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**MS-630: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Digital Collection, 1953-1996.**  
Series B: Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 1962-1996.

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New York Times Magazine, 1978.

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American Jewish Archives website.

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May 2, 1978

Mr. Saul Rosenzweig  
Kirkeby Center  
10889 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA. 90024

Dear Saul:

It was good hearing from you. I, too, hope that our paths will cross again in the not-too-distant future. If Rhea is with me you can be sure it will be with tennis racket!

A letter was sent by me to the editor of New York. What remains to be seen is whether or not they will print my response. I certainly hope so for I was distressed by the article as you can see from the enclosed copy of my reply.

With warmest regards, in which Rhea joins me, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.

*Saul Rosenzweig*

• INVESTMENTS

(213) 477-0051

*Kirkeby Center  
10889 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90024*

April 26th, 1978

Rabbi Alexander Schindler  
838 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York 10021

Dear Alex:

First, my thanks for lunch at the Tennis Club  
and the privilege of meeting your wife Rhea.

Please note my enclosed letter and personal action  
taken. I'm sure you have seen the article by  
now, however, a copy is enclosed. This kind of  
propaganda is truly despicable.

Best personal regards,

*Saul Rosenzweig*  
Saul Rosenzweig

SR:DA  
Enclosures

*I'd be pleased to see you when  
travels bring you to Los Angeles  
(with or without your tennis Racket).*

*SK.*

*Saul Rosenzweig*

INVESTMENTS

(213) 477-0051

*Kirkeby Center  
10889 Wilshire Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90024*

April 26th, 1978

Mr. Joe Armstrong  
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief  
New York Magazine  
755 Second Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Armstrong:

Please cancel my new subscription to New York magazine.

I find the article "Menachem Begin vs. the Jewish Lobby" by Sol Stern in the April 24th, 1978 issue totally unacceptable rubbish, both anti-Israel and anti-Semitic.

*Saul Rosenzweig*

Saul Rosenzweig

SR:DA

BCC: Rabbi Alexander Schindler





Last March, Menachem Begin acknowledged the applause of 1,000 leaders of Jewish organizations at the Waldorf-Astoria.



Last November, Dr. Nahum Goldmann, then head of the World Jewish Congress, secretly told Brzezinski and Vance to "break the Jewish lobby in the United States."

May 10, 1978

Mrs. Doris K. Shapira  
954 Liawen Court N.E.  
Atlanta, GA. 30329

Dear Mrs. Shapira:

Thank you for your letter of April 30 and the copies of your letters to President Carter. I am grateful to you for taking the time to share your concerns with me.

As you know, the item in The Southern Israelite was based on the interview which appeared in New York. I was quite distressed by the Sol Stern report of our interview and immediately sent a letter to the editor which, to my knowledge, has not been printed by the magazine. I enclose a copy of my letter for your information.

With kindest greetings, I am

Sincerely,

Alexander M. Schindler

Encl.



954 Liawen Court, N. E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329  
April 30, 1978

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Chairman  
The Conference of Presidents of Major  
American Jewish Organizations  
515 Park Avenue  
New York, N. Y. 10022

Dear Rabbi Schindler:

Re: The Article in New York Magazine

We are deeply concerned to have read the following in The Southern Israelite, April 28, 1978, page 2:

The article says that U. S. Jewish leaders, including Rabbi Alexander Schindler, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, have been working quietly behind the scenes to try to soften Begin's positions on territorial withdrawal from the West Bank, on the creation of new settlements in the territories, and on an interpretation of UN Security Council Resolution 242.

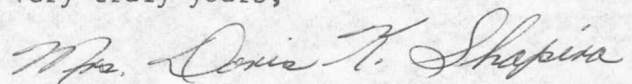
There is also a lengthy section in the article on Schindler's allegedly private protestations to Begin over Israeli policy, even though the American Jewish leader has taken a consistently supportive stance in public.

We appreciate your public stance. The two mottos we should never forget are: "That the future may learn from the past," and "United we stand; divided we fall."

Unlike any previous administration, Begin has put forth an astonishing proposal to begin negotiations. He cannot precondition Israel's position before actual negotiations on the West Bank take place. Israel can rely only on herself. American guarantees, if the same guarantees as made to Vietnam--and we all know what happened in Vietnam--aren't sufficient because the terrorists and militant Arabs are making a mockery of democracy.

Enclosed are copies of three letters I have written to The President and other Washington officials. The enclosed article by George F. Will, "The Real 'Obstacles' to Peace," is an exceptionally deep understanding of the situation; we Jews should heed.

Very truly yours,



Mrs. Doris K. Shapira

Enclosures: 3  
As stated above

954 Liawen Court, N. E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329  
April 29, 1978

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

My dear Mr. President:

Re: The Middle East - Israel's Need for Defensible Borders

Herein are some thoughts for your deepest and most heartfelt consideration.

Since the U. S. has failed to honor its commitment of arms for Israel made in 1975, an agreement with President Sadat of Egypt could just as easily be voided by a future Egyptian president. Therefore, Israel needs to have defensible borders.

Sinai--The settlement area Israel would like to keep in the Sinai is the traditional invasion route from Egypt to Gaza and Israel. This area is not vital for Egypt's economy or defense. With exchange of Israel's own Negev lands, each side's real interests would be fostered and safeguarded. There was a precedent in 1949 between King Abdulla of Jordan and Israel--the Wadi Ara and the Hebron region. Each side saw itself as acquiring territory, rather than "giving up" anything, "evacuation" or "withdrawal."

West Bank--The 600,000 Palestinians who fled Israel in 1948 had the option to remain; but, either from fear or instructed to leave by their leaders, the 600,000 had many neighboring Arab countries in which to live and resettle.

Under terrifying conditions in their homelands, Iraqi, Yemenite, Syrian, and other Jews came to Israel--the only one place to go--and resettled. Through sheer hard labor during 30 short years, Israel has created flourishing life in the desert. With present modern technology, Israel can accommodate as many Jews as is necessary. Her neighboring Arab countries could have done and can do likewise. Why would the Arabs who fled in 1948 wish to return to Israel, except for the fact they like what they see, a result of prosperity in a democracy. We do not want an independent PLO state in South Georgia; for the same reasons, the Israelis do not want an independent PLO state in Israel.

Any solution must begin from now, at this point in time. Only the Gaza and West Bank resident Palestinians are involved. What kind of self-rule had been offered to these people in the past? Israel's West Bank proposal calls for self-rule for West Bank Arabs, continuing Israeli responsibility for security, and review after five years. As stated by Mr. George F. Will, Newsweek, April 3, 1978, p. 92, who seems to understand the situation exceptionally well:

Actually, Begin's West Bank proposal jeopardizes Israel's security because it does not even make self-rule (a problematic concept in any case) contingent upon border revisions that correct the irrational lines left by the 1949 armistice. Under Begin's proposals, sooner or later self-rule probably would produce a vote for complete independence; if Israel



The President

April 29, 1978

resisted, there would be violence and uproar; if Israel agreed, the entity would separate along Israel's 1967 borders, which are indefensible. Anyway, neither Hussein nor Israel wants an independent state there. Jordan has no legal right to the West Bank, and its behavior as the military occupant . . . vitiated its moral claims. But perhaps Israel and Jordan can negotiate modifications of the 1967 lines and the right of Jews to live in the modified West Bank entity, loosely associated with Jordan and linked economically with Israel. Until Hussein will negotiate, Israel must govern the West Bank.

With documentation, Dr. Eugene Rostow, former Under Secretary of State, says:

The West Bank and the Gaza Strip (unlike the Sinai) are not recognized territories of any sovereign state. They are parts of the Palestine Mandate, an area which until 1946 included Jordan, Israel, and the territories in dispute between them. . . The territory of the mandate is Palestine, and those who have the right to live there are 'Palestinians'--Christian, Muslim, and Jewish alike. . . Israel's claim to the area under the mandate is at least as good as that of Jordan; some experts consider it to be better, because Israel occupied the area in 1967 after a war of self-defense. . . .

Since only Israel and Jordan can negotiate the West Bank, the intransigent one is Hussein as he refuses to negotiate. Sadat can only negotiate the Sinai. To Sadat, Begin cannot precondition Israel's position before actual negotiations on the West Bank take place. Who can urge Hussein to negotiate? As Mr. Will says, "Sadat, who has no standing to negotiate about anything but the Sinai, refuses to negotiate until Israel makes concessions about the West Bank."

Resolution 242 anticipates negotiations between the only states concerned, Israel and Jordan, and requires changes in the 1967 lines to provide "secure and recognized" borders. Sadat says, as Arabs always have, that 242 requires Israel to retreat to the 1967 lines. But 242 was painstakingly negotiated for five months in 1967, and Sadat's interpretation is inconsistent with the interpretation shared by all members of the Security Council that passed it....

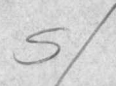
Israel has sought negotiations with her Arab neighbors for 30 years, and seeks a real peace in return--not the Czechoslovakian type. She has already proposed a large range of concessions. What can Egypt and Jordan concede now?

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We Jews worry a lot and verbally express ourselves a lot--because we don't see many officials in Washington worrying. The "Jewish lobby" and now the American Jewish citizens cannot be quiet because WE ARE WORRIED. We don't see Washington doing its homework for future long-range, common-sense planning and aftereffects, not only for our beloved nation but world wide. If we don't worry, who will worry???

In these complicated and troubled times, it is important to get varied opinions on the complex issues--foreign and domestic policy. I pray and trust that you will seek out varied opinions before making decisions which affect millions of people around the world.

Respectfully yours,

  
Mrs. Doris K. Shapira

Enclosure:  
Article

# The Real 'Obstacles' to Peace



**T**he Carter Administration has focused its moral microscope on the Middle East and decided that Israel, which for 30 years has sought negotiations with its neighbors, and has received from them four wars, is an obstacle to peace. The Administration has been erratic, but consistently wrong. It was wrong to put the misnamed "Palestinian issue" at the top of the agenda, wrong to try to install the Soviets as peacemakers, wrong to court the extremists, Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organization, and wrong to press for a "comprehensive" peace process that would give maximum leverage to extremists at the negotiating table. By branding Menachem Begin an obstacle to peace, the Administration now has rewarded the intransigence of Egypt's Sadat and Jordan's Hussein, and has nourished their hope that the U.S. will extort from Israel what they have been unable to win in battle and are unwilling to discuss in negotiations.

## THE PALESTINE MANDATE

The Administration says the burden is on Israel to bribe Sadat back to the negotiating table. But Israel has put on that table a proposal for concessions in the Sinai more sweeping than any previous Israeli Government ever proposed. Sadat, who has no standing to negotiate about anything *but* the Sinai, refuses to negotiate until Israel makes concessions about the West Bank. Unwilling to admit that Sadat's intransigence is the *only* obstacle to negotiations about the Sinai, the Administration calls Israel intransigent about the West Bank. But Hussein is the *only* obstacle to West Bank negotiations. There also is confusion about the legal status of the West Bank, the way U.N. Resolution 242 applies to it, and Israel's right to police it. Eugene Rostow, Yale law professor and former Under Secretary of State, says:

"The West Bank and the Gaza Strip [unlike the Sinai] are not recognized territories of any sovereign state. They are parts of the Palestine Mandate, an area which until 1946 included Jordan, Israel, and the territories in dispute between them . . . The mandate is a continuing trust of an international character, like the mandate for German Southwest Africa, now called Namibia. The continued vitality of the Palestine Mandate as a trust is confirmed by Article 80 of the U.N. Charter and the most recent advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice in the Namibia case.

"The territory of the mandate is Pales-

tine, and those who have the right to live there are 'Palestinians'—Christian, Muslim, and Jewish alike. Jordan held the West Bank as the military occupant between 1948 and 1967 after a war of aggression. Although Jordan sought to annex the West Bank in 1951, only two countries recognized that annexation. None of the other Arab states has recognized Jordanian sovereignty there. Israel's claim to the area under the mandate is at least as good as that of Jordan; some experts consider it to be better, because Israel occupied the area in 1967 after a war of self-defense. I myself transmitted the Israeli message to Hussein in 1967, promising him immunity if he did not join the Six Day War. If he had stayed out of the war, he would hold the West Bank and Old Jerusalem today."

Israel has never tried to annex the West Bank. For demographic reasons it could not do so and remain a Jewish state. And the Administration is simply wrong in saying Israel's West Bank settlements are "illegal." The mandate is an international trust for the benefit of Jewish as well as Arab inhabitants of Palestine, and Israelis have a right to settle there until Israel and Jordan negotiate disposition of the territory.

## A PROBLEMATIC CONCEPT

Resolution 242 *anticipates* negotiations between the only states concerned, Israel and Jordan, and *requires* changes in the 1967 lines to provide "secure and recognized" borders. Sadat says, as Arabs always have, that 242 requires Israel to retreat to the 1967 lines. But 242 was painstakingly negotiated for five months in 1967, and Sadat's interpretation is inconsistent with the interpretation shared by all members of the Security Council that passed it. Sadat's policy amounts to asserting Jordanian sovereignty in the West Bank, which the U.S. has refused to do for 27 years. As Rostow says, "As a matter of justice and political judgment, Resolution 242 does not demand that Jerusalem be split again, and sealed with machine guns, nor does it drive Israel back to live in a coastal strip 10 miles wide whose outlines were fixed by nothing more rational than the battles of the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948."

Begin's opening proposal for negotiations calls for self-rule for West Bank Arabs, continuing Israeli responsibility for security, and review of all matters after five years. The Administration praised Begin's proposal in December but disdains it in March. Not surprising-

ly, Hussein refuses to negotiate. He has noticed that Sadat, who also refuses, is liked at the White House, and Begin, who longs to negotiate, is not liked.

Actually, Begin's West Bank proposal jeopardizes Israel's security because it does not even make self-rule (a problematic concept in any case) contingent upon border revisions that correct the irrational lines left by the 1949 armistice. Under Begin's proposals, sooner or later self-rule probably would produce a vote for complete independence; if Israel resisted, there would be violence and uproar; if Israel agreed, the entity would separate along Israel's 1967 borders, which are indefensible. Anyway, neither Hussein nor Israel wants an independent state there. Jordan has no legal right to the West Bank, and its behavior as the military occupant (its desecrations included paving roads with Jewish tombstones) vitiated its moral claims. But perhaps Israel and Jordan can negotiate *modifications* of the 1967 lines and the right of Jews to live in the modified West Bank entity, *loosely* associated with Jordan and linked economically with Israel. Until Hussein will negotiate, Israel must govern the West Bank.

## 'APPREHENSION AND TURMOIL'

Until 1967, the West Bank was like southern Lebanon, a source of terrorism. Today the Administration believes Israel is unreasonably determined to police the West Bank. The Administration should read the note Secretary of State Robert Lansing delivered to the Mexican envoy in Washington on June 20, 1916: "Bandits have been permitted to roam at will through the territory contiguous to the United States . . . The frontier of the United States . . . has been thrown into a state of constant apprehension and turmoil because of frequent and sudden incursions . . . It is unreasonable to expect the United States to withdraw its forces from Mexican territory . . . when their presence is the only check upon further bandit outrages."

When Hussein negotiates, Sadat will have to stop savoring his press clippings and start living up to them. Until Hussein negotiates, and to convince him that he must, the Administration should stop pressuring America's ally of shared values. In case the Administration can't spot it, it is the small democracy.



954 Liawen Court, N. E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329  
April 30, 1978

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

My dear Mr. President:

Re: Packaged Arms Deal to the Middle East

I am submitting these thoughts to you for your deepest and most heartfelt consideration.

You termed Saudi Arabia a moderate Arab nation (News Conference, April 25, 1978). But, it is widely acknowledged and documented that the PLO is supported with money from Saudi Arabia as well as other militant Arab nations. One article, "The PLO: What Next?", Newsweek, March 27, 1978, p. 32, states:

The Tel Aviv raid was two months in planning by the Al Fatah guerilla group, the largest under the PLO umbrella and Arafat's organizational base. . . .

By turning again to terrorism, Arafat risked alienating his conservative backers, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. But both are expected to continue supplying the major portion of the PLO's annual budget. "The Saudis give money to the PLO because they want to maintain a substantial handle on its activities," says one U. S. official. Arafat also seems to retain strong ties with Moscow; he met amicably with Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev only two days before the raid.

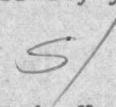
In addition to its existence, the PLO uses its annual budget to purchase arms, influence, etc., to carry out its guerilla operations. The PLO are terrorists, using weapons made in the U. S. S. R., committed to the destruction of democracy (as in Israel) and order and Christianity in the Arab world (as in Lebanon).

Is the packaged arms deal tied to an oil deal? Recently OPEC did not invoke an oil increase--thanks to Saudi Arabia. Are we repaying Saudi Arabia for this favor by supplying the ultimate in sophisticated fighter planes to her, far beyond her needs? These planes are long-range attack planes, not the short-range defensive planes sold to Saudi Arabia in the past. Of course, some may not care what happens in the Middle East nor America as long as a dollar is made.

In the final analysis, through American support to terrorism--by any means or form--we are destroying our democratic nation. Incidentally, the planes promised to Israel in 1975 were never delivered.

Thank you kindly for sincerely considering this grave situation.

Respectfully yours,

  
Mrs. Doris K. Shapira

954 Liawen Court, N. E.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30329  
April 29, 1978

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500

My dear Mr. President:

Re: Lebanese Tree Planting Ceremony

The occasion of your planting a tree in the name of Lebanon was a beautiful gesture on April 28, 1978.


Contrary to your statement that 200,000 are refugees (or PLO) because of events a few weeks ago, you failed to mention the native Lebanese have been displaced as a result of and since the PLO destroyed Lebanon. Lebanon is now dominated by the PLO, and many Moslem Lebanese, fearful for their lives, have been forced to shelter the PLO. When the Israelis struck back at the PLO, most of those fleeing northward were the PLO who were labeled civilians.

From the beginning of the partition of Palestine in 1948, Israel has sought peace through negotiations and was given four wars during those 30 years. If Israel's Arab neighbors would leave Israel alone, Israel would leave the Arabs alone.

We trust that you and your Cabinet will view the movie Holocaust so that you can more clearly understand why the Israelis think and act as they do, and why they struck back into Lebanon, creating the Security Belt. Rightfully, the Security Belt should have been turned over to the Lebanese Army (Moslems and Christians) which the U. N. should have then strengthened.

We would like to again see Lebanon as the peaceful democratic country it once was, "The Jewel of the Middle East." Only when the PLO is ousted from Lebanon will it be so.

Respectfully yours,

  
Mrs. Doris K. Shapira





"The unity of the Jewish community is the second defense line of the state of Israel."  
—Menachem Begin

# Menachem Begin vs. the Jewish Lobby

By Sol Stern

"... With the U.S. and the Begin government on a collision course, the solidarity of American and Israeli Jews is now in question..."

Late last year, Dr. Nahum Goldmann was preparing to resign as head of the World Jewish Congress. For most of his 82 years, this white-haired, distinguished-looking patriarch of international Jewry has been at the center of Zionist activities in America and abroad. Goldmann had seen it all; 25 years ago he negotiated the reparations made by West Germany to Israel and Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. And in the mid-1950s, he founded and became the first chairman of the well-known Presidents' Club, the spearhead of the Jewish community's political lobbying for Israel.

So when Dr. Nahum Goldmann went to Washington in November to see key members of the Carter administration, he carried with him the prestige and experience of a man who has been a major Jewish figure—almost since the days of the Balfour declaration in 1917. In that light, what Goldmann told Cyrus Vance, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and then White House aide Mark

Siegel seemed incredibly like treason.

Simply stated, Goldmann secretly urged this group to "break the Jewish lobby in the United States."

According to a participant in the discussions, Goldmann also told these officials that his old organization, the Presidents' Club—actually a body made up of important American Jewish group leaders—had become a "destructive force," a "major obstacle" to peace in the Middle East. In meetings at the White House and State Department that November day, Goldmann pleaded for the administration to stand firm and not back off from confrontations with the organized Jewish community as other administrations had done.

Unless this was done, he argued, President Carter's plans for a Middle East settlement would die in stillbirth.

Politically, Goldmann said, the administration would ultimately benefit, despite an almost certain uproar at the outset. Because if the Israelis compro-

mised and a settlement was achieved, Jimmy Carter would emerge as the "hero of the Jews."

In the months since those winter sessions in the nation's capital, much has changed. The leader of the largest and most important Arab nation is the man now perceived as the "hero" of peace. Menachem Begin's government has taken a terrific beating in the media. And the Carter administration, conscious of this new climate, has relentlessly been tightening the screws on Israel without the usual fear of domestic backlash. Mark Siegel, the young presidential aide so horrified by what he heard at those November meetings, has since resigned in protest. He believes that the decision to sell advanced F-15 fighter bombers to Saudi Arabia is the embodiment of an unfolding Brzezinski plan to break the "Jewish lobby"'s power in Congress.

One other thing has changed over the past six months. Whereas Nahum Goldmann's private, unprecedented

“... Even as they applauded Begin's speech, the Jewish leaders knew they could never sell his peace plan to the public ...”

defection once appeared to be only a straw in the wind, it now seems to have been a harbinger of serious schism within the ranks of the Jewish community.

Almost every day, the once solid support for the Israeli government by influential American Jews seems to be ebbing more. From people like Senator Ribicoff to Professor Irving Howe, publicly expressed dissidence is increasing—as is press coverage, almost to the point of overkill, of deep divisions among well-known American Jews.

But the truly significant story, the one that's been missed, is what is being said and done behind the closed doors of this nation's major Jewish groups. Notwithstanding their public show of unity in favor of the Begin government's policies—a stance which has led the press to believe that a split exists only between the Jewish leadership and President Carter—a secret, anguished campaign is now being waged to change the Israeli government's position.

However much the official leadership would be shocked at Goldmann's heretical White House statements, its own private campaign with the Begin government has the same intent of softening Israel's position—in effect, to save that nation in spite of itself.

In one closed-door discussion after another, American Jewish leaders are intensively lobbying high Israeli officials, telling them that their hard-line policies on settlements and withdrawals from the West Bank are wrong and cannot be sold in the United States.

Most spectacularly, on the major sticking point currently delaying an agreement between Israel and Egypt—the general declaration of principles Israel is being asked to make concerning some role for Palestinians in “determining their future”—the American Jewish leaders are urging Begin to give in. They are doing this because they know, as does Begin, that accepting such a statement won't lead to the creation of a dreaded Palestinian state—something which Carter and Sadat don't want either.

Recently, the president of one of this country's largest and most powerful Jewish organizations privately told Begin: “Accept the statement. I'm convinced you can reach a bilateral agreement with Egypt. I'm convinced of it. Let the future take care of itself.”

This increasingly wide gap between

public posturing in support of Begin by American Jewish groups and their secret maneuvers portends serious trouble. When there is a crisis of credibility such as this, obviously the center cannot hold. Already the American Jewish Committee, the oldest and most prestigious of national Jewish groups, has put the Israelis on notice that it may be going public; already the question of issuing a public statement of criticism is on the active agenda of the committee's highest policy-making councils.

The committee has already gone farther than any comparable organization in acknowledging its differences with Begin. The group's Washington representative, Hyman Bookbinder, puts it as diplomatically as possible: “While continuing to give Israel our full support on external matters, there are serious misgivings about some of its policies. These misgivings are being transmitted in effective ways to the Israeli government. Begin is not unaware of these misgivings.”

The person who must directly bear the burden of these mounting tensions is Rabbi Alexander Schindler, current chairman of the Presidents' Club. As the head of this umbrella group, formally known as the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Schindler is perceived as the “leader of organized American Jewry.” Actually, this may be a misleading title, because American Jews in reality are not organized on any constituent basis—nor do they want to be. What the organizations Schindler represents have agreed to agree on, however, is general support for Israel.

This said, it must be noted, however, that Schindler's chairmanship does give him a unique platform for his views—since Menachem Begin's election last year, he has spent perhaps 30 hours in private conversations with the prime minister, talks which have left Schindler tortured by the contradictions of his public position and his private doubts.

Schindler is clearly a man of the left—a refugee of Nazi Germany, a City College student in the 1940s who became a Reform rabbi. During the last decade, he helped lead the Reform Jews into early opposition to the Vietnam war. So it was with nervousness that Israelis greeted Schindler's ascendancy to the top of the Presidents' Club two years ago, an anxiety fostered by the rabbi's dovish views on Palestinian rights and captured territories.

The Israelis' fears were mainly un-

founded. So far, Schindler has retained the expected stance of public enthusiasm for the Begin regime. “It's easy to understand why the people of Israel are so excited about him,” Schindler said during the early days of the prime minister's reign. “The Jewish leadership sees in Begin what he truly is—the leader of the Jewish nation.”

But behind the scenes, another posture was developing. What Schindler told the media was one thing; but when he sat down with Menachem Begin, the criticism was strong.

Just before Schindler's first visit to the Middle East following the Israeli elections, Begin paid a much publicized visit to the controversial Israeli settlement of Kadum on the West Bank. There, the prime minister-designate told the settlers—all of them members of the mystical-nationalist Gush Emunim (“Block of the Faithful”) movement: “Soon there will be many Kadums.” A photograph of Begin, Torah scroll in hand, standing with the settlers, was flashed around the world.

A lot of people were shocked, including Schindler. And he told Begin so when they met several days later in a Tel Aviv hospital room, where the prime minister was resting after a minor relapse of his heart condition. According to Schindler, the following conversation ensued:

Begin: “What's wrong with Kadum? What's wrong with holding a Torah, Rabbi? I held the Torah. Shouldn't the prime minister of Israel be allowed to hold the Torah?”

Schindler: “I have no objections to your holding the Torah. It's what you said that bothered me.”

Begin started to respond angrily, but Schindler cut him off: “Look, do you want me to tell you what you want to hear or do you want me to tell you the truth as I perceive it? I deem it my responsibility to give you my perception of the temper of the American Jewish community and my perception of the American government's policy. Now do you want to hear the truth or don't you want to hear the truth?”

At that point, according to Schindler, Begin told him that he wanted to hear it straight.

Schindler now says, “Since that time he has heard the truth from me, sometimes very painful to him, and radically divergent from him.”

Although there hasn't been a hint of such “radical” disagreements in public, these disputes have focused on the cru-

# AIR-INDIA'S SPRING/SUMMER/ FALL TOURS ARE ABOUT TAKE OFF. HERE ARE JUST TWO OF THEM.



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## "...Criticism of Israel, Jewish leaders say, should be made only behind closed doors..."

cial issues separating Israel from the United States—settlements, interpretation of U.N. Resolution 242, and Palestinian rights. On all of these, Schindler has been pushing Begin hard to give in.

However, the public Schindler saw his role during those early sessions with Begin as that of cementing the political unity of American Jews. "I pretty well knew what I was going to say before I went," says Schindler. "I knew he was the only prime minister Israel had; that there was a danger of fragmentation with the American Jewish community; that I had at least the obligation to keep the community united in order to give this man a chance to form a government."

But why does the leader of an American Jewish organization—even the presumed leader of "organized American Jewry"—feel that the prime minister of Israel needs a personal endorsement in order to form his government?

"Because," answers Schindler, "to a large extent the strength of Israel depends on the strength of the American Jewish community, on its perceived strength and its unity in support of Israel."

In a further elaboration of that point, Schindler's organization says in its annual report: "Dissent ought not and should not be made public because . . . when Jewish dissent is made public in the daily press or in the halls of government, the result is to give aid and comfort to the enemy and to weaken that Jewish unity which is essential for the security of Israel."

There is in those two statements a summation of the present sad state of the organized Jewish leadership. Although Israelis are deeply split—as, of course, are American Jews—somehow it is necessary, come what may, to maintain the appearance of unity. Criticism may be made and heard, but only behind closed doors.

Apart from the moral question, it is a policy that cannot possibly work. The Jews of America do not live in a ghetto out of earshot of the Gentiles. Nor is the Jewish establishment, contrary to some notions shared by the political Right and Left, powerful enough to control what appears in the media. As the last few months have demonstrated only too well, when the press wants "Jewish dissent," it has no trouble in finding it.

There has been a widely held presumption that the people of Israel

maintain their sense of purpose through the total solidarity of American Jews. But while this concept has found its way into decades of fund-raising speeches and political rallies, it has actually led to a colossal misunderstanding: that in our 6 million Jews the Israeli people have a reserve army unquestioningly fighting their key battles on the crucial American front.

This belief has been left to flourish unchallenged because for most of Israel's existence, United States and Israeli interests converged, leaving the critical question of American Jewry's relationship to the Holy Land academic for some, a matter of pure emotion for others. But with America and the Begin government now on a collision course, the old rhetoric, the assumed tenets, are suddenly in question.

Already, the growing disenchantment with Begin has spilled over into challenges to the legitimacy of the Jewish leadership itself. The *New York Times* has run several sharply worded editorials questioning the right of the official leadership to speak in the name of the Jewish community regarding the present policies of Israel. Senator Ribicoff recently told the *Wall Street Journal* that the official leaders were simply "self-appointed spokesmen who try to give the impression they speak for the Jews." And in terms reminiscent of Goldmann, he went on to say of the Jewish lobby that "they do a great disservice to the U.S., to Israel, and to the Jewish community."

There are in all of this the clear rumblings of that long-submerged but never buried issue of "dual loyalty." The official American Jewish leadership is deeply concerned about this; in their private councils they anguish over their possible political isolation and over how much they can really "deliver" for Israel under its presently constituted leadership.

But whose interest does it serve to keep those concerns "all in the family"? If the Presidents' Club continually announces that it will do nothing more than be mere foot soldiers for the Israelis, who is going to take them seriously?

The impotence this self-imposed policy inflicts on Jewish organizations was well illustrated by their response to the Sadat peace initiative. While the Sadat-Begin honeymoon was still flourishing, Rabbi Schindler accepted an invitation to visit Egypt, where he met with the Cairo leader and most of his top aides.



Sadat expected to see Schindler and other leading American Jews again, on his February trip to the United States. But by then the peace talks had broken down; Schindler and the other leaders refused to see the Egyptian president.

Why? Simply because the Israelis didn't want these American Jews to see him. Once again, by letting themselves act as surrogates for the Israeli government, these American Jewish leaders lessened their credibility with the Egyptians, the Carter White House, and, in fact, the general public.

If these American Jewish groups can have no independent role in the peace-making process, if they refuse to speak publicly to the people of Israel about their concerns, what is left for them to do? Is it to be cheerleaders for the Begin government?

Maybe; maybe not. But that is exactly what they did several weeks ago, following Begin's disastrous trip to Washington. Gathered at the Waldorf-Astoria by the Presidents' Club, 1,000 of this nation's top Jewish organizational leaders heard the Israeli prime minister give an impassioned defense of his peace program. Begin urged them to turn the Carter administration around. "Take our peace plan," he implored them. "Make it known to millions of Americans. Ask for support: You will have it. Then everyone will see how great a contribution we have made."

In closing, Begin reiterated his contention that Jews must stand together because "the unity of the Jewish community is the second defense line of the state of Israel."

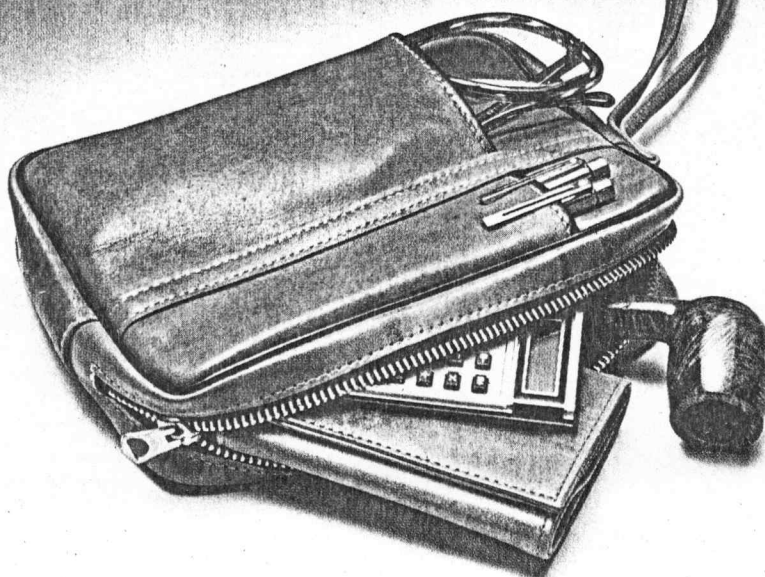
There was a tough speech of support from Rabbi Schindler and a standing ovation for Begin. But even as they applauded, most of the people in that ballroom knew there was no way they could sell the Israeli peace plan to the American public. They knew they might not even be able to stop the F-15 sale to the Saudis. And they knew they were really on the defensive. In fact, Nahum Goldmann's plea of last November to "break the Jewish lobby" had strengthened the White House's hand and was slowly taking seed across the country.

Rabbi Schindler, who sat on the podium next to Begin, has told him the truth. Many times, but always in private.

Thus, it was all a charade. Begin may have returned home feeling a bit better, but the victims of this façade are really the Israeli people. Because now, facing the most momentous set of political decisions in their brief existence, they don't know the real facts about the stance of the American Jews.

At the very least, the American Jewish leadership could stop lying to the people of Israel.

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# CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS OF MAJOR AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

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Women's League for  
Conservative Judaism  
World Zionist Organization  
American Section, Inc.  
Zionist Organization of America

Mr. John Berendt, Editor  
New York Magazine  
755 Second Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Sir:

Sol Stern's article "Menachem Begin vs. The Jewish Lobby" is not exactly a jewel of journalism, filled as it is with rumor, innuendo and selective quotations designed to fit into his pre-conceived notion that somehow the unified action of American Jewry in support of Israel's basic security needs is a dis-service to Israel's people.

A case in point: it is true that following Begin's election I travelled to Israel "knowing pretty well what I was going to say on my return even before I went." But what I also told Mr. Stern -- and what he failed to report -- is that I found my meetings with the Prime Minister deeply assuring -- so much so that I was able to declare with enthusiasm and from the depths of my convictions that Menachem Begin was a statesman who could make the transition from candidacy to incumbency and that he truly desires to negotiate peace with his neighbors. I believe the events in the Middle East since I made that statement confirm this view.

On another, more important point: Mr. Stern asked me whether I agree with each and every policy of the Government of Israel. I replied that I manifestly do not and that when I don't, I feel free to say so to Mr. Begin. Moreover, I said "would you believe it, the Prime Minister actually listens." On the basis of this statement Sol Stern invents a nightmare of "thirty hours of private conversations with the Prime Minister," during which I am wracked and "tortured" by the contradictions between my public position and my private doubts. Nonsense! Those conversations, though often serious, were not at all painful as I made clear to Mr. Stern. The areas of my agreement with Mr. Begin are infinitely greater than the areas of disagreement. Whatever differences do exist are in the realm of tactics, not strategy. I have raised (and will continue to raise) with Mr. Begin and his ministers questions about the public relations impact of various government policies; but I recognize that the decisions about Israel's security -- borders, armaments, "guarantees," etc. -- can be made only by the people of Israel who will have to pay the consequences of those policies.

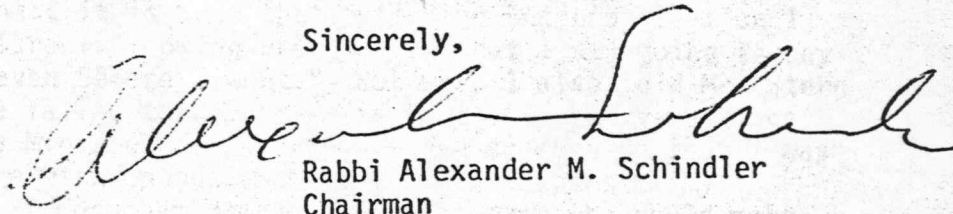
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18 April 1978

This applies, I believe, to the larger American Jewish community as well. We do not agree with each and every policy of the Government of Israel, present or past. But we are in truth united when it comes to the fundamentals, those guiding principles affecting the security of Israel and her people which most Jews and, indeed, most Americans still share. Disagreement on specific issues does not mean a division on fundamental goals. And the unity of the American Jewish community is not a "charade." As I have confirmed in several weeks of travel through dozens of communities throughout the country, from which I have just returned. The rank and file of our constituency -- the Jewish men and women and children of our communities -- are unwavering in the depth of their commitment to the survival of Israel in security and in strength -- and to the democratically elected leadership of the Government of Israel.

Mr. Stern berates us for not expressing our "dissent" in Washington. Does he really expect us to have an impact on Begin by talking to Hamilton Jordan? When we talk in Washington we talk about American policy; the logical place for the expression of dissent from Israeli policy is in Jerusalem.

As for Mr. Stern's crocodile tears that we delude the people of Israel, his contemptible slander that we "lie to them," I will say only this: Israel has good eyes and ears in America. Everything that is published in America affecting Israel is duly reported in the Israeli press. Sol Stern may not believe it but the substance of his article was presented extensively in the Jerusalem Post, Ha'aretz, and Ma'ariv a day before a copy of New York Magazine reached my desk.

Sincerely,



Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler  
Chairman

AMS:jbj