

# JEWISH SPECTATOR

Spring 1983

Vol. 48, No. 1

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THE JEWISH SPECTATOR, Dr. Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, Editor, Published quarterly—Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, by THE JEWISH SPECTATOR, P.O. Box 2016, Santa Monica, CA 90406. Telephone (213) 829-2484. Annual Subscription \$15.00, Canada and Foreign \$18.00. Single copy, \$4.00. • Unsolicited manuscripts receive careful attention. In case of nonacceptance, they will not be returned unless self-addressed envelopes and postage are provided by the authors.

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# Obligations of UJA Contributors

By ELIEZER JAFFE

ZIONIST congresses are crucial since it is here that power is allocated, senior jobs at the Jewish Agency are assigned, and bargains are struck.

However, the ingredient that gives substance and ferocity to congress deliberations, and prestige and power to thousands of political functionaries who will be employed to carry them out, is the more than \$400 million annual income of the Jewish Agency.

This income comes from charitable contributions of Jews around the world through the following organizations (1981-82 data):

UJA	\$247,023,000
Keren Hayesod	20,720,000
State of Israel	50,617,000
Youth Aliyah	4,374,000
Reimbursements	20,873,000
Education Fund	8,657,000
Project Renewal	48,300,000
Total	\$400,564,000

Since these funds are deposited into the Jewish Agency which is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization, and since the Agency is essentially a subsidiary of the World Zionist Organization, it is the role of the Zionist Congress to dictate the utilization of these funds, i.e., to slice the \$400 million cake.

Actually, since the interval between congresses is five years, the cake is much larger. The approximate term of office for WZO and Agency board members, and their party appointees who occupy senior jobs, is five years. In economic terms, the total sum to be administered by the 30th Zionist Congress will probably exceed \$2 billion.

Although the average Israeli citizen seems rather uninterested in goings-on at Zionist congresses, the Israeli political establishment is extremely active and aware of the financial and political stakes involved.

So, too, are the foreign counterpart supporters of the various parties in Israel. They work very hard to increase their delegations and to coordinate strategy with their sister-parties in Israel.

*Dr. Jaffe is Professor of Social Work at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "Obligations of UJA Contributors" is abbreviated from an article by Professor Jaffe in the Jerusalem Post of December 20, 1982.*

THE ZIONIST congress and the Jewish Agency are political party establishments fueled by *charitable and welfare funds* donated by well-meaning lovers of Israel around the world.

This explains why more time is spent at congress meetings haggling over the spoils of office and setting up political coalitions than in debating and evaluating Zionist programs and welfare projects.

It is extremely doubtful whether the average donor to UJA or to Keren Hayesod has the slightest understanding of the political nature of the World Zionist Organization-Jewish Agency. The mass of donors do not vote for delegates of political parties in the Zionist congress who then decide how UJA money is used.

Unfortunately, most donors don't really care, and they settle for sloppy, wasteful philanthropy, with only the crudest kind of "representation." If the Israeli political parties have thrived on Diaspora philanthropy, it is because no one cares to stop its misuse.

In my view it is inconceivable that charitable moneys collected from masses of politically unaffiliated Jews, who are not members of Zionist organizations, and are unsophisticated about Israeli politics, but who instinctively love Israel, should be used to finance Israeli politics in the Zionist Congress and in the Jewish Agency.

It is inconceivable that millions of dollars raised abroad specifically for non-political purposes are simply hijacked by political parties in Israel to fund the spoils system that exists today in the World Zionist Organization.

The Zionist Congress has no moral right to usurp these funds, and they must be completely removed from the jurisdiction of the Zionist Congress.

If Israeli political parties want to play Knesset in the Zionist Congress, let them pay for it themselves. One cannot excuse the consistent duplicity of the so-called "non-party" participants in the Congress, such as WIZO and mainly Hadassah, in this corrupt spoils system. It is time Hadassah members in America challenged their leaders to reform the system rather than feed on it.

The pseudo "non-political" Confederation of Zionists sent 108 delegates (out of 533) to the Thirtieth Zionist Congress, the majority of these Hadassah women. They participated in the festival like everyone else, with no moral qualms whatsoever about their role in dividing up UJA and Keren Hayesod spoils among the Israeli political parties.

In street terminology, someone has to stand up and stop the "rip-off," and say "the emperor is naked." The fact that no one of stature, including Max Fisher, has been able to do this, may in itself reflect the power and the fear of loss of patronage available from these wealthy institutions. But responsible people must now speak out.

FOR A START, change in the present Zionist apparatus can only be brought about by those who fund this structure. Without funds and control over funds, the apparatus cannot exist.

Local Jewish Federations, their leaders and national roof organizations, such as the Council of Jewish Federations, have a moral obligation to assess and evaluate the existing structure, and possible alternative ways of channelling donations to Israel.

If the Jewish Federations do not take responsibility for allocation of funds and patronage in Israel, they will have betrayed their constituencies and their moral obligation.

Perhaps what is needed is the establishment of a new, independent, non-profit, professionally-operated foundation, instead of the Jewish Agency, so as to make awards solely on merit and performance. Or perhaps the Joint Distribution Committee in Israel could fill part of this role, expanding the relatively limited role it now plays, on condition that it can avoid politicization.

The Israel government, if it so desires, could also help. Most of the departments of the Jewish Agency should be incorporated in existing Israeli government ministries.

There are many in Israel today who believe that the creation of the State should have resulted in a dismantling of the Jewish Agency. They feel that the Agency has become a state within the state and it competes with and duplicates many of the Israel government's activities, at times on a larger scale. Changing this requires leadership and vision.

Thanks to the involvement of Diaspora communities in Israel through Project Renewal, and the admission of the "non-Zionist" Jewish organizations as a result of recent Jewish Agency policy, people in the Diapora have become more informed about Israel, and more impatient for change. Perhaps this will provide the leadership and ideas for reorganization.

If this is not done soon by responsible Diaspora leaders who insist on iron-clad restrictions and professional follow-up on the use of *their* philanthropic funds, then it will be every man for himself.

It's time that we Israelis had responsible leadership from the Diaspora. For those whose relationship with us is defined by philanthropy, it's time you put your house in order. In doing so, we may together save the Zionist movement and the Zionist Congress from the embarrassing circus it has become.

For example, Youth Aliya could fit in the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Settlement Department and Project Renewal could move to the Ministry of Housing; immigration and absorption could be included in the Ministry of Absorption, or perhaps in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs; the departments of education, culture (secular and Torah education) could be moved to the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the information and foreign relations departments might come under the Prime Minister's Office.

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