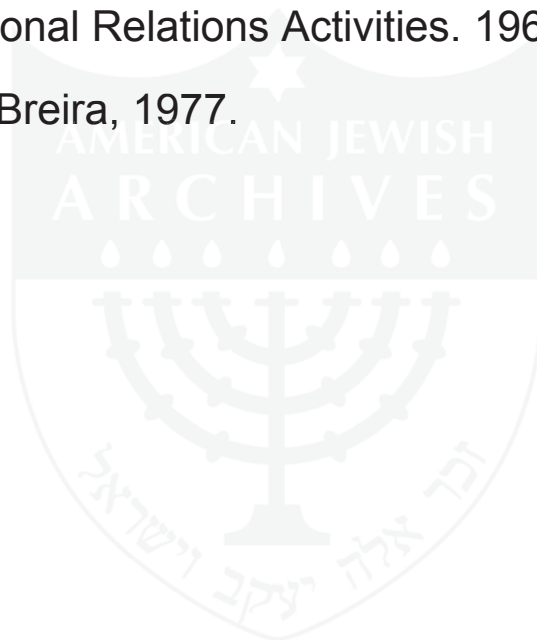
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 56, Folder 3, Breira, 1977.



March 10, 1977

George Gruen

Inge Lederer Gibel .

Thank you very much for sharing with me Steven Shaw's memorandum to Albert Chernin on Breira. I have never had the pleasure of meeting Shaw but I am highly impressed by his very fair analysis of the situation and hope that you will share my feeling with him.

As to the "generational conflict" you specifically queried me about, I suppose one answer might be found on page 4 where Shaw is kind enough to include me, along with Max Ticktin and David Wolfe Silverman, as among the "important," "mainline" voices in Breira while at the same time mentioning David Szonyi and David Tulin, at least one of whom belongs to precisely that generation, the "Havura" generation, of which he speaks. But then again, he may be right about some of the parental reactions.

I do hope you are planning to give this piece the widest possible distribution here or at least refer to it in the background piece that your department has been working on. I am, as you can see, taking the liberty of sharing it with Marc Tanenbaum.

Again, my thanks for giving me a chance to read this and respond.

ILG/es

✓cc: Marc H. Tanenbaum



March 2, 1977

MEMORANDUM

TO: Albert D. Chernin, Executive Vice Chairman  
National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council

FROM: Steven Shaw, Director  
JCRC of Bergen County

RE: Breira and its Critics: Some Reflections on the Organized  
Jewish Community's Response to Dissent

I am writing this memorandum at the suggestion of Rabbi Emmanuel Rackman, who, together with Professor Irving Greenberg, recently chaired a meeting on the Breira controversy in the offices of Robert Arnow, Joint Campaign Chairman of New York Federation/UJA. (Present, in addition to a representative of Breira and several neutral parties including myself, were Philip Hochstein and Elinor Lester of the Jewish Week.)

\* \* \* \*

Breira describes itself as a "project of Israel/Diaspora concern...A 'choice' for shared Responsibility between Israel and the Diaspora." Its more extreme critics have seen it as a plot to "sell out Israel" a conscious or unconscious front for the PLO: a group dominated by "New Leftists" with primary commitments to a questionable brand of radical universalism and a disdain for more traditional Jewish (and Israeli) commitments.

More moderate critics have pointed out that at times Breira's positions while certainly intellectually respectable, have shown a remarkable insensitivity to the deep feelings of the mass of American Jews. And whether knowingly or not, these critics maintain, Breira has the potential for undercutting Israeli foreign policy by giving the erroneous impression that American Jewry is deeply divided over its support for Israel and her current policies.

The most extreme criticism of Breira has appeared in articles in the American Zionist, an item in a Hadassah newsletter ("Update," May 17, 1976), a pamphlet authored by Rael Jean Isaac called "Breira: Council for Judaism," and in a barrage of front page articles which have appeared in the Jewish Week both in New York and in Washington over the last two months. The Isaac pamphlet, which at least on the surface, appears to be well researched and "objective," has been distributed as authoritative either officially or unofficially by several national Jewish organizations who are members of NJCRAC.

IF WHO  
YOU  
WANT TO  
KNOW?

In its own defense, Breira supporters have pointed out that most of the accusations against the organization have consisted of innuendos, half truths and guilt by association (i.e. much of the material in the Isaac piece and in the rather unprofessional journalism contained in the Jewish Week) and have had little relationship to official Breira policy or public statements. It has been noted that individuals with alleged anti-Zionist commitments and pro-PLO ties who Rael Isaac claims really control Breira, either have no (or only peripheral) relationships to the organization and its decision making structure, or else have repudiated their past "youthfully misguided" involvements; yet they continue to be subject to McCarthy-like vilification for purposes which are not as beneficent and high-mindedly objective as they may at first seem. Thus, these people point out, it is not generally known by most of the individuals who read the Isaac's piece (and its well-financed campaign reportedly now has printed or distributed well over 10,000 pamphlets) that the author and her organization - "Americans for a Safe Israel" - have close ties with various right wing groups such as the Greater Israel Movement and Gush Emunim (both of which are strongly opposed to any territorial concessions to the Arabs). Her facts and research methods are also open to serious question since she is reported never to have interviewed any of the principals whose politics and ulterior motives she analyzes and has had no contact with Breira's leadership or professional staff. One example may suffice, although we still await a detailed response from Breira. Thus, Barry Rubin and his alleged ties to MERIP, a group sympathetic to PLO interests, occupies almost forty per cent of the text of the Isaac pamphlet. That Rubin joined MERIP when he was nineteen, resigned from the group six years ago, and has since been a strong and committed Zionist who has spoken and written frequently for mainline Jewish groups, is never mentioned. Nor is it brought out that Rubin is not a member of Breira and has had little influence in its policy making circles. Moreover, it would seem to be the case that most of her other "facts" concerning Breira's Washington constituency which form the basis for the piece, were gathered by two individuals who are generally regarded as "crazies" by the Jewish professionals who know them.

Finally, Breira's defenders point out that they are very willing to be argued with on the basis of their stated political positions and on issues about which they have served as a forum for discussion (i.e. private meetings with the PLO, the importance of a Palestinian state - whether supported by the PLO or other Palestinians, etc.) but they react with incredulity and anger to what many neutral observers feel has been the hysterical nature of the attacks against the organization with distortions of evidence often bordering on a witch hunt or heresy trial.

In fact, despite the widespread and vicious nature of the attack and the respectable image of some of the national organizations who are leading it, a number of prominent individuals, primarily in the academic world, have come to Breira's defense. While not necessarily supporting all of Breira's positions or leadership, these voices have expressed alarm at the harsh and often questionable methods used to stifle dissent in this case. Open and critical discussion of issues, they feel, can almost always serve our best interests in the long run. In fact, once the issues are fairly explained, I would venture to say that a majority of the membership of the American Professors for Peace in the Middle East would emerge as sympathetic to Breira's right to present dissenting positions on Israeli foreign policy and Israel/Diaspora relationships and would express severe condemnation of many of the questionable tactics currently being used to discredit the organization.

Breira may or may not survive the viciousness of its attackers who seem determined to destroy the group at all costs. Frankly, Breira's continued viability does not concern me as much as the shortsighted and ill-considered nature of the organized Jewish response and what it has revealed about the low level of our communal sophistication and tolerance of dissent. Even if it be granted that Breira is harmful to Jewish interests - conceived of in the broadest sense - something not at all self-evident but certainly possible - the questionable methods used by its critics, may ultimately backfire and reflect negatively on the Jewish community as a whole.

Thus, I would contend that it was not Breira's "insidiousness" or publicity hunger that brought about its current fame or notoriety, but rather the unwise over-reaction by several national organizations and some of the Jewish media which enabled a new group, led largely by young people with limited resources and political skills, to gain national attention in a very short time. The issue of "Breira and the stifling of dissent by the Jewish establishment" is now a real one thanks to us, and a worthy subject of attention in the national media. I would not be surprised, for example, if we do not see our "dirty linen" bared in public in the magazine section of the New York Times and other news weeklies soon. Breira might have been seen as being too obscure and unnewsworthy, had certain individuals and organizations not over-reacted in such a blatant fashion. You can be sure, that we in the "Establishment" will not "look good" once the facts are made available to the general public.

Finally, through its totally inappropriate response to the challenge posed by Breira, our national organizations (with one notable exception - the American Jewish Committee which has refused to join in with the general hysteria and condemnation and true to its professional and sophisticated style, has commissioned its own careful and independent research) have again proven that many of our constituent bodies have little understanding of a whole generation of young Jews and even less relevance to their concerns and life styles.

I say this, because I am convinced that we are guilty of a gross misunderstanding if we see Breira solely in ideological or political categories. Just as significant - in fact, in some cases perhaps more so - is the sociological dimension of the organization and the potential needs that it may fulfill for a not insubstantial segment of younger Jews for whom existing organizations are largely irrelevant. While certainly not a phenomenon confined just to young people, Breira has attracted some of our brightest and sophisticated committed young adults now in their 20's and early 30's. These are individuals who grew up in the 60's when the counter culture and the Vietnam War were dominant socializing influences; they are among those who formed Response magazine, began havurot, brought the issue of Jewish education to the general awareness of the Federation movement and produced the Jewish Catalog - a now historic document whose first volume has already sold almost a quarter of a million copies (not exactly an insignificant cultural achievement...) Breira, in fact, has aroused a wide sympathy among young academicians and people who presently staff the lower ranks of departments of Jewish studies and religion. It also may have a not unsubstantial cadre of "closet sympathizers" among the younger members of the "Jewish civil service" who hail from this same sub-culture. Many of these groups received their significant Jewish experiences while at Camp Ramah, within Reform youth movements or at Zionist summer camps. Israel for them is a reality - not a dream or a fund-raising goal. Many of them have spent considerable amounts of time there - as students, kibbutzniks or on long-term summer programs. Thus, their perception is different from an older generation who often viewed Israel largely through the eyes of a UJA mission guide. They know something about the diversity of opinion that is constantly and forcefully expressed everyday in the Israeli press; they have seen

Israeli problems first hand and are unwilling to either use "worship of Israel" as a substitute Jewish religion or to take devotion to a Jewish State as a way out of developing a meaningful and distinct Jewish life here in America. Thus, to see the members of Breira as anti-Israel, non-Zionist, or "naive dupes of the PLO" is both patently untrue and rather ridiculous. History may prove elements of their political position to have been wrong - but if so, then they will be in good company with some rather substantial Israelis of a wide variety of party affiliations - including several within the present government's tenuous coalition.

Rather than condemnation and hysteria and threats of job loss (presently directed at some of the best Hillel staff), I would expect that a more mature and healthy Jewish community would welcome the intellectual stimulation and youthfully refreshing energy that such individuals could provide for the wider Jewish polity. That this has not exactly been the case bears sad witness to the state of Jewish organizational life in the diaspora and to the potential for misunderstandings that exist between Israel and America through inadequate Israeli governmental organizational structures which seem incapable of dealing creatively or intelligently with such forces.

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I would like to offer several additional observations in an attempt to explain the vehemence of the attack against Breira and the intense anger generated by those opposing it.

In part, the opposition has been due to the erroneous perception that Breira is dominated by Arthur Waskow whose rather Messianic (and I believe, naive) political views have appeared on occasion on the Op-Ed Page of the New York Times. While it is true that Waskow is a member of Breira's Executive Board, he by no means dominates it. Far more "mainline" voices such as David Tulin of Philadelphia, Max Ticktin of Washington, David Szonyi, Inge Gibel and David Wolfe Silverman of New York play considerably more important roles. But in all fairness to Waskow, the role he played at the Breira National Membership Conference last week was both statesman-like and entirely conducive to very reasonable compromise. Considering where he began, Arthur Waskow has come a long way since his Freedom Seder and has revealed himself as being far more of a "mentsch" than most of his attackers - almost none of whom have ever met this "monster." In view of the delicate situation of Breira's public image, from a public relations standpoint conventional wisdom might have dictated that Waskow be removed. But until now, Breira people have refused to "acquiesce" to the methods used by most other Jewish organizations. Of course, even if they did remove Waskow (or if he voluntarily agreed to resign his position) one seriously wonders if this would make any substantial difference in how Breira is perceived. "It's just a trick," Breira's detractors might contend since "we know that he's really running things, no matter what his title is..."

This brings up my second point: much of the controversy over Breira might usefully be seen in traditional "religious" categories. At least in the popular mind, support for Israel frequently functions as a kind of "civil religion" for American Jews - including those high in the secular organizational hierarchy. Because of the strong emotional components involved, criticism of Israel is seen as damaging to "the faith" and therefore it must be fought at all costs. If this analogy is

correct - and I believe it is at least for many of the people involved - then there is also no possibility to "falsify" the evidence. Just as in dealing with individuals holding simplistic faith commitments, the old certainties must be adhered to no matter what the cost. Anyone challenging them (even if he claims to be a true friend of religion, albeit a more sophisticated one) is seen as a dangerous heretic. In the matter at hand, perfectly respectable Jews with long histories of love, support and involvement with Israel are now suspect - either as dupes of the PLO or simply naive, but potentially harmful "do-gooders." The possibility that a certain kind of criticism might be the sign of a mature relationship to Israel is discounted since, for these "true believers," Israel has functioned more as a myth than as a reality. All the shades of grey that any reality brings with it arouse intense anxiety and general uneasiness.

One further element may be worth mentioning - at least on the level of possible explanation. This is the effect of the generation gap which, at times, seems to divide the perception of parents from those of their siblings who have diametrically opposing reactions to Breira. On several occasions, my contemporaries who were not necessarily members or even supporters of Breira, but know the people who are - have confessed to me their utter frustration in trying to explain to their suddenly hostile parents, why Breira might not be as terrible as The Jewish Week has made the group out to be. In part of course, the air has already been poisoned by irresponsible journalism - but perhaps only in part. On different occasions, two sociologists - Dr. Egon Mayer of Brooklyn College and Dr. Charles Liebman of Bar Ilan, have remarked to me that they would suspect that a good deal of the anger directed at Breira is actually displaced hostility, originally felt towards the New Left, now emerging several years later - which could not be expressed when one's own growing children were part of the phenomenon. The fact that Breira can only very imperfectly be explained as a New Left or counter-culture movement, seems besides the point. Much of the lack of communication between two different generations has its parallel when one listens to people in their twenties talk with complete acceptance and even with great sensitivity and responsibility of pre-marital sex, and then discovering that their parents can only view this fact with distaste and condemnation (i.e. Arthur Green's treatment of sexuality - "A Dissenting View" in the Second Jewish Catalog).

If this assumption is correct, then we are dealing not simply with a cognitive gap between parents and children - where parents can dismiss their sons' and daughters' views as being immature or irresponsible - as might have been the case when those sons and daughters were teenagers. Instead, we are now facing two different views of the world leading to differing ideological and political positions. One, influenced by forces such as the Great Depression, the Second World War, and the Holocaust and the Creation of Israel in 1948 - often has a strong emphasis on survival at all costs. This, of course, is entirely natural since this generation saw the terrible consequences of Jewish powerlessness. The second, growing up in an age of Vietnam protests, the ecology movement, distrust of governmental and Bureaucratic structures, facing a world of technological progress sometimes run rampant - often has a very different vision of reality and its life goals. The fact that this second generation largely grew to adulthood when the State of Israel was an existing reality is also an important datum to consider. Ideally, at least, these two different "world views" or generational perceptions do not necessarily have to be seen as mutually exclusive. Both may be able to learn from and serve

as a necessary corrective to the excesses of the other. But because of the political campaign launched by the forces behind the Isaac pamphlet, and the generally ill-considered and counterproductive over-reaction of some segments of our community, essential dialogue and meaningful personal encounter is not taking place. I for one, think this is tragic for both sides and for the good of the American (and Israeli) Jewish community.

The explanations tentatively offered above, are meant to be more suggestive than either exhaustive or authoritative. I do not wish to discuss the ideological dimension - which is certainly very real (and either "challenging" or "dangerous" depending on one's point of view). My main point is, however, that we must also understand Breira as a social phenomenon before we decide upon the correct course of action to be taken in dealing with it.

\* \* \* \*

Important issues are involved here and they need to be discussed openly within the Jewish community in dialogue with members of Breira and their contemporaries. Some points for discussion might include:

- a. The limits to debate on issues affecting Israeli foreign policy by Jews residing in the Diaspora, but still touched by Israel's decisions.
- b. "Private" vs. "public" debate. When, if ever, might it be necessary to "go public."
- c. The creation of a meaningful forum for discussion on issues concerning more than just Israeli foreign policy, including the current State of Israel/Diaspora relationships; the quality of Jewish life in the Diaspora and its relation to Israel as both a cultural and spiritual center; re-definitions of Zionism, etc. Oddly enough, the Zionist movement itself, along with its official structures, is no longer regarded by many informed observers as the proper vehicle for such discussion. This is an important comment on the viability and flexibility of many of our present agencies - and their relevance to a new generation of Jews (cf. David Vital's article in the November, 1976 issue of Midstream, "Israel and Jewry").

Even if one should hold that the continued existence of a group such as Breira is ultimately harmful to Israel's best interests and could hamper her foreign policy initiatives and search for peace, I would still maintain that the present techniques of "heresy hunting," putting people in "herem," and spreading half-truths when dealing with Breira, are counterproductive and will only make it more difficult to gain the group's support and utilize its potential creative energy when total unquestioned support for Israeli policies becomes an absolute necessity. Honest discussion, open-minded personal encounters and fair debate can only strengthen our community and serve to bring the Breira constituency into the Jewish polity as responsible members, rather than to isolate them as pariahs and thus serve to make some segments of this group more extreme and less mature citizens of the Jewish People.

On the other hand, I am convinced that there is a considerable openness on the part of Breira's leadership and general membership. This was amply demonstrated by the



moderate and well thought-out tones of almost all of the carefully debated platforms adopted at the National Membership Conference earlier this month. In fact, much of the valid criticism of Breira - some of which is contained in a particularly insightful article by Alan Mintz in the current issue of Response (which appeared after the conference and was written before the Jewish Week's vicious attacks) would seem almost to have been absorbed by many of the conference participants through the sensitivity with which political platforms were formulated and general discussion carried on.

\* \* \* \*

Because of the unexpected length and complexity of what I just thought would be just a simple "memo," but which now seems to have turned into a rather rambling "position paper," I would like to conclude with a summary of my two major points.

1. The Jewish Community's Response to Breira as an Organizational and Political Phenomenon: A Plea for Restraint, Objectivity, Dialogue and Open Political Debate

In the first portion of this memorandum, I attempted to counter what I considered some of the mis-information and polemically biased treatments concerning Breira (i.e. The Rael Isaac piece, the on-going attacks by The Jewish Week, etc.). I would only re-emphasize again, that it is my impression that most otherwise informed Jewish professionals and concerned lay leaders with whom I have talked, do not have anywhere near all the facts about Breira which would facilitate their making a more rational decision about the organization and its politics. I would, therefore, put in a plea for restraint in formulating a final judgement about the group and in developing a strategy for the Jewish community's dealings with it. This lack of information is due to many factors besides the not always openly stated political motivations of some people for wanting to destroy a "dovish" group. Some of my guesses about these motivations and their strong emotional overtones are contained in the latter part of this paper.

However, there is another factor that has contributed to this misunderstanding. Breira's policies have not always been clear or well-disseminated. Articles have been written by people who are members of Breira, but it is by no means certain that these pieces represent the feelings of Breira's leadership or constituency. Now that its first national membership conference is past history, Breira has the obligation to widely disseminate its political platforms and should be praised or called to task for their contents. Breira also has the obligation - since the conference and the intense staff preparation time that it entailed is over with - to provide a clear and detailed response to the charges against the organization which are contained in Rael Isaac's work. If the group now "does its homework," then hopefully the Jewish community must see to it that the time for rumors, bad journalism, guilt by associations and general hysteria is over. Breira must be confronted on the basis of a more objective understanding of the facts: its stated political platforms and positions; the seminar proceedings from its national membership conference; and the quality and nature of the

articles contained in its monthly publication, Inter-change (which incidentally, I find to be one of the most stimulating Jewish newsletters that crosses my desk each month). The above is not a plea for support of Breira, but rather an appeal to our traditional sense of fairness, good sense and healthy tolerance towards the responsible expression of different views. How else can we ever arrive at intelligent policy decisions, other than through the dialectical method of give and take? And while more experienced and cynical observers might say I may be naive, I think I have every right to my "naivety" on this point.

2. The Wider Sociological Implications of Breira: The Coming of Age of the Generation of the "Generation Gap"

Regardless of what one may conclude about the wisdom of Breira's political stance after all the facts are in, the organized Jewish community must seek to understand what it can learn about the huge gap in generational perceptions if the second part of my analysis is correct. Thus, if we are going to revitalize much of our top (and bottom) heavy community structures, and deal both more creatively and effectively with important segments of our alienated and not so alienated Jewish young adults, I think some of my sociological observations must be discussed and critically debated. Under this rubric, Breira may just be a ripple or the tip of an iceberg for all kinds of other broader and perhaps more significant issues. And while I am sure they exist in every age with the normal clash of different generational interests, my intent here was only to put forth the claims of some of my contemporaries and ask that they be taken more seriously.

\* \* \* \*

The question facing us now is how will the more mainline, well-organized Jewish community respond to this challenge. Whether or not Breira can come under the rubric of NJCRAC is an open question. I hope it can, but I realize that in view of current tensions within NJCRAC itself this may not be possible at present. But at the very least, I would hope that some form of mature and open discussion be initiated between members of Breira along with more neutral parties and some mainline organizational leadership before greater damage is done and whole generation of younger Jews become even more cynical about "The Establishment."

I would be pleased to discuss these matters with you in person, if you should so desire, and would offer any abilities I may have as a mediator to help bring the various parties to this conflict together.

SS:bb

c.c. Rabbi Emanuel Rackman  
Mr. Robert Arnow  
Prof. Irving Greenberg  
Prof. Elie Wiesel

### A Postscript

Reading over this memo after it was finally typed (something that unfortunately took over a week), has made me aware of several significant omissions, only one of which I now feel impelled to bring up:

Nothing was said in my position paper about the role of Breira's newly elected chairman, Arnold Jacob Wolf. This omission, however, was only too apparent after just having attended a major seminar arranged by our Federation's Women's Division yesterday which dealt with the viability of a secularist position for the assurance of meaningful Jewish survival for American Jewry. Central to the program was a dialogue between Rabbi Wolf, a noted theologian who serves as Jewish Chaplain at Yale University where he also teaches Jewish philosophy, and Ms. Naomi Levine, the Executive Director of the American Jewish Congress.

Perhaps because of the now poisoned atmosphere concerning the subject of Breira (a term which now seems to function much like a "dirty word"), teenage representatives of the JDL wasted the first portion of our tightly structural program castigating the audience of almost 300 women for allowing such an "enemy of Israel and friend of the Arabs" to have a public platform. The fact that Rabbi Wolf was there to present a traditionalist or neo-orthodox religious approach to Jewish Life (and the JDL members obviously conceived of themselves as "religious Jews") was certainly ironic. And while we had clearly agreed beforehand not to allow Breira to become a topic of discussion, the vicious personal attacks made against Arnold Wolf obviously demanded some form of response. Thus, after lunch and before we began the second portion of our all-day seminar, Rabbi Wolf was allowed several minutes to respond to his accusers. He did so in an entirely non-polemical and statesman-like fashion - something also consistently demonstrated by his firmness and fairness in chairing the National Membership Conference - arguing only for the freedom of Jews, who care deeply about Israel, to talk with one another in love and concern, regardless of their political differences. Arnold Wolf is known as both extremely thought-provoking and controversial speaker (depending on who is doing the evaluating). His credentials on Israel are as good as any rabbis' (I happen to know that his yearly gift to UJA given regularly over the last ten years would put most of his colleagues to shame). The fact that his co-discussant then felt impelled to polemicize against Breira's purported position (details of which were never made clear) was, I think, both unfair - since Wolf, who I think, could have easily demolished her was not allowed to respond - was typical of the kind of anger that Breira has aroused.

Whether our Federation will be able to provide a more suitable format for serious discussion of these issues is an open question - particularly in view of the kind of heated atmosphere that already exists. NJCRAC's Israel Task Force recommendations and loud silence regarding these issues during the exceedingly tame discussion session at its annual Plenum, will certainly not make this important task any easier.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

**date** March 29, 1977  
**to** Staff Listed Below  
**from** Phyllis Sherman  
**subject** Program Strategy Meeting - April 7, 1977  
 10:00-12:00 - Room 800-A

The topic selected by our agenda planning group for our discussion on April 7th is "Should Criticism of Israeli Policies Be Publicly Aired and How Should AJC Respond to Dissent in the Jewish Community on Middle East Issues?"

We are indeed fortunate that Professor Charles Liebman of the Jewish Theological Seminary has agreed to lead off our discussion. Professor Liebman has written an important work on the subject entitled, Pressures Without Sanction. Attached as background for our discussion is the last chapter of that book. Also attached are "Group Solidarity and Dissent in Israel-Diaspora Relationships" by George Gruen and "Israel and Jewry Digging In" by David Vital. Please be sure to read this material in advance of the meeting.

I might also mention that while Breira is a valuable case study with regard to this issue, the agenda planning committee did not intend that the discussion should focus on the pros and cons of Breira's philosophy per se.



PS:mb  
 Enclosures

- |                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| Bert Gold        | Israel Laster    |
| Harold Applebaum | Haskell Lazere   |
| Judy Banki       | Irving Levine    |
| Marilyn Braveman | Sidney Liskofsky |
| Sylvia Edelman   | Sam Rabinove     |
| Milton Ellerin   | Gladys Rosen     |
| Morris Fine      | Yehuda Rosenman  |
| Harry Fleischman | James Rudin      |
| David Geller     | Seymour Samet    |
| Inge Gibel       | Nancy Seifer     |
| Joe Girodano     | Ira Silverman    |
| George Gruen     | David Singer     |
| Selma Hirsh      | Marc Tanenbaum   |
| Will Katz        | Ann Wolfe        |
| Sonya Kaufer     | Mort Yarmon      |

## GROUP SOLIDARITY AND DISSENT IN ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONS

(Discussion paper prepared for American Jewish Committee Task Force  
on Israel-American Jewry Interaction)

By George E. Gruen

### Framework and Assumptions

In thoughtful discussions of Israel-Diaspora relations the question inevitably arises as to what should non-Israeli Jews do when they find that they disagree with the official position of the Government of Israel either on a matter of basic policy or with regard to tactical measures which they regard as unwise. This paper does not presume to provide definitive answers to the dilemmas which confront concerned and committed Jews in the Diaspora when they are faced with appeals to group solidarity which limit their freedom to give full expression to independent, critical views. Nor is it our intention to present an exhaustive review of the literature on this complex issue. Our objective is simply to facilitate a more systematic examination of this subject by outlining the various arguments that have been marshalled on each side, illustrating the kinds of issues that have been raised, and finally noting the various forms and degrees of dissent that have been advocated by some as legitimate and constructive.

(While some of the following general comments may apply to other Diaspora communities as well, our focus will be upon the American Jewish community and its interaction with Israel.)

It might also be well to state explicitly at the outset two assumptions which set the parameters for this discussion:

1. Most American Jews feel some degree of attachment to Israel and are at least concerned about, if not deeply committed to the survival of the State of Israel. As for those Jews who are indifferent to Israel's fate, they are not likely to be swayed by appeals to group solidarity. Indeed this entire discussion will seem irrelevant and therefore of little interest to them.

2. Israel desires to achieve lasting peace in the Middle East, is committed to the preservation of a democratic society and is concerned for the welfare of Jews throughout the world. Consequently, irrespective of naturally differing perspectives and occasional disagreements between Washington and Jerusalem, there is no fundamental or irreconcilable conflict of basic interests between the United States and Israel on the governmental level or between American Jews and Israelis. There are of course some Jews who consider the State of Israel as inherently "sinful" -- as do the Satmar and Neturei Karta; or who regard Israel as threatening vital American interests in the Middle East -- as does Alfred Lilienthal, or as endangering what they consider the status and security of American Jews--as does Rabbi Elmer Berger. But for such groups and individuals the self-restraints upon dissent do not apply. They see a clear need to publicly criticize and dissociate themselves from Israeli policies and actions.

We are thus dealing with those elements in the American Jewish community who maintain an interest in Israeli affairs and would like to be supportive of Israel, but find that something Israel has done or failed to do upsets them greatly. Although this paper concentrates upon views and perceptions in the American Jewish community, it should be noted that some of the observations concerning group loyalty and dissent also apply, mutatis mutandis, to Israeli views of instances of action or inaction by American Jews which the Israelis regard as adversely affecting Israeli or general Jewish interests. (Some reported examples will be included in the discussion below.)

Arguments for Group Solidarity:

One of the primary arguments advanced for Jews in the Diaspora to suspend the voicing of criticism of Israeli policies is the importance of Jewish group solidarity to Israel at a time when it is "surrounded by enemies on all sides" and the Arabs are engaged in intensive international efforts to weaken Israel economically, isolate her diplomatically and ultimately to destroy the Jewish state if not through physical genocide then through "politicide". The Jewish communities of the world, and especially those of the United States and other Western democracies, are seen by both Israel and its adversaries as an important ally of Israel. Occasionally Israelis go so far as to declare that the Jews of the world are "our only reliable ally."

Continual signs of Jewish solidarity with Israel are considered important by both Israeli and Diaspora leaders as one

means of maintaining the morale of the Israeli public in the face of terrorist attacks and signs of diplomatic isolation. This factor has played a role in the public stances adopted by American Jewish organizations. For example, when the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations discussed how to respond to the first appearance of PLO leader Yasir Arafat before the United Nations General Assembly in November 1974, some persons noted that a massive Jewish demonstration near the United Nations was not likely to change delegates' votes and some believed it might even have the negative effect of attracting greater coverage of the PLO by the mass media than if the Jewish community did not draw special attention to the event.<sup>1</sup> While these points were generally conceded, they were outweighed in the minds of the organizers of the rally by the feeling that a massive outpouring of Jewish opposition to the PLO's participation in the UN debate was necessary to demonstrate to the Israeli public that American Jewry cared and was not indifferent to Israel's struggle. The rally also served as a means of channeling in an organized and nonviolent way the grassroots feelings of solidarity with Israel in her time of need that many American Jews -- as well as some non-Jews -- wished to voice.

Similarly, immediately following the adoption in November 1975 of a UN General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism, the government of Israel and the Jewish Agency convened an emergency conference of worldwide Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. Some thought that this Jewish summit conference would provide a timely



opportunity for a fundamental re-examination of Israel's political strategies and public relations tactics, as well as for the weighing of the options available to Israel to present its case more effectively in the international arena. It quickly became apparent, however, that the sponsors of the conference had in mind the more limited and specific objective of demonstrating and increasing world-wide Jewish identification with Israel. The conclave was in fact entitled "the Jerusalem Conference of Jewish Solidarity" and its purpose, as stated in the fervent opening address by President Ephraim Katzir, was "as a demonstration to the world of the unity of Israel, Zionism and Jewry, to repel the vile attack on the Jewish people" contained in the General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism, and "to plan together the steps that must be taken to strengthen and fortify the Zionist enterprise." The conference concluded on December 5 with an impressive ceremony at the Knesset (Parliament) in which all the participants from some 27 countries affixed their signatures to a formal Declaration expressing "the devotion of the Jewish people to Zion and its solidarity with the State of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

The conference program was so structured as to avoid discussion of any controversial political and therefore potentially divisive issues, such as Israel's public stance on the Palestinians, the policy of aerial raids against suspected terrorist bases in Lebanon, or the effect on peace prospects of establishment of new Israeli settlements in Sinai, the Golan Heights, and in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank). Instead, two days of intensive workshops

elaborated program recommendations to strengthen Jewish education, increase aliyah, maximize economic resources and stimulate investment in Israel, and to build "public solidarity" for Israel around the world. While these were no doubt laudable objectives, some delegates privately shared the view of the Latin American delegate who expressed to the press his disappointment at having travelled thousands of miles merely to endorse resolutions that he said could as well have been sent him by mail for comment. He had hoped to participate in a basic discussion of the changing international climate facing Israel to which he could contribute the particular insights of a resident of Latin America.

From the Israel Government's point of view, however, the conference had already achieved a major objective -- demonstrating to Jews and non-Jews alike that Israel could still count on the solidarity of world Jewry. Such demonstrations are important not only to maintain the morale of the beleaguered Israelis. They also have a practical value as a counterweight in the struggle with the Arabs for the economic and political support of the United States and other free countries. As the Arab states increasingly use their oil and petrodollars as both a threat and inducement to the United States to lessen its support of Israel, the evidence given to Washington that American Jews are solidly in support of Israel, it is argued, can serve to limit the amount of pressure the United States will bring to bear upon the Israel government to make concessions it regards inimical to its security. We need not go into the reasons for the prevalent view that

American Jews exert an influence on elected officials and upon the media far out of proportion to their numerical representation in the population. Whether true or exaggerated, this popular belief in Jewish power and influence has political significance. It means that American officials will think long and hard before taking action regarded by the Israel government as so dangerous to Israel's vital interests as to justify the calling out of what has been referred to as "Dinitz's troops" -- the Jewish masses in the United States. Thus Jewish solidarity with Israel is seen as serving to inhibit the extent of unwarranted American governmental pressure on Israel.

The spontaneous cancellation of thousands of flight and hotel reservations to Mexico in protest against the vote by the Mexican delegate in favor of the anti-Zionism resolution provided another demonstration of American Jewish solidarity with Israel and of the economic "clout" that the Jewish community could bring to bear when it felt sufficiently outraged. While it is hard to measure the economic influence of the American Jewish community -- e.g. to what extent the cancellations of planned conferences in Mexico by non-Jewish groups were prompted by a general sense of moral outrage or were initiated by Jewish members or travel agents -- this is a factor that must be weighed by American firms. An American corporation presumably will be more reluctant to capitulate to Arab boycott demands if it knows that such action will become public knowledge and provoke a storm of protest from American Jewish consumers and stockholders.

Fear of offending the highly sensitive and articulate pro-Israel Jewish public has also frequently been cited as a factor inhibiting some publishers and mass media producers from presenting pro-Arab positions or even views highly critical of Israel by Jewish sources. The extent to which these inhibitions influence publishing or broadcasting decisions is also impossible to measure, but the allegation that "the Jews control the mass media" and thereby prevent the dissemination of dissenting views is not and never was true. The Arab failure in the past to get much of a hearing was probably due in large part to their own ineptness at public relations and the extremism of their message.

Widely reported Arab threats to "drive the Jews into the sea" and blatantly anti-Semitic remarks by Saudi Arabian monarchs hurt the Arab image in the United States in the past and worked in favor of support for Israel. Popular American revulsion against the genocidal policies of the Nazis and a general sympathy for Israel's creation as a haven for the Jewish refugees of the extermination camps helped Israel win American support in the early years of statehood. Even though this factor is lessening as the memory of World War II fades and as an increasing proportion of the American public consists of persons who grew up after World War II, anti-Semitism is still looked upon with disfavor by the majority of Americans. The Arabs have begun to realize this and as their propaganda efforts become more professionalized and better financed, their spokesmen are also

becoming more articulate and soft-spoken.

A constant Arab propaganda theme is that the Arab world has always shown tolerance and understanding for Jews and Judaism; it is only "expansionist" Zionism and its supporters that they oppose. Consequently the Arabs have embarked upon a two pronged attack to increase Israel's international isolation and to diminish American popular and ultimately Congressional support, which has been so crucial to Israel. One prong of the attack -- and this is directed mainly to the newly independent countries who together with the Communist and Arab bloc constitute the majority of UN members -- is to deny that Zionism is a legitimate national or religious movement, and to charge instead, as did Yasir Arafat in his November 13, 1974 speech to the UN General Assembly, that:

Zionism is an ideology that is imperialistic, colonialist, racist; it is profoundly reactionary and discriminatory; it is united with anti-Semitism in its retrograde tenets and is, when all is said and done, another side of the same coin.

The second prong of the Arab attack is directed at public opinion in the Western democracies, and especially at liberal opinion in the United States, including American Jews. Thus, in his nationally televised speech, Arafat told the American public that his dream was to return with his people from exile to live in Palestine "in one democratic state where Christian, Jew and Moslem live in justice, equality and fraternity." The Arab propaganda task would obviously be made much simpler if

they could somehow separate American Jews from Israel. Arafat in fact chided European and American Jews for their support for a "racist" Jewish state and their opposition to his proclaimed ideal of a secular democracy:

Let us remember, Mr. President, that the Jews of Europe and the United States have been known to lead the struggles for secularism and the separation of church and state; they have also been known to fight against discrimination on religious grounds. How do they then refuse this humane paradigm for the holy land?

Those in Israel and in the Jewish community who argue that American Jews should suspend their expression of criticism of Israel "for the duration" point to this continuing Arab campaign to portray Israel as racist and discriminatory. If American Jews were to publicly express their criticism of defects in Israel's society such as the continuing gap in terms of education, employment and housing between the Israelis of European origin and those of Afro-Asian origin, or the unsettled controversies between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews on issues relating to religion and state in Israel, or the problem of land expropriated from Israeli Arabs in the villages of Ikrit and Biram, or the maintenance of suspected Arabs under preventive detention, would they not be giving ammunition and credibility to the Arabs for their slanderous barrage against Israel? If American Jews were to become critical of Israel, would this not send a signal to the Arabs that they could separate Israel from its natural base of support?

Possibly even more important, it is argued, if American Jews themselves criticized Israel government policies and Israeli society, would this not provide a "hechsher" or official stamp of approval for all those who wish to criticize and pressure Israel, <sup>enabling them</sup> to say, how can you accuse us of being anti-Semitic if your fellow Jews find your policies to be wrong?

The sense of this potential danger no doubt explains the gravity with which Israel viewed the Zionism equals racism resolution and the intensive campaign urged by UN Ambassador Chaim Herzog upon American Jewish organizations to declare publicly and unequivocally that they regarded the Arab attack on Zionism as an attack not simply against Israel but as an attack upon all Jews, Arab disclaimers to the contrary notwithstanding. (The controversy surrounding the probity and wisdom of Ambassador Herzog's releasing to the press his criticisms of the Jewish community for its allegedly apathetic response is discussed below.) In his address to the Presidents' Conference on October 24, 1975, Herzog termed the Assembly resolution "plain, unadulterated anti-Semitism." He warned the Jewish leaders:

If we do not today, as one people all over the world, speak out against this new international outburst of anti-Semitism, this medieval attack on our religion, we shall sin towards the future generations of Jews who will ask us where we were when this occurred. If we do not as a people demand an immediate stop to this new development, if we do not make it clear to each country which is a signatory to this document, what is its responsibility to the Jewish history and to the Jewish religion in this respect, then we shall be encouraging newer and more violent outbursts. Let us learn from the past and fight to defend what is so sacred to us.

Some observers privately expressed doubts as to whether this resolution would really provoke new anti-Semitic outbreaks around the world. Democracies, it was said, would not mistreat their Jews simply because of such an obviously partisan political ploy, while totalitarian states did not wait for a UN "hechsher" to persecute their Jews. But whatever its potential danger for world Jewry, the UN resolution did provide an immediate tactical opportunity for Israel to attempt to reverse the growing image of nearly total diplomatic isolation. Had the Arab states merely pushed yet another resolution denouncing Israel for allegedly mistreating Arabs in the occupied territories, denying the Palestinian refugees the choice of repatriation or compensation, and refusing to recognize Palestinian "rights of self-determination," they would probably have again scored a completely lopsided victory such as the 105 to 4 vote in October 1974, inviting the PLO to participate in the UN debate on the question of Palestine. Then only Bolivia and the Dominican Republic had joined the United States in supporting Israel's objection to Arafat's participation. By raising the specter of anti-Semitism and getting world Jewry to concur in this characterization of the issue, Israel now managed to win the support of 34 states, representing nearly all the democratic countries of the world and including the major Western European powers which had been gradually eroding their support of Israel under Arab economic and political pressure. It can be argued therefore that the solidarity displayed by world Jewry on this issue, despite some private reser-



vations as to the intellectual honesty of the Israeli position, no doubt played an important role in enabling Israel and the U.S. to bring together a significant group of countries to express openly their opposition to this Arab attack.

Other Arguments Against Diaspora Criticism of Israel

Among other arguments often given for Diaspora Jewry to refrain from criticism of Israeli policies is that Diaspora Jews do not share the burdens and responsibilities equally with Israelis. American Jews may contribute to UJA or buy Israel Bonds, but their contributions are voluntary acts. It is only Israelis who are required to pay the taxes to maintain the country's defense and must serve in its armed forces. It is the Israelis whose lives are on the firing line and therefore American Jews should refrain from the luxury of sniping from the sidelines or serving as armchair generals. "If you want a voice in Israeli affairs, come on Aliya" is the blunt response sometimes given by Israelis to Diaspora critics. The author recalls a conversation that some American Jews had a few years ago with then Minister of Religion, Zerach Wahrhaftig. When the Americans complained about the lack of official status granted to Conservative and Reform rabbis in Israel and the absence of the option of civil marriage, Dr. Wahrhaftig suggested to them that they bring several million of their adherents with them to Israel and then they would be able to act as a legitimate pressure group to modify Israeli legislation, even going so far as to run their own slate of candidates for the Knesset, if they wished.

Another argument used by Israelis is that Jews who do not live in Israel do not have the background and expertise to comment on the complex problems facing Israel. "You Americans don't really understand the Arabs as we who have lived with them for decades do," is a commonly heard Israeli response to what they consider naively dovish American proposals. Another dimension of this question is noted by Professor Charles Liebman in his paper in which he points out that not only are American Jews often ignorant of the complexities of Israeli politics and society, but that they subconsciously prefer it this way. For them Israel is a symbol with which they identify. To get American Jews deeply involved in Israel's day-to-day problems would inevitably tarnish the symbol for them and pose the danger of weakening the basis of their identification with Israel.<sup>6</sup>

A variant of the argument of lack of information which has been used even against those foreigners who do have acknowledged expertise in international relations and Middle East affairs is that the Israeli government's actions are based on secret information and hush hush contacts which cannot be disclosed prematurely. "Trust us, we know what we are doing and eventually you will see that we were right." Thus, for example, the timing and nature of the aerial bombardment in early December 1975 against Lebanese guerrilla targets in which many civilians were killed or wounded, was explained not as a sign of defiance against the UN or as a necessary move to satisfy the Israeli public which was naturally outraged over the wanton deaths caused by Arab

terrorist incidents and wanted the Israel government to demonstrate that it could and would revenge the shedding of Jewish blood. Such reasons might be debated pro and con on their merits as might the question whether punitive raids do or do not act as an effective deterrent to the local Lebanese population to cooperate with the terrorists who operate in their midst. The official Israeli explanation was that they had received secret intelligence information that terrorist leaders were meeting there and were planning stepped up raids into Israel. The timing of the raid was thus necessitated by the military consideration of knocking them off guard and disrupting their aggressive plans, which would have endangered countless Israeli civilian lives. If the raid hurt Israel's standing in American public opinion and if it was inconvenient for the U.S. because of Lebanon's internal problems that was just too bad. Israel also regretted any loss of Lebanese civilian life, but that was just not avoidable unless Israel was to risk greater numbers of Israeli civilian and military personnel through inaction. How many American Jews would be prepared to argue and say: "I have independent and better intelligence information to the effect that no major terrorist raids were being planned or that the PLO leaders were not planning to be at that place at that time"?

Similarly, Israel's adamant refusal to sit in the Security Council together with the PLO and its total rejection of a formula for dealing with the Palestinian question other than in the context of negotiations with Jordan has been criticized on

the grounds that it hurts Israel's standing with American public opinion. But this criticism would be less justified if Israel could demonstrate that its ostensibly hard line was part of a calculated strategy to enable King Hussein to resume an active role in negotiating a settlement. Various Israeli sources have dropped hints, confirming leaks appearing in the press, that there have been recent meetings between King Hussein and Israeli leaders. Here again American Jews are asked to suspend their own judgment and to trust that the Israelis know what they are doing and that when one looked at the overall picture, the temporary loss of a few points in American public opinion polls would soon be more than outweighed by the benefits that would accrue once the Israeli policy began to produce visible results in terms of real progress toward peace.

There is also concern among some Israelis and friends of Israel abroad that it will be hard to get and maintain the necessary deep sense of commitment and high level of personal involvement in Israel's cause among Diaspora Jews if the struggle in the Middle East is not presented in clear terms of the Israelis being morally<sup>right</sup> and the Arabs wrong. If the struggle is perceived not as between the forces of light versus the forces of darkness, but simply between varying shades of gray, will this not confuse and fragment the Jewish community with potentially disastrous consequences for Israel? There are already growing numbers of Jews who are asking questions quietly if not publicly such as those recently posed to the author by

a participant in an adult education series on the Middle East in Historical Perspective: "I am beginning to wonder about my long held assumptions that the Israeli version of history was always correct. Maybe it is just our propaganda versus theirs. Is there any objective truth?"

Why Is Diaspora Criticism of Israel Increasingly Being Voiced?

Already in March 1973, the Jewish Chronicle (London) noted in an editorial the increasing number of stories reporting "sounds of discontent within the American Jewish community about the relationship with Israel." While the essence of the complaint was that "Israel takes too much and gives too little," the editorial warned that this revealed only the tip of the iceberg. Noting that there were both emotional and practical reasons for submerging criticism in the past, the editorial nevertheless<sup>7</sup> cautioned:

A crisis that is maintained for twenty-five years is bound to lose some of its emotive qualities. The strains begin to appear and it is better to face the problems that emerge and take stock of all the implications before the essential Israel-Diaspora relationship is allowed to deteriorate into any sort of serious misunderstanding.

The editorial asserted that "the fact that dissent is now open shows how imperative it is to take action without delay." The editorial concluded with some suggestions for "regular and permanent consultation" between Israeli and Diaspora leaders to achieve greater understanding and "defuse the possibility of serious conflicts arising."

The editorial dealt primarily with the issues related to raising, allocating and supervising the expenditure of funds for Israel and posed questions concerning the impact of fund-raising for Israel in tending to "starve local community needs," the danger that an "expense-account morality was developing in Israel," as well as the long-range ethical and psychological effects upon Israel of dependence upon foreign aid and the growing materialism within Diaspora Jewish communities because the well organized mechanisms of fund-raising for Israel were tending to "debase traditional Jewish values by elevating only the wealthy into the seats of eminence."

One should note that this editorial restricted itself to the internal Jewish agenda and did not raise any basic issues of Israeli foreign policy. Some observers even believed that it was only because of the relative tranquility along Israel's borders as well as the booming Israeli economy following the Six-Day War that Diaspora Jews began to allow themselves the luxury of openly grumbling and questioning some aspects of Israel-Diaspora relations. The same issue of the Chronicle did contain an editorial, "Peace with Jordan," discussing Yigal Allon's proposal for a reappraisal of Israel's then current view that peace talks would have to begin with Egyptian President Sadat and to examine instead the possibility of beginning talks with King Hussein, the only Arab leader with "a real willingness to negotiate," and whose plan for a federal state linking the East and West Banks of the Jordan offered the possibility of "a measure of Palestinian self-

determination." The editorial was, however, deferential to the Israelis in its tone and did not presume to judge the issue on the merits. It concluded simply that "Mr. Allon's proposal is worthy of careful consideration by Israel's Government even in the knowledge that it can hardly be acted upon before the elections."

As it turned out, the Yom Kippur War was launched by Egypt and Syria before the Israeli elections, which had been scheduled for the end of October 1973. This created a new situation and subsequently aroused questions both within Israel and in the Diaspora as to whether Israel had not lost precious opportunities since 1967 by assuming that it could operate in a more leisurely time-frame than was really available to it. People began to ask whether responsible Jewish voices in the Diaspora, such as the respected editor of the Jewish Chronicle should not have pressed more forcefully for changes in Israeli negotiating postures and tactics.

The Yom Kippur War had paradoxical effects on the issue of Diaspora criticism of Israel. On the one hand, by once again demonstrating Israel's vulnerability to physical attack by hostile Arab forces, the war reawakened among Diaspora Jewry the sense of clear and present danger that they seemed to have forgotten during the euphoric period following the Six-Day War. The acuteness of the crisis reinforced the arguments, cited above, for the need for worldwide Jewish solidarity with besieged and beleaguered Israel.

General (Res.) Mattityahu Peled, one of Israel's most outspoken "doves" complained bitterly, upon his return from a speaking trip to the United States sponsored by Breira in the spring of 1975, at the extent to which he found American Jews, with few exceptions, "more Israeli than Israelis." In an article in New Outlook he complained that the Jewish community as a whole was "supporting the most intransigent views in Israel on the Arab-Israel conflict, in the belief that this is expected of it, and oblivious of the fact that Israel is not monolithic politically and that the hard line taken by the Israeli Government is seriously challenged within Israel." The American Jewish hostility to dissent from Israel's official line, he said, extended even to resentment at the existence of such divergent views in Israel. He cited a well-respected American Jewish leader as deploring the public debate within Israel itself since "Israel should appear united in time of crisis." Moreover, Peled found it "pitiable and outlandish" that even an Israeli shaliach (emissary) of a left and "dovish" movement such as Hashomer Hatzair, who in private agreed with him completely, then added that "it is quite 'unhealthy' to express such views 'here'."

On the other hand, the Yom Kippur War shook American Jewish complacency in another way. American Jews read of the popular protest movements and demonstrations within Israel and the official investigation into the causes of the "mechdal" -- the name given to the various acts of omission and commission that



had resulted in Israel's much praised intelligence establishment being deficient and its military preparedness lax in the face of the Egyptian-Syrian surprise attack. Until then, few would have thought of questioning the competence and virtually none dared question the rectitude of the towering figures who had brought about modern Israel's rebirth.

Nothing succeeds like success, and as long as the Israelis seemed to be winning, American Jews generally were prepared to accept the Israel Government's reassurances that it knew best what to do. The aftermath of the war saw the replacement of the charismatic leadership of Golda Meir and the tarnishing of the image of Israel's flamboyant and heroic Defense Minister Moshe Dayan. Professor Amnon Rubinstein, on his return from the U.S., described the effect on American Jewry as follows in a Ha'aretz article in September 1975:

Mrs. Meir was Queen of the Jews. She spoke to them not only as an Israeli representative but also as its head. She was also Mrs. Meir "the miracle worker": The miracle being a strong, invincible Israel which could say "no" to world leaders. . . . There was no reason to criticize the Israeli Government. But when the miracle ended, the situation changed. The reverence disappeared and the questioning began.

Professor Rubinstein, who is one of the leaders of Shinui (change), one of the post-Yom Kippur war political movements for structural and policy changes in Israel, noted that the relative lack of charisma of Israel's current leadership made it easier for American Jews to "ask questions, even aloud." Moreover, "the recently exposed corruption and blackmail in Israel shocked

American Jewry. Is that what the Israelid did with our money? Is that the way they used public funds?"

Since the reports of political incompetence and financial scandal in Israel were being reported by the general American media they could no longer be swept under the rug and American Jewish critics could now argue that they could not be accused of weakening Israel in the eyes of the non-Jewish world by discussing problems that had become public knowledge.

American Jews, especially those involved in "liberal" causes, had also been affected by the growing disenchantment with and distrust of officialdom within the United States in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate. It is surely not accidental that rabbis and younger Jewish laymen who had been active in the anti-Vietnam peace movement were prominent in the 1973 founding of Breira (choice), the most systematic and organized Jewish movement in the U.S. thus far for providing a hearing for generally more "dovish" alternatives to the Israel Government's official policy toward the Palestinians and the post-67 territories as well as for a more independent American voice in Israel-Diaspora relations. In an article in Davar on "Israel and the Territories: A Dissenting View," Rabbi Henry Siegman notes that an American Jew expressing views sharply at odds with official Israeli policy immediately faces two questions: "Is it conceivable that Israeli leaders whose commitment to decent and humane values is beyond question, and for whom peace is not merely an abstract goal but the very condition of survival, would pursue policies which make the attainment of peace more difficult?" And isn't an American who imagines he understands

the situation better than the Israelis -- whose very lives are on the line -- guilty of a very special hubris [Greek for hutzpah]?"

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He responds:

I must confess that if it were not for the experience of Vietnam I would have found these considerations intimidating. Vietnam has taught us their essential fallacy. Americans brought to Vietnam great ideals and the highest of moral values. Our policymakers were neither cruel nor stupid; on the contrary they were "the best and the brightest." They themselves now know how tragically misguided they were. And the most misguided of all were those with first-hand experience in Vietnam. . . .

Siegmán goes on to stress the basic differences between the Vietnam war and Israel's historically and morally justified struggle for survival. However, he believes that the Vietnam experience supports his argument that "people deeply involved in the stresses of military and political conflict are not necessarily the most objective and reliable judges of their own situation." Consequently, belief that Israel's cause is fundamentally just, "does not free one, however, from questioning aspects of Israel's policies that do not seem to serve that fundamental objective."

Another reason for the growth of <sup>a</sup>questioning if not yet openly critical attitude among increasing numbers of American Jews is the direct exposure for the first time of some American Jews, including religious and business leaders, to the Arab countries of the MiddleEast. Until 1967 it was exceedingly rare for American Jews to travel to Arab countries, in part because most Arab countries, with the exception of Egypt, made it difficult for Jews to enter unless they were clearly identified with pro-Arab and

anti-Zionist causes. It was thus possible for the mainstream of the Jewish community to dismiss the reports of such Jews as those of "traitors to the cause." There were also relatively few non-Jewish Americans who travelled to the Middle East and these were mainly career diplomats, Christian missionaries and educators who concentrated upon the Arab countries and whose views could similarly be discredited as reflecting a pro-Arab bias. American Jews tended only to visit Israel and thus their personal experiences had the effect of reinforcing the correctness of the Israeli version of Middle East history and the Israeli stereotypes of Arab attitudes and policies.

Beginning after the 1967 war and increasing upon the resumption of American diplomatic relations with most of the Arab states following the Yom Kippur War, many of the Arab states eased their entry regulations for Jews in their desire to attract American tourists and businessmen, and to present their case directly to American legislators, scholars, journalists, religious and business leaders and ordinary citizens as well. As a result, American Jews in still small but steadily increasing numbers, are returning from direct exposure to the Arab as well as the Israeli side of the line, often visiting both on the same trip. They note that Christian participants in such delegations, including those who can not be dismissed as biased or anti-Semitic, are increasingly finding the official Israeli explanations unsatisfactory and the Jewish participants in such fact-finding missions are often chagrined to find that they themselves lack satisfactory answers.

Some Jews then begin to question whether Israel's policy has been sufficiently flexible and imaginative in seizing every possible opportunity for peace. They will feel compelled to speak out if they return with a firm impression that "time is running out" and that unless Israel makes quick progress to reach an accommodation with the allegedly moderate elements in the Arab world, the present opportunity for peace will be irretrievably lost and a new and far more devastating war is likely to break out.

Arguments for Diaspora Dissent from Israeli Policies

Thus, one of the basic arguments in favor of the expression of views critical of Israeli policy by American Jews is a conviction that continuation of the current Israeli policy will lead to catastrophic results for Israel itself. An undated "Open Letter from Breira's Executive Board," appealing to other concerned Jews to join, declares:

Our immediate and overriding concern is peace in the Middle East. Our concern grows out of our love and respect for the people and the land of Israel as well as our understanding that the continuity of creative Jewish life in the Diaspora is inextricably linked to the existence of a free Israel.

We are not innocent bystanders. If we share anxieties about Israel's policies, we have the responsibility to say so. If we detect mistakes which might have catastrophic consequences, we must not ignore or swallow our concern: For the sake of Zion, we shall not be silent.<sup>11</sup>

Similar arguments are being made by outspoken critics of Israel's policies from the other side of the political spectrum as well. Such groups as SOIL (Save Our Israel Land), an offshoot of Rabbi Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League, the Committee for a Secure Israel, and the American supporters of the Land of Israel.

Movement have been vociferous in public statements and demonstrations before the Israeli Consulate in New York and elsewhere criticizing the Israel Government for succumbing to American pressures for concessions they believe threaten Israel's security and historic rights. They have been equally critical of Establishment Jewish organizations, and most notably the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, for allegedly supinely following the Israel Government's lead and for not speaking out in the face of what they regard as the intolerable American pressures to which the Rabin Government is being subjected.

The argument that dissent and open discussion have positive values for a democratic society that outweigh the benefits of conformity have also been advanced by scientists and sociologists alike. "The clash of doctrines is not a disaster, it is an opportunity," Alfred North Whitehead wrote in his Science and the Modern World.<sup>12</sup> In a resolution on Freedom of Speech, adopted on June 13, 1975, the Central Conference of American Rabbis noted "with interest and favor" the ongoing debate within Israel on various alternatives to bring about peace. The resolution by the organization of American Reform rabbis went on to declare:

Since the security of Israel remains our abiding commitment, we believe that such security is enhanced by free and open exploration of options for solving the multitude of problems Israel now faces. In this light we applaud the openness that is present in Israel and call upon the American Jewish community to recognize that diversity. Thus, we encourage a full discussion of alternatives in the North American community and call upon our movement to sponsor forums for open discussion of divergent points of view. No subject, including options for a solution to the Palestinian problem, should be ignored.

An Israeli, who is closely involved in Israel-American Jewry interaction, recently expressed the view privately that whatever the drawbacks of such open discussion, the advantages on the side of democratic values, common peoplehood and the involvement of good minds who now feel estranged are all on the side of open discussion. He noted that, of course, there is a price and therefore both sides must be responsible and use good judgment in the exercise of freedom of discussion.

General Peled argues that "tremendous damage is done to Israel" by American Jews who try to suppress the dissemination of dissenting "dovish" Israeli views. The result is that

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Israel is generally presented to the American public as a society of conservative chauvinists of whom nothing can be expected except intransigence and a desire for war. This is a terrible distortion of fact, and it is time that American Jewish leadership give some thought to the devastating consequences that may one day result from this image of Israel they help create in the general public's mind.

Another argument in favor of an independent stance by American Jews is the danger to American Jewry itself and ultimately to Israel from an automatic and unqualified identification of Jews in the United States with Israel Government policy. This concern is voiced both by the more "dovish" critics of Israel's current negotiating posture, such as Rabbi Siegman, and by the more "hawkish" critics, such as Samuel Katz, an Israeli author and publisher who is one of the founders of the Land of Israel Movement. (The English title does not adequately reflect the group's Hebrew name's concept of maintaining the "wholeness" of Israel

within its historic boundaries and opposing any territorial concessions.) Mr. Katz regards implacable Arab hostility as a given that cannot be changed by Israeli conciliatory moves and consequently he regards any signs of Israeli weakness as simply an invitation for renewed Arab attack. In a recent informal meeting at the American Jewish Committee in New York, Mr. Katz warned of the dangers to American Jewry if it did not adopt an independent stance from that of the Israel Government. If American Jews simply followed the zigs and zags in Israeli policy, automatically following Jerusalem's dictates, they would soon be regarded by the American government and the general public as nothing more than agents for a foreign power. Their loyalty would increasingly be subject to question. Not only would this pose a threat to their own security but ultimately this would be counterproductive to Israel itself, since the views of American Jews would be discounted and dismissed in advance as simply another example of special pleading by a foreign group. The basic strength of American Jewish support for Israel depends on the ability of American Jews to convince the 97 percent of the American public which is not Jewish that support for Israel is in the highest national interest of the United States itself. Only if American Jews adopt an independent stance, including occasional criticism of Israeli policies and actions, will they be able to maintain their credibility with the general American public.

The value of U.S. Jewry presenting an independent posture is illustrated by the apocryphal story told about the late Secretary



of State John Foster Dulles who allegedly remarked to an aide upon receiving a request for a meeting by the chairman of the Presidents' Conference, who was then a European-born rabbi, "Why should I waste my time meeting with Rabbi X, when I can hear the same arguments directly from Israeli Ambassador Abba Eban, -- and in much better English at that!"

Aside from this practical reason there is also an underlying philosophic or even ideological basis advanced for the right of Diaspora Jewish communities occasionally to criticize Israeli policies. This is in a sense the other side of the coin of Jewish solidarity. If the State of Israel is viewed, as its own founders viewed it, not as an end in itself, but as a means for the survival and creative development of the Jewish people, then all Jews, whether in Israel or outside have not only a right but an obligation to help Israel remain true to its ideals. It may be argued further that a fundamental basis of American popular support for Israel is not the geopolitical situation in the Middle East but the moral bond that unites the United States with Israel, rooted in the common Biblical commitment to "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." While the Israel government may because of domestic political considerations or in response to the pressures of realpolitik be forced to make expedient tactical decisions that seem to violate the principles of Western democracy or the prophetic ideals of social justice, it is the role of Diaspora Jews, who are not caught up in the day-to-day decisions and thus have a broader perspective, to remind Israel of its ultimate goals. American Jewry, it is argued, thus

has a duty to keep "Israel honest" by measuring its actions against the utopian ideal that no earthly state can achieve but toward which the Jewish State must constantly strive.

Such a supportive but independent role for American Jewry has also won public approval in some prominent Israeli circles. When Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, President of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, was recently elected as Chairman of the Presidents' Conference he was quoted, in an interview with Davar, the Histadrut daily, as declaring that "it will be a mistake to see us as an agency of the Government of Israel." The paper noted editorially that a somewhat independent stance would help establish bridges to the increasingly critical American Jewish intellectuals and university students and faculty.<sup>14</sup> Ha'aretz, Israel's leading independent morning paper, noted that Israelis should not be concerned over Schindler's efforts to make the Presidents' Conference more independent, since this did not mean a lessening of fundamental support for Israel, especially in view of the Reform movement's growing closeness to Zionism.<sup>15</sup> The editorial concluded:

An independent leadership of American Jewry and the exercise of its right to tell Israel also what Israel does not like to hear, are a condition for the strengthening of the largest Jewish community in the world and for the deepening of its partnership with the State of Israel.

#### Modes of Expressing Criticism or Dissent

Even if the principle is accepted that American Jewry has a right to criticize Israeli policies, there remains the practical problem in each case of deciding how to do so in a "responsible" and "constructive" manner. What are the outer limits of permissible

criticism? Most persons will agree, for example, that American Jews should feel free to speak frankly and even if necessary, bluntly, to Israeli leaders in private. A similar right is naturally accorded to Israeli representatives in their contacts with American Jewish leaders. The difficult question is what to do when private advice seems to be ignored? Should dissent be voiced publicly? Is there a difference between official pronouncements by Jewish organizations and the right of individual Diaspora Jews, be they academicians or lay or religious leaders, to expound in public their personal views on such issues as step-by-step negotiations, the territorial aspects of a settlement, or the proposals for electoral reform in Israel? Can prominent individuals, who hold official positions in the Jewish community, effectively make the distinction in the public mind that their affiliations are "for identification purposes only"?

There are, of course, also non-verbal ways of showing criticism. One is simply to remain passive or indifferent to Israeli appeals. The most extreme would be the threat of withhold UJA contributions and the purchase of Israel Bonds. But such threats obviously should never be made lightly, and certainly not as an empty bluff. A step short of the threat of withholding aid is the demand for greater accountability in the expenditure of funds contributed or invested by Diaspora Jews. Here it would seem that Diaspora Jews are on sound grounds both legally and morally.

But the modalities of remedying alleged abuses can vary. For example, in the wake of the financial scandals surrounding the Israel Corporation, the Rothschilds, whose money was involved, did not go public but insisted in behind-the-scenes meetings with Israeli leaders upon the appointment of independent auditors of their own choice to go over the books. They obviously had enough "clout" to have their demands met, although one should note that the Rabin Government publicly declared that it was committed to rooting out corruption and was prepared to let the chips fall where they might, including the indictment and conviction of the guilty parties in Israel.

Others, however, have followed the public route. For example, at its <sup>April</sup> 1975 annual conference, the Rabbinical Assembly, after some debate, approved the following resolution:

The American Jewish community cannot tolerate a situation which has led to allegations of corruption, mismanagement and substantial losses of direly needed funds. We urge, in this time of unprecedented peril for the State of Israel, that vehicles of mutual responsibility and accountability be established between Israel and the Diaspora. We are especially concerned that no funds collected for strengthening Israel be diverted, under whatever disguises, for support of political parties and other purposes for which they were not originally intended. We must insist that all who are responsible for the disbursement of philanthropic funds, whether in the United States or Israel, be held accountable for the manner in which these funds are spent in the Diaspora.

The rabbinical leaders of the Conservative movement then proceeded to remove some of the sting and implicit threat contained in this resolution by unanimously adopting another resolution calling upon President Ford and Secretary Kissinger to

"continue wholehearted American support" of Israel and to avoid pressing it to make concessions that would "jeopardize its safety and security." This resolution concluded with a declaration of the RA membership's solidarity with Israel, asserting "our emotional and spiritual unity with Israel, and our continued support of the UJA and Israel Bonds. We establish it as a priority during these days of crisis and isolation for Israel; we pledge our leadership in our community campaigns."

It has also been frequently suggested that certain areas, such as that of fiscal accountability of contributions, Israeli legislation concerning conversion and definition of who is a Jew, or the Jewish Agency's educational programs in the Diaspora clearly affect Jews outside Israel directly or indirectly and therefore Diaspora Jews can legitimately demand a right to participate in discussions and possibly even in decisions on such matters. However, it may be argued, some other areas should remain exclusively within the exclusive jurisdiction of Israel or of the respective Diaspora communities. Some examples cited in the area for non-interference are the internal political campaigns of each country, Israel's negotiation of final borders and decisions as to military strategy, or the voluntary right of American Jews to decide whether or not to go on Aliyah. But even in these areas, while the ultimate decision-making power must rest with one side alone, there is the gray area of offering advice, which some may regard as improper and others consider quite legitimate.

For example, Ambassador Herzog was criticized not so much for voicing his view that the response of the American Jewish

community to the resolution equating Zionism with racism was too weak and apathetic, but for doing so in the presence of the general press. Had this been merely an internal Jewish discussion of tactics, he might have been persuaded by the argument of Rabbi Israel Miller and others that the decision to hold off on Jewish public demonstrations was not due to apathy but out of a desire not to weaken the force of the expressions of outrage voiced by high American Government officials in Washington and at the UN by making it appear that they were the result of Jewish pressure rather than general moral indignation at the "obscene act" of the UN Assembly. The Jewish community had in fact been active behind the scenes in garnering non-Jewish expressions of condemnation. By publicly demanding greater Jewish activism on Friday, Herzog also made it appear that the advertisement by the Presidents' Conference, which appeared in the New York Times the following Sunday condemning the UN vote was simply the automatic knee-jerk reaction of American Jewry to the Israeli Ambassador's exhortation. Few Americans were likely to know that the Presidents' Conference had decided upon the ad the previous week and copy had already been submitted several days before Herzog's address. <sup>17</sup> Significantly, Herzog's remarks were criticized not only by American Jewish leaders but also by members of the Israel Cabinet. <sup>18</sup> Earlier controversies had erupted following alleged remarks by Israeli officials to the effect that President Nixon had done more for Israel than any previous administration or that vocal American Jewish criticism of United States involvement in Vietnam might be

harmful to Israel. These controversies are discussed in other Task Force papers. Suffice it here to note that while some Americans regarded such remarks as unconscionable Israeli interference in domestic American affairs, others defended the right of Israelis to express their opinions to Americans on issues which they believed might have critical consequences for future American governmental support of Israel.

Conversely, the question arises as to how far American Jews may go in giving support to Israeli political movements or to educational projects linked to political movements. Providing platforms for Israeli parliamentarians visiting the United States is already frequently done by like-minded groups. Disseminating their publications is another channel. Should the same standard be applied to government members as to those in opposition? And what of appeals by established or struggling new Israeli parties to recruit adherents and financial backers in the United States? Is this objectionable only if it involves UJA funds or are even voluntary solicitations to be regarded as totally improper?

There is of course an inherent asymmetry in the relationship between a sovereign state, such as Israel, and the Jewish minority of the United States. There are naturally differences in some areas as to what is an appropriate role for each. The special position of American Jews as United States citizens but also with strong bonds to Israel raises difficult questions. While no state can be completely self-reliant in the interdependent world of today, Israel's extraordinarily heavy dependence upon the United

States naturally prompts Israel to make great demands upon the American Jewish community for support.

Thus the question of the legitimate limits of intervention apply both to instances of appeals to group solidarity and to the right to express opposition. What if the Israel Government or individual Israeli officials make demands upon American Jews which the latter consider either ideologically offensive or practically undesirable or unattainable? Robert Goldman has suggested that an appropriate response, which stops short of public expression of dissent, is for American Jews in effect to say to the Israelis: "You are free within your sovereign authority to decide on the course of action you propose -- for example, retaliatory raids into Lebanon, new settlements in the West Bank, refusal to sit in the Security Council together with PLO representatives, or a request for \$3 billion in U.S. economic and military aid. However, we must let you know that from our reading of the American national temperament we find that if you do so we can not help you effectively present your message to the American people."<sup>19</sup>

Other American Jews would go a step further and say: "You are free to do what you like, but if you want our help and advice, we believe the following modifications in your negotiating stance is more likely to win public support or the scaling down of your aid request is necessary to obtain the required Congressional approval."

#### A Practical Suggestion

While this paper has dealt in large part with abstract arguments for and against group loyalty and the right of dissent, in



reality controversies usually flare up about specific cases. It would appear to the author that one practical way of strengthening Israel-Diaspora relations is to increase the opportunities for American and other Diaspora Jews to become intimately involved in specific projects relating to Israel. Such involvement, whether it be in housing or in social welfare, in manpower utilization, in public relations, in legal issues, or even in examining the strategic concepts underlying the Israeli and American defense budgets, would help overcome the sense of alienation, of being left out, or of being manipulated that many knowledgeable American Jews frequently feel. In the process of working together, the Americans will get a better understanding of the complexities of the problems the Israelis are facing. Conversely, the Israeli participants will become more sensitive to the perspective of American Jews and possibly avoid misjudgments and unintended repercussions for Diaspora Jewry.

Obviously not all questions are susceptible to such joint approaches, but where they can be utilized they can help strengthen the sense of group solidarity (the sense of Klal Yisrael) naturally linking American Jews with Israel. As Jewish Agency secretary-general Moshe Rivlin stated in a discussion of Israel-Diaspora relations in 1973: "We are not partners but brothers sharing the same destiny." <sup>20</sup> With this as the guiding principle, it is for the Task Force to examine in what areas and what ways we can replace destructive criticism with the creative tension of persons with different ideas working together for common objectives.

Appendix I

DECLARATION OF THE  
JERUSALEM CONFERENCE OF  
JEWISH SOLIDARITY

Jerusalem, December 5, 1975

We have come to Jerusalem to give expression to the devotion of the Jewish people to Zion and its solidarity with the State of Israel.

We reject categorically the resolutions adopted in the General Assembly of the United Nations on the initiative of the enemies of Israel and their supporters, which impugn the right of our people to national independence in the Land of Israel.

The historic right of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel is inalienable.

We declare that the resolutions of the UN Assembly condemning Zionism, the national revival and liberation movement of the Jewish people, constitute a violation of elementary rights and justice, and are null and void.

In Jerusalem, the eternal capital of Israel, we pledge ourselves to stand by the State of Israel with all our heart and soul, and to help it to fulfill its historic mission in the return to Zion, in immigration and absorption, in the settlement of the Land, and in the fostering of Jewish and universal values.

In the face of the campaign of baseless slander and calumny, we shall intensify our efforts to deepen the unbreakable bond of the Jewish people with its spiritual heritage and its historic homeland.

We shall work to strengthen Israel's power to defend its independence and we shall support its efforts to establish a lasting peace with its neighbours.

We, representatives of Jewish communities and organizations from all parts of the Diaspora and spokesmen of the State of Israel, set our hands in witness to this declaration at the closing session of the Conference of Jewish Solidarity in Jerusalem, on this day, Sabbath eve, the 1st of Tevet, 5735, the 5th of December 1975.

## Notes

1

PLO representatives had since 1965 been participating in the annual debate on the budget of UNRWA, the UN relief and works agency for Palestinian refugees. These appearances had received virtually no press coverage. It could be argued, however, that the political situation had greatly changed by 1974. In the earlier appearances the UN committee had specified that its allowing "persons" constituting the PLO delegation to speak was "without such authorization implying recognition" of their organization. Now Arafat was being received as if he were head of state, permitted to speak before the Assembly plenum, under a General Assembly resolution that recognized the PLO's claim to be "the representative of the Palestinian people." The increased media attention to the PLO could thus be attributed not to anything done or not done by the Jewish community but to the PLO's greatly enhanced international standing, as demonstrated by actions of the Rabat Arab League Summit and the UN. (On the PLO's appearances at the UN see George E. Gruen, "The United States, Israel and the Middle East," American Jewish Year Book, 1966 [Vol. 67], pp. 265-69 et passim, and similarly titled articles in subsequent volumes.)

2

See Appendix I for text of the Declaration of the Jerusalem Conference of Jewish Solidarity.

3

See George E. Gruen, "Arab Petropower and American Public Opinion," Middle East Review, Winter 1975-76, pp. 33-39.

4

Emphasis added. Full text in New York Times, November 14, 1974.

5

"Address to President's (sic) Conference by Ambassador Chaim Herzog, 24 October 1975," p. 13 (Xerox copy of 20 page text distributed to press.)

6

Charles S. Liebman, "Political Relationships Between Israel and American Jewry," (unpublished draft paper prepared for American Jewish Committee Task Force on Israel-American Jewish Relations, Feb. 1976), pp. 22-23, and 34-36.

7

"Seeds of Discontent," editorial, Jewish Chronicle (London), March 16, 1973.

8

Mattityahu Peled, "American Jewry: 'More Israeli than Israelis'," New Outlook, May-June 1975, pp. 18-26. Breira is described below.

9

Amnon Rubinstein, "The Jews of America Today," Ha'aretz, Sept. 5, 1975.

10

Henry Siegman, "Israel and the Territories: A Dissenting View," Davar, Sept. 19, 1975. English version reprinted and distributed by Breira. See also the interview with Rabbi Siegman by David C. Gross, "Scores Kissinger Deal: Religious leader fears Sinai Pact may merely postpone another war," The Jewish Week-American Examiner, Oct. 5-11, 1975.

11

Emphasis in original. This is a paraphrase of the verse in Isaiah 62,1: "For the sake of Zion, I will not be silent, and for the sake of Jerusalem I will not rest, until her righteousness go forth as brilliance and her salvation burn as brightly as a torch." The Breira letter was distributed toward the end of 1975.

12

Cited by Lewis A. Coser, The Functions of Social Conflict (Glencoe, Ill., The Free Press, 1956), p. 9.

13

Peled, op. cit., p. 21.

14

Davar, interview, Jan. 14, editorial Jan. 16, 1976.

15

Ha'aretz, editorial, Jan. 18, 1976.

16

Text taken from the galleys of the proceedings, publication of which is forthcoming.

17

The Herzog statement was widely covered in the general American press, e.g. New York Post Oct. 24, 1975, and New York Times, Oct. 25, and 27, 1975.

18

See articles in Jerusalem Post, Oct. 26,27,28, 1975, and The Jewish Week-American Examiner, Nov. 2-8, 1975.

19

Mr. Robert Goldmann's comments were made during meeting of the Steering Committee of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the American Jewish Committee, Feb. 5, 1976. Illustrative of the problem is a New York Daily News poll, Dec. 1, 1975, which found a majority of New Yorkers critical of the United Nations for equating Zionism with racism, also found a majority of 61% disagreeing with Israel's retaliatory raids--with only 18% approving. Possibly most significant in terms of the limits of American Jewish support for Israel was the finding that only 37% of the Jewish respondents supported the Israeli retaliatory policy.

20

"Israel-diaspora link provokes clash," Jewish Chronicle, July 13, 1973.



# Israel and Jewry: Digging In

DAVID VITAL

*In an early version part of this essay formed the 19th Noah Barou Memorial Lecture delivered in London in December, 1974.*

For some time it has been unfashionable for Zionists in Israel to criticize relations between the Jews of Israel and the Jews outside. One might look with wonder, even with a stab of envy, at the Western Jew, free to decide, it would seem, whether and how far he was prepared to indulge his nostalgia, or his piety, or his sense of justice, or his feeling of kinship, or whatever else it might have been that drew him, however marginally, to our affairs. But it has been thought ill-mannered and naive to question that freedom either in practice or in principle. Generally, the subject is not taken up—unless and until others have raised it. So don't you do so, I have been told. Don't try to make clear and tidy what can be neither, but must necessarily, on the contrary, be governed by conflicting sentiments, by interests that are both incompatible and of unequal weight, by competing ideologies, by anxieties of the deepest kind. Don't raise the ghost of Ben Gurion. Don't, above all, try to get the Jews outside Israel to declare themselves, if they have not done so already. They do not want to. And if they did, they would declare against you. Leave well enough alone.

But in any case, whatever might have been the occasion for such pressure up-

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on them, it has now, I believe, been superseded by events: in part, because in the absence of external constraints the freedom to choose is itself waning and in part, because of developments within Jewry that are not unconnected with the external setting within which Jewish affairs must now evolve.

To put it baldly, we are in some danger of fission into two great camps—or, more strictly, one great camp and one small. Not, indeed, camps that are perfectly and easily identifiable, camps that are so clearly demarcated that each one of us will always know precisely who among us belongs to which. But camps, nevertheless, these will be, sufficiently distinctive in character, in culture (or sub-culture), and above all in material situation, to make not only the individual's moral and social identification with one or the other camp, but his physical existence within the one rather than the other, the decisive factor in his life. And finally—this is a cardinal point—camps whose lines of development are distinct, and not parallel, and whose respective major interests are not really compatible.

We have all been there before. The analogy is plain: *Ostjude* and *Westjude*, the less and the more assimilated, the more and the less "authentic" Jews, the Jews subject to immense and continuous violence to body and soul and the Jews subject to no real violence whatever, certainly no violence of comparable proportions, and finally the Jews who mostly died before the end of their natural term and those who mostly lived. This latter great divide was largely bridged in the years after the Second World War when Eastern

Jewry had gone and representative members of both camps came to live in Israel in substantial, if unequal, numbers. Israel also served (amongst many other things) to involve on a regular and agreeable basis safe and comparatively comfortable Western Jews in the affairs of those whose lives were less safe and less comfortable.

**T**he great irony of the present crisis now developing in Jewry is that it is Israel again or, rather, the attitudes likely to be adopted toward Israel that are at the root of the danger, as I see it, that Jewry may divide longitudinally once more.

Zionism, in essence, proposed to make the Jewish people equal and, to some extent, similar to other peoples. It thus ran counter to the traditional and orthodox position on the status of the Jews and for many decades, as everyone knows, it was fought much more bitterly within Jewry than outside it. Equality, in this context, was understood to mean a great deal more than the simple acquisition of the externals of internationally recognized sovereignty: the flags, the ambassadors, the anthems and the other trappings of nationhood—although it would be silly to deny that they were badly wanted. Equality meant, most notably, an enhancement of the dignity of the Jews, along with, but also to a large extent through, the attainment of a high degree of physical security. Of course, this latter requirement had a better echo to it before and immediately after the Second World War. Today, it has a ring that is at once too vague and too far-fetched, for ours is an age in which virtually all men and women have been, and remain, subject to threats of famine, or police repression, or civil war, or war *tout court*, not excluding nuclear war. But at least Zionists wanted (and still want) the elimination of

those particular and peculiar kinds of vulnerability and indignity to which Jews, almost alone among the peoples of the earth, had been subject for so long, both collectively and individually.

For twenty years or so all seemed well. In precisely this respect, if in no other, the condition of the Jews, at all events of those Jews who were directly involved in the handiwork of the Zionists in Israel, had undergone a true revolution. And if one needed proof positive of the success of the enterprise, there was the Six-Day War, or so it appeared, to demonstrate the validity of the Zionist analysis and prescription. Until, by the same token, that is, the Yom Kippur War called so much into question once more.

All thoroughly familiar, yet worth re-stating, I think, because the more carefully one considers the swift—dare one say neurotic—change of mood that occurred in many Jewish communities in the autumn of 1973, the more there is to examine and explain.

Consider, for example, the reactions to the same events of 1967 and 1973 in the Arab world. Dark despair, a most profound sense of grievance and frustration one moment, and sublime euphoria and the thrill of an impending, unlimited triumph the next. Whether the extreme and intensely passionate reactions that swept the Arab camp and still pervade it require analysis cast in psycho-pathological terms if they are to be understood is at least a fair question, although not one which I would venture to answer. So far as the complementary, virtually equal and opposite reactions that swept great parts of the Jewish world are concerned, there, indeed, some have suggested, more or less seriously, that the phenomena are in some measure psycho-pathological and that it is we in Israel who most require therapy. One scholar at an Israeli university even suggested

a couple of years ago that, indeed, the providential therapist was at hand in the form of Dr. Kissinger.

In any case the reaction to the events of October, 1973 throughout the Jewish world do rate closer attention than they have received until now. If one may continue to talk in these general terms, it is not *like* the Jews to react quite so passionately as this, particularly to events that concern them so directly. The national catalogue of disasters is so long and terrible and familiar that a great deal more than what actually happened in 1973 might have been expected to occur to rouse us from our customary stoicism.

**C**ertainly the forces confronting Israel are formidable, the dangers correspondingly great. But consider the slow and not infrequently obtuse reaction of those Jews in the 1930s and 1940s whose good fortune it was to be safely beyond the German grip to the fate, actual and prospective, of those who were well within that grip. It was only gradually, by dint of the accumulation of mountainous detail well after the war had ended and all was over, that the full scope of the disaster was grasped. In contrast, the lapse into gloom of the conscious and unconscious supporters of Israel in 1973 was almost instantaneous; it requires much more to explain it than reference, say, to the comparative speed of modern mass communication, or to the putative fact that Jewry had at last learned the lesson of 1933-1945, after all, or to the evident circumstance that for special, local reasons, all sufficiently familiar, the effect of the opening stage of the October War on the Jews of Israel was in the most direct sense of the term traumatic.

My own answer is in two parts. First, I would suggest that even that vast and irreversible catastrophe, the

destruction of European Jewry, left the bulk of Jewry dented, but still unchanged in any fundamental respect (apart, of course, from the demographic). Similarly, the advent of Israel did at least presage change and certainly required for its fulfillment the re-ordering of all our affairs—a positive remaking of Jewry in the light of the new possibilities; but there the real changes were only for a fraction of the whole. And only a fraction of that fraction comprised men and women who were entirely free to make a choice in the matter. Thus the long moment of 1945-49 passed.

One has only to take the common beliefs and the daily practices of the Jews of any of the large communities—in Britain, or in France, or in the United States, or even in Latin America—and to consider whether it is the changes or the continuities that are the more striking. Or to take (perhaps, before all else and above all else) the practices and doctrines of those who still claim, on the strength of long tradition, to be in the established and rightful possession of the spiritual and religious leadership of the Jewish people, and consider in what manner and in what degree the greatest wave of pain ever to engulf those whom they had presumed (and still presume) to lead had impinged upon *their* practices and doctrines.

Jewry, then, for reasons I certainly do not myself claim fully to understand, is extraordinarily (I would say, outrageously) homeostatic. It has been able not only to survive, but in a sense to absorb the Holocaust. And it has, in the same sense, been able to absorb Israel. The second half of the reason the events of 1973—which have certainly amounted to a blow to Israel's strategy and defenses, to say nothing of its self-esteem—have caused so profound a *malaise* not only



in Israel, but outside it, is that at this first serious failure to advance, at this unmistakable indication that a long and difficult period is once again before us (even if not as difficult as certain other periods have been in our past) the really fundamental and much, much greater failure, has been laid bare—the failure of modern Jewry to come to grips with the possibility of change inherent in the successful re-establishment of the Jewish State barely two and a half decades ago. The state of mind in which the Jews consciously and self-consciously approach contemporary pressures and dangers and the modes in which they deploy such forces as they have differ, no doubt, from what they were three and four decades ago. But the differences are of degree, not of kind. And the comparison of new with old is as between variations on a single and familiar theme.

**W**hat we have had since 1948—to be more accurate, since 1945—has been an uneasy, but nevertheless reasonably successful coalition between two classes of activists from within two corresponding classes of organizations. On the one side (most notably, though not exclusively, in the United States) these have been the leading voluntary and philanthropic organizations. One salient characteristic of these organizations is that they encompass men and women who have been accustomed to living and operating simultaneously within two distinguishable spheres, one Jewish and one not, and who have derived their political and economic strength and their corresponding power to enhance and promote purely Jewish causes from this circumstance of performing dual social roles—in effect, from what one might (somewhat unkindly, but I think correctly) term their refusal ever to accede wholly to a wholly

Jewish interest. In contrast, among their partners to the coalition (most notably, though again not exclusively in Israel), the distinction between a Jewish cause, public or private, and a non-Jewish cause has ceased to make much sense, if any.

This coalition—the heart of which has been an alliance between the majority of the established leaders and institutions of American Jewry (the latter being by no means identical with American Jewry in all its variety itself) and the political establishment of the *yishuv* in Israel (with which it has never been synonymous, and of which it has never been more than imperfectly representative)—worked quite well for a very long time. It still works.

True, as with all coalitions, costs have had to be borne by both partners. In retrospect, it may be asked in Israel, for example, what the Israeli Government's consideration for the sensitivity of leading American Jews to the policies of successive American governments on China and Russia in the late 1940s and early 1950s may have cost Israel politically and strategically. Equally, it may be questioned what the Americans' acceptance of a predominantly money-gathering role unaccompanied by significant, let alone corresponding influence on the uses to which the funds were put may have cost *them* in terms of their standing within the American Jewish public and their own development and maturity as leading figures in the largest and most powerful non-sovereign Jewish community ever known.

Nevertheless, this coalition between the two establishments has been remarkably successful for a generation. And it is, perhaps, not the least serious aspect of the present crisis that its future is now not as secure as its past achievements, on the face of things, might suggest. Its total dissolution is

certainly not imminent, but it is ill-equipped to cope with what it is, I think, reasonable to term the Jewish Question in its contemporary form.

The great theoretical assumption underlying the coalition and justifying it was, of course, that for most major purposes Jewry was indivisible and shared a true community of interests. This assumption was implicit; for it, in turn, rested at heart (if one insisted on inquiring) on the much more obviously debatable argument that the present division of Jewry by community and by country, by language and by official nationality, was impermanent and in a certain sense unreal, of substantially less long-term significance than appeared. This was a position on which the clearer-minded among the Zionists and the truly orthodox were for once agreed, but on which they were opposed by everyone else—or would have been opposed had the issue been allowed, in recent years, to emerge fully into the light of day and be taken up in public discussion. It had, of course, been debated *ad nauseam* in the period before the Second World War, but now that it was a great deal *less* academic the general disposition, paradoxically, was to bury it.

**H**owever, for some years now, doubts about the validity of this theory of the indivisibility of Jewry and doubts as to whether the community of interests in which all parts of Jewry partook was as true and extensive as had been assumed for the past twenty years or so, have bit by bit begun to creep out. But since the older and, in the familiar phrase, more *responsible* Jewish leaders have been extremely, and very properly, careful to rock no boats and cause no positive harm, the phenomenon is hard to document. I am not concerned here directly with the radical

Left, which is vocal enough, or with those of my colleagues in the university world who share many of the radicals' assumptions, even if they express themselves more cautiously. It is the men and women who play a central and—within the narrow limits allowed by the rules of Jewish communal politics—representative role whom I chiefly have in mind. And it is, most specifically, a *mood* I am talking about. Not overt behavior, but one of those subtle changes of climate as a consequence of which certain customary lines of debate are dissolved and new ones emerge, in which certain ideas, hitherto suppressed, even taboo, become thinkable once more.

Up to a point this change of mood is part and parcel of the well-publicized, if still little understood, change of political and intellectual fashion that has overtaken all Western society in the past ten years or so and to which Jews in no Western country could possibly have remained immune for long. There is, for example, the long-maturing effect of the common disenchantment with ordinary (power) politics, with the State (any state) as a social institution and with its characteristic instrument of policy, armed force. There is a general climate of resistance to the notion that the sovereign, politically independent state as we know it provides a satisfactory basis for social organization, let alone an end in itself that it is our duty (and to our advantage) not merely to accommodate, but to serve. And it is compounded with old and new doubts about a Jewish state in particular—religious and cultural in the first instance, but political and practical too, and from the very first. There must be no thought of statehood (*malkhiyut*), the first conference of Hovevei Ziyon at Kattowitz (1884) was warned. The Jews must return to their land, but the

incumbent sovereign (the Sultan) must be accepted and loyally served, his wars fought for him, his welfare prayed for. Not even if we were many thousands should we think of independence—the spirit of the times was one of great states swallowing up small ones. Thus Dr. Karpel Lipa of Jassy warned his colleagues ninety years ago.

Of course, the matter today is vastly more complex even though at its heart there is the same extremely hesitant, in part unwilling, certainly awkward and still incomplete conversion of the Jews into a political people. There is still a widespread and deeply ingrained reluctance (even in some quarters in Israel) to accept whole-heartedly what has always been one of the chief planks in the Zionist program, namely, that Jewish interests cannot be adequately defended, still less promoted, except by means that Jewry itself controls and is free to use in the service of those interests.

The point is, to put it a little differently, that Jewish causes require Jewish instruments of policy; the world being complex and dangerous, all varieties of instruments of policy must be acquired. Such instruments of policy have, at long last, been acquired, although only by (or on behalf of) one part of the people. But some have never wanted them; many have never had real confidence in them. Indeed, the penalty (as some might think it) attending the re-entry of Jews *as such* into the world of international political and military affairs has been, of course, that decisions of a hitherto unknown, distasteful kind to some, have had to be taken about their use, and corresponding commitments made. Decisions, accordingly, have had clearer consequences and, if not fatal, have often been more dramatic. Certain lines of retreat, as well as of advance, have

been sharply foreclosed. Since the risks, while rarely greater, are better defined and the burden of making decisions, as opposed to avoiding them or trying to get others to make them for us, is uppermost, we appear to be living more dangerously than ever before. In brief, there is the relatively new—and to some still frightening—general circumstance that a readily identifiable fraction of the Jewish people has become an autonomous factor in world affairs. There is the question of hitherto unfamiliar ways and means of action. And another question that then looms very large is how far decisions on behalf of the fully politicized part of the people are likely to commit the others.

So far as means are concerned, the chief source of discomfort lies, I think, in the use of force, as a matter of course, by the machinery of government in our name. Even in Israel there is some residual unease about this. Anyone who is familiar with the inner texture of our daily life will know how ambivalent and often how embarrassed we still are in our view of the police and, on occasion, in our relations with them as well (although this is waning). Military force in its classic form, with which we in Israel are all now sufficiently familiar, is another matter altogether. Not the least of necessity's children is psychological adjustment; also, there can now be few adults in the country under the age of fifty who have not been in, or still are in, the armed forces. But this is not so for the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly those too young to have served in the Second World War. Since the employment of armed force by Israel could not be more public, and has become that aspect of public life that is best known outside the country, here is an important and characteristic cause of the widening cultural gulf between the two great classes of modern Jews. What could be

easier than to contrast the seemingly typical *modus operandi* of the two sectors: force as opposed to persuasion, reliance on the means that are most common in human affairs and that normally do its employers least credit, as opposed to those that are rarest and do greatest credit. The *malaise* with which Diaspora Jews increasingly survey the existence, and certainly the employment, of the military arm of the Jewish State can probably be traced to sources in our past—real or imagined. But its particular, contemporary source is ultimately more important and, perhaps, more interesting.

We happen to live in an age in which both available military power and the inhibitions on its use are greater than ever before in history. But it is the *inhibitions* that are the more striking, the more characteristic of our times. These are not universal, of course. But a glance even, say, at Russia, calls attention to the fact that for all the immense significance of Russian military might, for the Russians within and for everyone else without, it is yet the case that the number of occasions on which Russian troops or airmen have shot, or been shot at, in anger since 1945 is very small indeed, and always severely limited in scope and time. So far as the United States is concerned, what is most striking is the fact that the greatest bar to a freer employment of military force by the American Government has emerged within the United States itself. For within the Western world, at least, military force now has a bad name as ultimately self-defeating if not evil *per se*.

**I**t is therefore ironic and, in a way, rather sad that at a time when the climate of public (not, of course, governmental) opinion in those parts of the world in which the Jews of the

Diaspora are largely congregated is more antipathetic to things military than ever before, we, hitherto the most peaceful and unwarlike of peoples, should emerge as a military force ourselves. More than that: it is our military force we must chiefly rely on. For it is military force that is—and will probably long remain—our strongest card, certainly the indispensable card, and the card that will have to be played repeatedly if we are to pull through. In contrast, it is the enemies of Israel who have the upper hand in the use of the classic instruments of *political* and *economic* pressure; these—for reasons too familiar, I believe, to need restating—are likely to be retained for use against us for a very long time indeed.

But if this is so, has not something gone terribly wrong? Is such a prognosis tolerable? Alternatively, is the bleak reading of the present situation briefly indicated in the preceding paragraph (I believe a fair, if abbreviated representation of the thinking of most sober and well-informed Israelis) really correct? And if correct, is someone at fault? And if so, who? These are the sorts of question that the present prospects of Israel, a fortress state, arouse, not at all unnaturally, nor exclusively outside Israel. They cannot all be answered. Nor do they all deserve to be answered. But the central issue (i.e. the validity, as opposed to the acceptability, of the prognosis) must be answered.

The brutal question of the physical survival of Israel in the teeth of the great military and political offensive against it, which has plainly become more severe in recent years, has two aspects.

One is the straightforward question of the present and future balance of power between the Arabs and Israel, taking into account both relatively

constant (for example, demographic and geo-political) factors, and shifting, contingent increments of strength (such as Great Power support). On this count the present state of affairs is plain enough—too plain to require elaboration here: it is encouraging for the Arabs, grim for Israel. Still, it is an error (to which we are all easily prone) to see the contingent as permanent—to fail to see that it is factors of the former, not the latter, kind that have altered the terms of the Middle East conflict out of all recognition in the last ten years or so. It would therefore not be excessively optimistic to suppose that ten years hence matters may have changed again. The existing strains between the Arabs and the poor of the Third World may well have torn the Afro-Asian coalition apart. The Europeans will (if they persist) be virtually self-sufficient in oil; the North Sea alone is now authoritatively said to hold resources adequate to meet three-quarters of Europe's needs. An end will either have been put to the destruction being wrought on the Western financial system or else a new and necessarily anti-Arab one will have emerged from the ashes of the old. The United Nations will have become a yet fainter shadow of its original self, devoid of authority, but also shorn of the capacity to interest any but its adepts, like a church in its decline. And the Russians, the naturally preponderant Power in the Middle East, may have veered back a good part of the way to the position on the Arab-Jewish conflict they held in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Speculative? Certainly. But no more so than the vision of a coming Armageddon.

Only one political (i.e., in principle, changeable) component of the Middle East situation appears to me to be as fixed as anything dependent

on the human mind can ever be—that is the Arab-Jewish conflict itself. But it is still true, and will be true at least to the end of this century, that the extreme severity of its consequences for the Jews is a function of the acquisition by the Arabs of formidable, yet transitory additions to their intrinsic strength, transitory because they stem from the shifting balance of world economic, political and military forces, of which the Arabs themselves are only one of a large and complex set of factors.

The other aspect of the question of Israel's survival may be termed an ideological or cultural one. It too offers us little joy. Like the political vanguards of other submerged peoples newly entered into the post-World War club of nations, the Zionists believed that sovereignty was properly perpetual, that theirs was a permanent achievement. It could be said that in Israel, at any rate, we have tended to comfort ourselves for the pain of ideological exhaustion and internal tumult after 1947-49 with the belief that that great peak having been scaled we could not be pushed back off it.

It is, indeed, commonly held that the break-up of any of the new states (let alone of any one of the old) would seriously undermine the delicate conventions of formal mutual respect on which so much of international relations at the surface depends; and that there are, accordingly, great countervailing pressures—or at least inhibitions—tending to reinforce the existing states against their collapse. These seem generally to operate even in the face of very powerful ethnic feelings and inimical interests. Thus it was in the case of Biafra; and in that of South Sudan.

But it is now plain that some new states are much less than obviously viable. Some prospective states, the tail-end of the long queue that has been

winding since 1939, are so structured, geographically and demographically, that they cannot conceivably function on a model that essentially is the European nation-state. For example, what hope can there be for the people of Papua-New Guinea, comprising groups of speakers of six or seven hundred distinct languages, burdened with a ferocious landscape and virtually no means of efficient land communication beyond the coastal strips, stone-age social organization and practices in peace and war and all the ills that modernity habitually visits upon the primitive? The Congo (Zaire), comprising people of much greater sophistication, barely survived the crisis of its birth. Pakistan, still better equipped, on the face of things, has broken up; the Afghani claims to Baluchistan suggest that its future as the rump of the original state is still shadowy. Bangladesh is worse off still. The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a perennial object of attempted wrecking operations. There are and will be other cases.

Of course, the entire subject of states containing (or constituting) *terra irredenta*, of broken-backed states, actual and potential, and of states riven by profound ethnic conflict is clouded over by a certain amount of the type of humbug characteristic of political life in all its forms and of international politics in particular. Nevertheless, the question remains; it is, in the 1970s, what it was not in the 1950s or 1960s, an open question admitting of more than one answer. This is a circumstance that has not failed to impinge upon our view of the world in which we live, not least because it relates to a political and conceptual conflict which goes well beyond the bounds of the specific cases which I have mentioned, and of Israel with them.

The modern rule—or rather convention—that sovereignty is irreversible is obviously attractive to submerged and subject nations who believe it to be the key to their prison doors. But it is widely held that it is in the interests of all sovereign states to maintain the membership of others in the system, no less than their own. For the sovereign state as we know it is the indispensable building block, the chief basis of almost all significant political and (to a lesser extent) economic activity. As such it is too valuable to be lightly treated. Few contemporary developments demonstrate so well its value as a formula and the reliance placed upon it by all as the slow but steady extension of the sovereign state beyond the land and the air above it into the seas, the “high seas” as they were once called, from which it had long been excluded by mutual consent—even though what is implied by this great enlargement of the inherently monopolistic, mutually exclusive, and sharply competitive dominions of the nation states is a wholly new source of conflict over inescapably incompatible economic and strategic interests whose resolution will be no easier than that of disputes arising out of conflicts relating to, or deriving from, “territory” in its normal meaning.

Yet there are countervailing and destructive—indeed, self-destructive—forces within the system. Chief of these is one that stems from the no doubt obvious fact that the modern Western conception of the comity of nations, at the center of which lies the sovereign state, is, today, inherently conservative in its implications. Those who subscribe to it are impelled by its logic also to subscribe, more or less, to the international political, and *a fortiori* territorial, status quo.

In contrast, those who wish significant change, and in particular, those who

seek to re-distribute the surface of the globe among some, but not all, of the existing states and, possibly, some quite new ones, are required by the logic of their purposes on the one hand, and of that of the state system on the other, to draw a distinction between at least two classes of states—between those that are acceptable to them and those that are unacceptable, between legitimate and illegitimate ones, between the good and the bad.

There may be no clear basis in international law or custom of the traditional Western kind for such a distinction, but politically it is potent and useful. And in our times it has come to be the principal dialectical device whereby international conflict and change, peaceful and—more especially—violent, is legitimized. It would thus seem to follow, to put the matter somewhat differently, that so long as there are forces that desire change there will be forces that work against the *universal* application of the state system and of Western international law and who, where successful, indirectly weaken the basis of the system itself. Can it be maintained that there will come a time when there will be none seeking change?

All this may be seen at work in the now common phenomenon of conflicting and ambiguous attitudes to modern political terrorism, as compared with the still fairly clear-cut opposition to gangsterism and piracy of the old-fashioned kind—which last, on the plane of the concrete and, as it were, the technical, political terrorism so greatly resembles. These conflicting approaches (along with the curious combination of self-righteousness and mendacity that often accompanies them) result, of course, from the plain political fact that terrorists who enjoy, for whatever reasons, the open or tacit support of states with which other states

are unwilling to quarrel are sure of not being treated as common criminals, but to all intents and purposes as extensions—if mildly disreputable ones—of those instruments of state policy that convention does decree to be respectable. Always provided, that is, that the states supporting or protecting terror and terrorists carry sufficient weight of their own in other (political, economic, or strategic) spheres.

In any event, the matter of terrorism shows that the society of sovereign states is one in which even the most fundamental rules—the rules of membership and its corresponding rights and obligations—are rules that in practice none adhere to except conditionally, for the sake of convenience. At the limit is still the characteristic rule of international political behavior—except in crises, when it is generally too late to turn about.

All this has been observed with more or less insight, more or less bitterness, throughout the Jewish world. And if people crave something better, something more like the state of affairs that ensued in the aftermath of the 1940s, less like the disorderly and dangerous conditions in Europe (*a fortiori* outside it) before the relatively long calm of the 19th century began, who can blame them?

I say, "throughout the Jewish world," because the offensive mounted against Israel is multi-faceted, more extensive than its nominal target and tending, in practice, to dove-tail with pressures exerted against, and discomforts experienced by the population of the Diaspora itself. Can it be doubted that there has occurred a change, originally subtle, but now, I think, beginning to bite, in the status and, if one may still use that tired word, the image of Western Jews themselves within the countries they inhabit? For example, that in

the context of American anti-discrimination laws the Jews have ceased to rate as a "minority"? And that more generally, and more insidiously, there has been a revival, fostered and popularized by all the forces arrayed against Jewry, of the distinction between good Jews and bad, between the deserving and the undeserving, between the ordinary, decent Jews who mind their own local interest and the others—the Zionists, and of course the Israelis?

It must certainly be said that a wedge between the two great sectors of contemporary Jewry is the easier to drive because of the doubts that have arisen throughout Jewry, as much in Israel as outside it, about the wisdom of some of Israel's policies in recent years, especially in the spheres of defense and foreign affairs. Failure has a sour taste. And it is not difficult to show that in many respects there has been failure—at the very least, a failure to succeed. To what extent the Government of Israel did have substantial freedom of political choice in recent years is a hard question to answer and too large a question to deal with here, except to say that the further back one steps in an effort to see the situation in its broadest perspective, the narrower the choices and the smaller the freedom to maneuver appear.

In any case, doubts about the capacity of Israel. Government and people alike, to fight its way through the present crisis and the one that will no doubt follow it, and the one after that are liable to eat slowly into the posture habitually taken in recent years by so many Jews outside Israel—open sympathy and support, along with general acceptance that the safety of Israel must be the overriding *national* concern of modern Jewry.

It is an inescapable impression, after some months spent in the Diaspora even by an outsider like myself, that

the present disappointment, certainly shared in Israel, combined with a sense, possibly deeper than ours, of the actual and latent power of the forces arrayed explicitly against Israel, has struck a highly sensitive nerve. It has put a great many more people on the defensive; it has made some of them uncomfortable and fearful in a way that reminds one, however faintly, of much more evil times than our own.

**N**o doubt the defensive instinct is a healthy one and too strong to be ignored. And no doubt the dangers are real enough. Thus the dilemma that now faces the Diaspora, and will very probably face it a great deal more blatantly and ominously in years to come, is not one that we, in Israel, should sneer at.

For the Diaspora must now confront, over and above all the difficulties and problems peculiar to it, the extremely serious question whether the long-term political, economic and military offensive aimed at Israel will not now begin to have direct consequences for that part of Jewry that is outside Israel and that has been involved in the affairs of Israel, and, indeed in Jewish affairs generally, only on a partial, voluntary basis.

Let me take the obvious, hardly speculative, example. The importance of the support that large sections of Diaspora Jewry have rendered Israel morally, financially and politically, is as familiar to the Arabs (and to the Russians too) as it is to us; if anything, they tend to overstate it. In any event, now that the Arabs at last possess a weapon with which they can reach right into the soft stomachs of the states containing the largest and most influential Jewish communities, can it be doubted that they will seek to turn it more systematically than in the past to the weakening of the Jewish presence



in those societies—notably the United States, the United Kingdom, and France?

The times are propitious; the opportunity may not last for more than a few years. The Arabs are therefore likely to want to move hard and fast as soon as they have found the right opening. And they are unlikely to be interested in fine distinctions between those active and those inactive in Jewish affairs, between Zionists and non-Zionists. The evidence is that few Arabs will accept, other than verbally, for tactical reasons, that distinctions between categories of Jews mean anything as far as *their* affairs are concerned. And since many Jews engage in highly competitive occupations—industry, commerce, politics—local non-Jewish but also non-Arab allies who will co-operate with the Arabs themselves should not be too difficult to find.

Accordingly, one development to be looked for and feared, is a growth of tension within Jewry that, however it may be covered up in cautious terminology, will be traceable to doubts about where the interests of any particular Jewish community do lie and, ultimately, to the question of whether the interests and needs of differently placed Jewish communities are compatible with each other. At the very least one would expect many to seek a way out into some new, sunlit avenue. In the United States it may be (or is) that of "ethnicity," seemingly so well grounded in the American situation, so much easier, so much more fun. Either way, warier, more inward-looking communities on the Diaspora side of the divide are to be expected and may already be in evidence.

**T**his is not a cheerful prospect—and not simply because of its possible consequences for the Jews of Israel in the

short and middle term, which is to say, in the ten years or so to come in which every increment of power and every boost to morale will be priceless. The re-drawing of the lines between "us" and "them" cannot fail to corrode the delicate structure of what might be termed ecumenical Jewry. And that process, if carried beyond some point that is difficult to define, but of which it can be said that it brings earlier times to mind, is one that now, surely, in an age in which most Jews are brought together not by faith, but by kinship (altogether more tenuous), would lead to irrevocable fission. Divorce is fatal not merely to family life but to the well-being of the children.

On the other hand the structure of the Jewish world is fearfully fragile; the dilemmas and centrifugal forces are real, powerful, and likely to increase in strength. And in times of great moment it is generally a mistake to seek to paper over genuine and ever more visible cracks. It would be doubly an error to attempt to do so now, all the more so because this is precisely what those who have largely set the tone of open discussion of Jewish affairs have tried so hard and for so long to do.

This has not been out of blindness, I think, but out of a compulsion born of two connected circumstances. One stems from the fact that the essential basis of the Israel-Diaspora relationship is uni-linear and philanthropic. The other stems from the fact that the preponderant partner has been based in Israel.

Thus, broadly and in briefest summary, the contemporary terms of the Jewish Question appear to be the following:

a. the war being waged by the Arabs against the Jews of Israel will continue to spread into the entire Jewish, as well as Arab, world;

b. this evolving conflict cannot fail to affect the status of the Jews, individually and collectively, in all the societies in which they live;

c. while the question of a commitment by Jews outside Israel to Jewish causes in general and to Israel in particular will become more pressing than before, it will also become more difficult, nor does this mean that the numbers positively committed will grow;

d. familiar modes of thought and action in Jewish affairs will prove inadequate, if they are not so already, because they are predicated on philanthropy, while in essence the contemporary struggle is political through and through;

e. accordingly, if no adjustment is made, existing centrifugal tendencies in Jewry will grow in force, the still minimal isolation of Israel from the Diaspora will intensify, and the twin issues that the future well-being of the Jewish people largely rests on—the Arab-Jewish war and the rehabilitation of Judaism in the modern world—will be decided in extremely disadvantageous, if not fatal, circumstances.

**W**hat, then, is to be done?

The short answer, I believe, is that it would be wisest and most efficacious to work out a form of national retrenchment: to dig in now, with smaller forces more tightly bound, in conscious expectation of the long night ahead.

But there is a great deal more to be said than that. To begin with, there is both a moral, ideological side to the matter, and a practical, institutional one. The two are intimately connected and mutually reinforcing.

The first imperative is therefore to recognize the changes in our circumstances for what they are and to build for them and, so far as possible, upon them. Given the fact of a conflict of apparent (let alone real) interests between the unhyphenated and the hy-

phenated Jews—a conflict that is old in type but that has taken on fresh content—a healthy and lasting relationship between them can now only be one that is itself political. By that is meant a relationship that is founded explicitly on an attempt to mitigate and, if possible, dissolve the conflict by a careful balance of purposes and resources that in turn derives its logic and justification from agreed aims.

But can there be agreed aims? Agreed aims, if taken seriously, would have two practical implications. First, so far as the Diaspora communities were concerned, they would entail a form of Jewish ultramontaniam. Secondly, for Israel they would imply a form of power-sharing. Agreed aims, in other words, if they are not to be meaningless and politically sterile, must go hand-in-hand with joint (if not necessarily equal) public responsibility for events.

Accordingly, the first objection to such ideas as these will surely be that they are wrong-headed in the crucial respect—they would only ensure that the prognosis would be well and truly realized, that the wedge being driven between the Jews within the State and those without would be rammed home almost unopposed. It would certainly be silly to suppose that a serious effort to re-constitute as a political people all, or even many, of the Jews in all or most parts of the world (which is what "power sharing" would entail) would not jangle the nerves of many millions of the great-grandchildren of the Emancipation. If matters were ever made to move this way there would certainly be a corresponding re-alignment of forces all around. The immediate costs to Israel—diminished economic support and a weakened lobby in Washington and elsewhere—might be considerable. And other reasons could easily be adduced for following the conven-

tional advice to leave things, so far as possible, as they are.

Nevertheless, in the slightly longer term, things would be different, I venture to think, in that a new and more promising situation would have been created and the ability of the Jews to meet contemporary pressures in all places enhanced.

**I**n the first place, boldness and integrity in really great matters are their own reward. That, surely, is not a proposition that needs special substantiation. In the second place, there would be hope of progress in one great matter in which Israel—or, to be more accurate, contemporary Zionism—has failed, namely, in its ability to attract to it more than a handful of those Jews who have been free to come and free to go. There are many reasons for this failure, reasons that have operated differently at different times. But it is peculiarly significant, also peculiarly sad, that we have failed to hold out more of a promise at a time when the gloom and general loss of nerve in the West is, in some respects, greater than our own.

It can be argued, I think, that two principal factors have militated against more socially conscious Western Jews joining us. One is the contrast between Jews in and out of Israel in respect to public duties. In the case of the Israelis they are not only exceptionally heavy, but also, when all is said and done, involuntary, imposed externally, by authority. In the case of the non-Israelis, externally determined public obligations of all kinds are by comparison slight and Jewish ones are entirely voluntary. One important consequence of their greater freedom is, I think, their more searching and, if one may so put it, more abstract and explicitly ethical approach to public issues. To put it very simply, Israelis assume public obligations that, though

extremely onerous, are also narrow in scope, while outside that narrow, if critical range of matters, they tend not to be particularly public-spirited. In the Diaspora, matters are different on both counts.

The other relevant factor is the structure of politics in Israel. This is peculiarly ill-adapted to change, and to accommodation of the non-professional volunteer in public affairs generally, and of the newcomer particularly. On the other hand, the degree of politicization in the country and, concomitantly, the degree of dependence upon the central political system at all levels of society is, by normal Western standards, extraordinarily high. It is thus a structure that would have to be radically pruned and partly remade if power-sharing with non-Israelis, however limited the basis, were instituted.

Yet the consequent benefits to our society could not but be very great; and it is not fanciful to suppose that the enhancement of the attractions of Israel to the socially conscious who live outside it would not be small. The development as a whole could be expected to lend a degree of substance to the national concept such as it has not had for generations—although it would also be true that, as is generally the case with radical social and political changes—and where heads alone are counted—the unpopularity of such steps would probably be greater than the favor they would find.

**W**hat is suggested here, in sum, is that the involvement of Jews in and out of Israel in their respective affairs be changed in kind and in degree. Now it is evident that the topic is not only a large one and one, moreover, that many would regard as dangerous, but it is also one on which an explicit, practical program must emerge from some

kind of parliamentary process of consultation, debate and promulgation if it is to be of any value.

It would seem proper to illustrate with examples of the sort of social and institutional changes that I have in mind.

First, there would ensue a great clarification of positions and degrees of commitment by all concerned. The members of an inner ring, no doubt very small at first, would commit themselves totally to the present model of *aliyah*. A larger periphery of people whose feelings are mixed and whose actions, in the last analysis, are dictated by prudence, would continue to limit their involvement to the present, uni-linear, philanthropic, and easily reversible modes that dominate the scene today. The outer circle, largest of all, composed of the indifferent, the antagonistic and the fearful, would probably increase in numbers, at any rate for a while. But the most significant change would lie in the firm establishment of a fourth category—the *participants*. These would be men and women who undertake direct responsibilities and functions in Israel for an extended period: much less like the present "year of service" or the Peace Corps, which comprise young people working at the lower reaches of the various hierarchies for relatively brief periods, and more like the great international technical assistance programs under which whole projects are instituted and maintained in foreign countries by non-indigenous personnel.

Schools, libraries, hospitals, transport services, public construction and housing companies, etc., etc., would be not only financed but *run* by non-Israelis who would contract to work in the country for three or four or more years at a time. The general object would be to bring about the assumption of responsibility for whole areas of public

activity by organized groups or corporations formed in the Diaspora, extending in kind from the financial to the operational, and made to run separately, yet in tandem, with the locally-manned and directed Israeli institutions and corporations that exist today. (Areas of activity subsumed under the general heading of defense and foreign affairs would doubtless be excluded as at present.)

Second, there would be far-reaching institutional changes of which the chief would be the liquidation—or, at least, the radical transformation—of the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Executive. These would be replaced by an organization that would be expressly an institution of the Diaspora, deriving its authority and freedom of operation from that fact, managed and staffed by Jews of the Diaspora, based physically in the Diaspora, with only an operational base in Israel from which Israelis would be excluded from all but technical functions. Its success or failure would hinge upon its ability to deal with the Government of Israel; and the Government, now that the new Agency was no longer integrated into the political system of Israel, would, for its part, have the greatest interest in making that success possible.

Thus the underlying national purpose of bringing the two great wings of Jewry into a system of coordination on the basis of an explicit recognition of both common *and* conflicting interests would be served.

But the greater argument for some such program as this is of a moral kind. The great problem of Jewish identity and the content of Judaism cannot continue to be slurred over or evaded without ever deeper damage to individual and collective self-respect, and ultimately therefore to the spiritual and ethical foundations of Judaism.

To turn the question around, Juda-

ism cannot be renewed except in the light of the recent past and of the circumstances of our own lives; these include, at a minimum, the decline of belief in the supernatural, the killing off of East European Jewry, and the rise of that which in certain cardinal respects is the child of both events—a secular Jewish state. It is time, in short, that the full implications of the advent of Israel be faced and that the changes it has wrought and will continue to wreak in the situation and *mores* of the Jews be accepted.

It is always difficult to institute change that is radical without being destructive, surgical without being murderous. It requires a combination of daring and tact that is nothing if not rare. But it is simply unacceptable for great affairs to be continually left

in abeyance or, perhaps worse still, in the hands of decent, but tired men running worthy, but out-dated institutions. Nor is it sensible to look to Israel for initiative in matters great and small. The climate of daily life in Israel is not conducive today to much more than coping with daily pressures.

And therein, indeed, may lie what will amount to our principal contribution to the common task of pulling through present troubles in good order. It is from the Diaspora that most ideas and certainly and above all the *initiative* for really substantial change must come. And it would be best if such energy and thought as can be mustered in the Diaspora were applied first and foremost at the interface between Israel and the Diaspora itself—the institutions of organized Zionism.

