

JEWISH SPECTATOR

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History and Memory

Nuclear Proliferation

The Shofar's Last Sound

Kibbutz Judaism

The New York Intellectuals

Israeli Democracy

Torah and Medicine

The Many Lives Of Yiddish

The War Against Breira

Nursing Homes—Good and Bad

Nobody Cares About U.J.A.

By ELIEZER D. JAFFE

A GOOD friend of mine, a former chairman of Project Renewal and now General Chairman of the Jewish Appeal for a large Eastern metropolis in the U.S., wrote to me recently complaining that attacks on the World Zionist Congress and the Jewish Agency "have not helped me in my present capacity" (i.e. fundraising). He felt that such attacks feed into the desire of "many in the States who wish that major functions of the Agency be placed under Israel Government Ministerial control in order to reapportion a percentage of available funds for American Jewish needs." My friend then went on to write that "the Agency is a miniature stereotype of the whole Israeli scene and for it to be any other way, it would have to operate in a vacuum or be directed entirely by non-Israelis." As for changes needed, my friend noted: "You know very well that many of us are trying in our own way to break down the bureaucratic walls."

These comments summarize in a nutshell the dilemma, the bewilderment, and the essential powerlessness of many relatively sophisticated diaspora Jews regarding their relationship with Israel. Beyond the deep emotional ties, the form of this relationship is overwhelmingly financial; it is a philanthropic fundraising charity relationship based on the need to identify as Jews and to respond to the pleas of the Israeli Government and of the Jewish Agency, which is the major beneficiary of tax-deductable philanthropy for Israel.

Unfortunately, the politicization of the World Zionist Organization and its action arm, the Jewish Agency, has not only been tolerated by U.J.A. and Keren Hayesod donors, but their leadership has consciously rationalized this arrangement as acceptable and necessary "as a miniature of the larger Israeli scene." This benevolent tolerance of Israeli politics concerning the distribution of American Jewish philanthropy represents an irresponsibility and defeatism totally unbecoming diaspora leadership and the people they claim to represent. The fatalism and passivity of efforts to depoliticize the W.Z.O. and the Jewish Agency are incredible in view of the power wielded by the American Jewish community.

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The United Jewish Appeal (U.J.A.) transfers its Israel-bound funds to the United Israel Appeal (U.I.A.). Income from the U.J.A. is the principal source (87.7 percent) of U.I.A.'s funds. And income from the U.I.A. is the major source (more than 60 percent) of the Jewish Agency's annual operating budget. In financial terms, the U.J.A.-U.I.A. provided \$2,857,752,000 to the Agency in the past eleven years, more than 65 percent of the Agency's operating budget. In fiscal 1982, U.I.A.'s support for programs in Israel amounted to \$298 million; and the Agency has requested a total of \$282 million for fiscal 1983 from the U.J.A.-U.I.A., not including funds for Project Renewal (\$21 million in 1982), the Israel Education Fund (\$5.9 million in 1982), and the Debt Retirement Program (\$44.6 million in 1982), all of which are directly remitted to the Jewish Agency.

The "shares" of the American Jewish community in the Jewish Agency are even more formidable than this. For ten consecutive past years the United Israel Appeal has succeeded in obtaining grants from the American Government to assist in the resettlement of Soviet and Eastern European Jews in Israel, for a total of \$240,615,000. These Federal grants account for nearly 7 percent of the total Agency budget.

THE JEWISH Agency (as well as the W.Z.O.) are primarily the fiscal responsibility of the American Jewish community. Therefore the U.J.A.-U.I.A. must be held mainly accountable for the appropriate, efficient and effective expenditure of monies collected on its behalf through local Federations. It seems incomprehensible, therefore, that the U.I.A. has only 30 percent representation on the Jewish Agency Assembly, and the Board of Governors, and only three representatives (23 percent) on the 13 member Jewish Agency Executive. Whoever agreed to such meager representation for such a major stockholder, shares much of the blame for diminished responsibility and accountability to American donors.

PERHAPS the most serious error of American philanthropists and U.J.A. leaders is the delusion that one can have politization of the W.Z.O., the Zionist Congress and the Jewish Agency on the

one hand, and "appropriate, efficient, and effective expenditure of monies collected," on the other. The naive assumption that you can have both has not been justified in fact. Yet so far, only lip-service has been forthcoming from American leaders concerning the need for change, at least among those who do not view themselves simply as American representatives of Israeli political parties.

Perhaps the best current example of the ineptitude of American leaders in "trying in their own way to break down the bureaucratic walls" is Project Renewal. Without the knowledge of any American Renewal representatives, including Jerold Hoffberger, Chairman of both the U.I.A. and of Project Renewal, two meetings were held in Jerusalem between representatives of the Ministry of Housing (including David Levy, Moshe Katzav and Daniel Shimshoni), and representatives of the Jewish Agency (including Arye Dulzin, Akiva Lewinsky, and Yechiel Admoni) during which an agreement was drawn up, and signed just prior to the convening of the World Zionist Congress in December, 1982. In this agreement, Project Renewal in Israel was essentially placed under the control of the Ministry of Housing, with the Jewish Agency relegated to functions such as "contact with Jewish communities abroad and responsibility of dealing with the twinned communities," "responsibility for activities abroad, such as campaigns and public relations," "decisions on twinning relationships," "allocation of approved projects to be adopted by the (diaspora) communities," "responsibility and supervision of volunteers," and "monitoring and reporting on progress of projects to the communities abroad."

In essence, the agreement consigns the Jewish Agency to its classic role of conduit for funds and restricts it from meaningful involvement or independent transfer of funds to neighborhood steering committees. It thus relegates *the Americans* to second-class status regarding the use of their own funds, without even consulting them about this crucial policy decision.

The Jewish Agency representatives also agreed that "the Jewish Agency will not establish a planning section and will not appoint evaluation teams for Project Renewal." The final insult to the unknowing American and diaspora fundraisers is found in paragraph 15 of the agreement, in which the Ministry of Housing and the Jewish Agency signers sum up the whole spirit of the Agreement,

that "Jewish communities will have no veto power on decisions of the Local Steering Committee which have been authorized by the Interministerial Committee."

Some claim that Mr. Dulzin was looking at the time more to political support for his re-election to the chairmanship of the W.Z.O., the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, and the Agency Executive, than to his American "partners." Weeks later, when Hoffberger finally read a translation of the agreement, he totally rejected as absurd any notion of denying Americans veto power concerning use of their Project Renewal funds.

Whether Renewal should become a Government enterprise or not is not the issue. The point is that the American Jewish leadership has neglected its responsibility to its own constituents, and has played along for decades with Israeli demands to give money and not to get involved in how it should be spent. The Americans have quietly gone along, seeing the problem simply and paternalistically as one of "Israeli bureaucracy," rather than as a struggle for social policy, control over the use of massive philanthropic funds, and political power in Israel.

Despite the rhetoric of Jewish Agency officials, it is not "Zionism" that is at issue here at all, nor *hagshama* (self-fulfillment through aliya), or even Jewish "commitment." For too long these self-appointed missionaries of Zionism have equated fundraising and philanthropy for Israel with Zionism. This "Zionism" is really irrelevant to the issues of fiscal accountability, efficiency, responsibility and morality regarding massive philanthropy for Israel. This purposeful blurring of welfare work with Zionism has been detrimental to both Zionism and welfare in Israel. The least that American and other diaspora Jews can do is to run their philanthropic affairs more responsibly and use their considerable resources in a much more sophisticated manner.

I would strongly suggest to the fundraisers that they spend some effort setting up a new mechanism for spending their money in Israel. They clearly cannot rely on the Jewish Agency because of overlapping political identities between top Agency and Government officials. They also cannot rely on the World Zionist Organization or the Zionist Congress for the same reasons.

Dare they, perhaps, rely on themselves?

BOOKS BY ELIEZER JAFFE

Child Welfare in Israel

A description, analysis, and critique of Israeli child welfare services. A resource and textbook by an expert who has been closely involved with developments in social work education, practice, and policy in Israel for over two decades.

Praeger Scientific Publishers, 521 Fifth Avenue, New York 1982, 319 pp., \$21.95.

Giving Wisely: The Israel Guide to Non-Profit Volunteer Social Services in Israel

Detailed profiles of nearly 400 non-profit Israeli social service organizations desperately in need of funds. Few philanthropists have ever heard of many of them. **Giving Wisely** is the first effort to prevent a survival-of-the-fittest situation in which the more sophisticated organizations, often the wealthiest, win out.

The Jerusalem Post, 120 East 56 Street, N.Y.C. 10022, 656 pp., \$18.00

Israelis in Institutions: Studies in Child Placement Practices and Policy

An inside view of the data and the debate over Israeli institutional care, the politics of child care and organizational survival, and major challenges confronting Israeli child welfare workers.

Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, Inc., One Park Avenue, New York 10016. 213 pp.

Pleaders and Protesters: The Future of Citizens' Organizations in Israel

Reports the changing roles, goals, and strategies of grassroots citizens' groups involved with social change in Israel; the implications of the Israeli Black Panther movement and the mass protests against the Government after the Yom Kippur War, and the social action groups.

The American Jewish Committee, 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022. 36 pp., \$2.50

Letters to Yitz

This short volume traces the paths of two brothers who grew up in an immigrant Jewish family in the Midwest. The older brother, Yitz, raised a family and was a prominent, active member of his community, until his untimely and tragic death in 1978. This book is Eliezer Jaffe's dialog with his brother in their correspondence over nearly three decades. It will speak to those who have experienced close family ties, separation, and the loss of loved ones.

Herzl Press, 515 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. 83 pp. \$5.00.