

The Challenge to the Communal Worker of the Uncommitted Among Jewry*

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THE efforts and decisions of the American Jewish communal professional can change the nature of the American Jewish community, can affect the quality of life in Israel and can decide the fate of Soviet Jewry.

If some are skeptical or cynical about our potential power, just think back to the thirties when our collective strength did not exist; when there were few professionals, mostly untrained, disorganized, frightened . . . and unable to harness the power of more than 2,000,000 Jews. . . Jews who were deaf to the few courageous voices raised during those troubled times.

Today, we are neither frightened nor hesitant. Jewish communal workers, in the main, are rooted in *Ahavat Yisrael*. We have strength, courage, vitality and confidence — faith in ourselves as Jews and Americans, and most of us do believe with Elie Wiesel that, "alone, the individual Jew would have been lost many times and long ago, but a Jew is never alone . . . Jews have never before been so organically linked to one another. If we shout in San Francisco, we are being heard in Kiev. If Jews cry in Kiev they are heard and worried over in Jerusalem, and if Jews are sad in Jerusalem, we are moved to tears in New York. Thus a Jew lives in more than one place — in more than one time. A Jew lives on more than one level and he lives with the people of Israel."

Yet, despite our strength, almost half of the Jewish families in America still do not

*Presented at the Annual Meeting of The National Conference of Jewish Communal Service, San Francisco, June 4, 1974.

give to our central welfare fund campaigns which support Jewish needs in their own communities as well as overseas. Yes, there are Jews of Silence in America. Passive Jews, non involved Jews, non committed Jews, not active like the Jews of Silence in the Soviet Union whose silence is heard and felt around the world. Can we reach our Jews of Silence, our missing Jews? Yes, if we, the men and women who have devoted our lives to Jewish survival, work together toward common goals.

One of our mutual problems is confusion over primacy and priority. We tend to indulge in rhetoric and forget about reality and, because it is nice to be well received by all, we talk as if every area of Jewish life has the same primacy and priority.

These goals, the higher quality of Jewish life in Israel and America, are *not* mutually exclusive concepts, but funding them does have a track record, which Zibbell courageously pointed out in his address.†

He said, "Whenever more funds are raised in the totality, even if substantially in response to an overseas crisis, more funds are made available for our domestic agencies. From 1960 to 1970, federated regular funds increased 30 percent; allocations for local purposes increased 57 percent; federation grants for Jewish education increased 100 percent."

I am not implying that these increases have met the growing needs of our communities. The point is, when our priorities are clear and our aim is surely at our targets, we will fund our needs

† pp. 21-27.

and we will all benefit as our communities did even in this year of the terrible Yom Kippur War.

All the more reason why it is startling not to see a separate resolution coming out of this meeting of the Conference, along with all the others being passed, on Israel's human needs and the American Jewish community's part in meeting these needs through the United Jewish Appeal, since our central campaign is so vital to the funding of all programs. I must confess I am also somewhat bewildered by the report submitted today on the Organized Jewish Community. In it there are three statements that I do not grasp and it may very well be my own ignorance. If so, I trust I'll have an opportunity to become better informed before the conference meeting ends.

The first is:

"... the ideological position which underlies the survey's findings and is, in fact, its principal finding: the overwhelming commitment of Jewish communal workers to 'creative Jewish survival' through Jewish communal services based on the major share of the resources and participation of all strata and subgroups of the Jewish community."

How can I or anyone else accept this as a valid finding when the report itself goes on to call this statement "deceptively platitudinous?"

Secondly, the respondents are described as, "first and foremost Jewish communal workers rather than cosmopolitan professionals and predominantly American Jewish rather than Israel-oriented."

I always regarded myself as a cosmopolitan, Israel-oriented American Jewish communal worker. Besides, it is an unfortunate choice of words, since the last time I recall "cosmopolitan" used together with "Israel-oriented" or "Jewish" it was by those who denigrate us in the Soviet Union.

Thirdly, although the vast majority listed fund-raising for Israel as a major priority, one-third of those who replied did not even include fund-raising for Israel as one of American Jewry's first *three* priorities. It may very well be that the missing one-third are part of our Jews of silence.

It therefore seems to me that we are too fragmented and compartmentalized, nationally and locally. We often see only the particular, the smallest Jewish element and not the universal destiny of Klal Yisrael.

This tension between particularity and universal vision runs through the whole of Jewish history. Our task is not to ensure the eclipse of one by the other, but to bring them together in creative alliance.

This is the reason I have been traveling almost every day for the past four weeks, meeting with executive directors, Federation presidents, campaign chairmen, editors of the Anglo-Jewish press, to alert our community that this is not just another year and 1975 is not just another campaign. For the first time in 26 years, Israel can no longer be considered invincible. Although the war was not lost, it also wasn't won. The war may have been won militarily, but was it won politically or psychologically? Israel's human losses were staggering. Taxes are practically confiscatory, and it is a matter of ingenuity for families to "make it." The gulf between the "two Israels" is greater than ever before and is explosive.

Israel at 26, younger than most of us, is almost alone in the world facing not only a united, politically and economically strong Arab world but the Soviet Union, and behind the Soviet Union, China. This just is not a year like any other year!

Arnulf Pins in his remarkable address tried to avoid emotion and be logical and rational. If I am emotional or angry, bear with me, for I share my thoughts and

problems with you, colleague to colleague, I think you will agree that this is also a time for emotion and anger.

Once upon a time fund-raising was a simple process ... few were solicited ... campaigning was seasonal. Now we deal on many levels, and the campaign runs all year, with one campaign telescoping into another, one beginning before another has ended.

Contributions range from five million dollars to piggy banks brought in by children; from a select 1,000 people who give us 330 million, or 50 percent of our campaign, to *amcha*, masses of small contributors. It involves university faculty and students, women's division and young leaders, rabbis and Hebrew school students, cutting across generations, denominations, and professions.

Today's campaign is diverse: missions to Israel, Upgrade programs, resident solicitors, retreats, seminars, institutes, background papers; theatrical programs expressing Jewish values; special Hagaddahs for holidays; and a different speaker for a different UJA, voices of Yitzchak Greenberg, Moshe Davis, Amos Elon and Elie Wiesel.

Through the process of fund-raising we have learned that we can raise Jews at the same time that we raise money. And talented, and committed and creative Jewish professionals can do it in a variety of ways, be it pledge solicitation, playing basketball or guiding a Jewish family.

Our challenge is not only to work together but to find the right kind of personnel who will work together, for fund-raising depends as much or more on asking as on giving, and asking requires training. The scarcity of staff trained in fund-raising is appalling.

I have served on several committees dealing with our schools of social work. In my opinion the critical need for communal personnel will not be resolved in the 70's, particularly the need for fund-raisers.

I sometimes wonder where we would be without Cleveland, without its enlightened and courageous program which has contributed more professionals to our communal institutions than almost any other community or organization. In the past few years, UJA has been trying to emulate Cleveland. In view of the increased staff needs of more and more Federations and communal organizations, I predict that a growing number of vital positions will be filled by men and women from outside of social work, and more communal decisions will be made by the growing leadership generation of young men and women, unless attitudes and perspectives are changed regarding fund-raising, both in our schools and in our community.

What is the challenge to the UJA? Your challenge as much as mine, for fund-raising in the final analysis is individual community action. The challenge is simple to define, complicated to implement, critical to many.

The challenge. A campaign in 1975 to raise \$900,000,000 — \$750,000,000 for Israel and \$150,000,000 for American Jewish domestic needs. Compare that with our 1974 results — the gross is anticipated to be \$675,000,000, more than double that of 1973, but still far from meeting overseas' and our own community needs.

It is complicated to campaign because ours is a campaign of almost 900 individual communities: 215 Federated, 660 Non-Federated, 22 cities raising five million dollars and over, 66 cities raising one million dollars and over.

With all our complications and with many negative factors — unsettled economic conditions in the United States, a 1974 campaign of huge dimensions, indecision and confusion in Israel — there are many of us who still believe that more money can be raised in 1975 than was raised in 1974.

We bear in mind the 1967 experience:

in the flush of victory and pride, that fund-raising campaign seemed to be the limit of our fund raising potential. Then in 1972, without war, in the midst of recession, the American Jewish community raised more than it raised during the war year 1967. The 1972 campaign was a year of communal achievement greater than either 1967 or 1974.

And many will recall a year ago at just this same time, how some of our colleagues were promoting a concept that 1972 was the plateau of fund-raising for the American Jewish community. Others among us protested that no one could predict American Jewish response to Jewish need. Tragically, October 6th made a prophet out of some of us and the concept of plateau has now been forgotten.

We also know that, despite our achievement, many of us did not give according to the level our peers rated us. There were magnificent increases. But if a man went from \$1,000 to \$10,000, who was rated at \$100,000, or from \$10,000 to \$100,000 when he was rated at \$250,000, should we rate them any lower in 1975? Of course, there are many who cannot repeat their giving. But there are just as many who can give more. And what about our Jews of Silence, those who give nothing or give so far below their potential? Or members of Jewish fraternal, communal and religious organizations who do not participate at all in our central federated fund-raising campaigns?

Each campaign has a dynamic of its own and we must develop in this one a dynamic of strength and unity. Our plan, therefore, is to start as early as possible to build confidence in the 1975 campaign. In April, meetings were held with the Council of Federations and Welfare Funds and with executives all over the country in regional meetings in Atlanta, New York, Chicago and San

Francisco. We together agreed to select carefully in each city a few leaders who could, as early as April, May and June, signify their willingness to give as much or more for 1975 in order to set the standards for the 1975 campaign.

Just this past week at our Executive Committee Retreat in Florida, we asked the leaders of the United Jewish Appeal to indicate their own intentions, for if they are to project a goal to the American Jewish community as large or larger than that adopted after Yom Kippur, then it is their responsibility to be leaders by example as well as by word, and most of the men present pledged their giving commensurately.

At the Jewish Agency Assembly in Jerusalem later this month, leaders of the world Jewish community will meet to assess the needs of the Jewish Agency and to project a goal for the world. We will ask them as well to back their affirmation of need with their own giving.

In July we have planned dialogues in all major communities between community leaders and Israel's leaders, in order for each community to determine for itself the validity of Israel's needs, to determine if they are greater today than they were on October 6.

In August a meeting will be held in the home of Israel's Ambassador in Washington to obtain additional pace-setting gifts and a week later, executive directors, presidents, chairmen and large contributors will be invited to visit Israel on a special Prime Minister's Mission.

In September all communities will hold meetings to determine their own goals for the 1975 campaign and the success of these meetings will be dependent on what we do between now and September.

In October a million dollar meeting will be held in London, and the 22 communities which raise \$5,000,000 or more

will send leadership missions to Israel. At the same time we will conduct our National Study Conference in Israel.

November will be a dramatic month. A quarter of a million dollar meeting will be held in London. Fifty American communities raising a million dollars and over will be in Israel with leadership missions. For the first time in the CJFWF's 48-year history, a fund-raising meeting will be held in conjunction with the General Assembly.

At our December Conference we will honor Golda Meir for all that she has done for the Jewish people.

In January, which is as far as we have planned — an international conference for 1,000 people is being projected in Israel ... for those contributors and workers below the top giving level, people who are not usually sought out and honored, in order to keep in our campaign all the new contributors who became involved in 1974.

This plan can be implemented only if all of us work together. And working together in 1975 requires an added dimension, a dimension of trying to make each community one. New York City's slogan this year, growing out of the merger of the Federation and UJA, is "We Are One" — but this is only a slogan unless it is implemented. It can be done. I've seen it done. But it cannot be dictated from any national organization; it must grow organically from each community.

The cost of failure would be dreadful and devastating. We campaigned 28 years before we reached three hundred million dollars in any one campaign. Can we afford to lose tens of millions? Not any community. Not nationally. Not overseas.

You are all familiar with your own community needs. Arnulf Pins has effectively covered the world. Charles Zibbell has eloquently spoken for America.

My role is to speak of Israel, Syria, Russia, Rumania, Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, JDC, HIAS, ORT, the Jewish Agency. What can I tell you that you don't already know?

Yes — the Kissinger shuttle was successful, but peace is not at hand. Disengagement is not peace. Terrorism has not been curbed or even recognized, and ahead lie the issues of withdrawal, Palestinians and Jerusalem. As Kissinger himself said, "This was the first and smallest step."

Any chance for peace depends on the strength of Israel and the strength of the Jewish people. Israel will need to be strong to combat terrorism, to build its shattered economy, to take in more immigrants and absorb them, to fight again if necessary. And Israel will need to be strong to say, "No" if necessary, to its only real friend, the United States.

In terms of actual needs, I hesitate to repeat the numbers. Yes, billions are difficult to grasp and so are millions but there is a simple, tragic and poignant description of Israel — one word: Ma'alot.

Remember not only the deaths of children but how the living reacted at the funerals at Safed and Kiryat Shmona. Would we have slept if those funerals occurred in America? Israel will survive, but what kind of Israel will it be? This is the question we and world Jewry, together with the Jews of Israel must answer. 1975 is not just another year, it is an eternity from 1974.

Can I speak to you about 1975 and not mention Soviet Jewry. Most of you are deeply involved in this historic struggle. The Soviet Jewish issue was summed up for me by Elie Wiesel in his new play, *Madness Of God*, now in Washington, D.C., and which I hope will come to Broadway. It is the story of a small synagogue in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin. The elderly board of the

synagogue meets, it is *erev* Yom Kippur, a group of actors has been stranded in town and they wish to come to the synagogue and the KGB does not want any communication between the Jews and the strangers. The board agrees and there ensues a dialogue between the mad shamis and the old, tired, defeated rabbi. Zalman, the shamis, tries to get the rabbi to become the man he was and the Jew he was in his younger days and finally succeeds and the rabbi cries out to the strangers after Kol Nidre. The second act is a dialogue between the KGB and the rabbi and the board members and all involved since the KGB suspect a diabolical plot. One of the most dramatic moments comes when the rabbi's son-in-law cries out against the rabbi and against Judaism as a burden for himself and his child, the rabbi's grandchild, and how the son-in-law refuses to have the child carry this heavy burden.

If the Jews in Russia finally decide that the burden is too heavy to carry and lose hope, it will be as great a loss to the Jewish people as the Holocaust. And we will have repeated the sins of our fathers. If we let this happen, is it God who is mad, or we?

If we are to survive in this chaotic world, it will not be through professional skill alone but through conviction — for only deep conviction and faith can lead us out of chaos.

Hear Abraham Joshua Heschel who said, "To assess Judaism soberly and far-sightedly is to establish it as a good, preferred to any alternative which we may ever face.

"It is therefore a matter of immense responsibility that we and Jewish teachers everywhere undertake to instill in our youth the will to be Jews today — tomorrow — and forever and ever. Unless being a Jew is of absolute significance how can we justify the ultimate price which our people have paid throughout its history?

"Is there any group in America with a greater responsibility to teach than we? Is there anyone with a greater opportunity to involve all generations — to create one community — to understand the totality of need and the demands of choiceness?"

Profound personal decisions are not usually made in a logical and rational manner. They are usually based upon emotion. Just as we ask our leaders to make those profound decisions about life, their commitment of money and time and energy in 1975, each of us must also make these decisions as we face 1975.

What are our alternatives? History has taught us that we can repeat the experience of the Evian Conference and Krystal Nacht, and let our enemies destroy us; or Masada and the Warsaw Ghetto and fight our enemies courageously but die ourselves in the end—or, like Samson, destroy ourselves and the world around us — or, like David, stand up against overwhelming odds and fight for our rights with anger, strength and determination.

This is a time for anger, strength, determination and unity, not rhetoric, for we have much to be angry about and more reasons than ever to stand together.

Earl Raab of San Francisco, in the last issue of *Commentary* and Ben Epstein and Arnold Forster, in their book, *New Anti-Semitism* describe a new attitude as "insensitivity to Jews." I questioned whether they were correct until Ma'alot. I was in St. Louis and, after reading the headlines in the prestigious *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* I realized that Raab and Epstein and Forster are right.

The *Post Dispatch* headline read, "Israelis Raid School, Kill Arabs," and the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* headline, "Arabs, Israelis Clash - 16 Slain."

To Executive Director David

Rabinovitz's credit, the community came out in strength to protest the Ma'alot massacre and also received a public apology printed in the local Anglo-Jewish newspaper from the *Post Dispatch*.

But insensitivity to Jews and indifference to Jews is not confined to the United States. What have we done about Greece's expulsion of the Arab terrorists who killed 35 airline passengers in Rome and Athens? Although sentenced to death in Greece, the two were expelled from Greece to Libya, where they were received as heroes. Of the 159 Arab terrorists arrested in Europe in the past five years for murder, or attempted murder, all but nine have been quietly set free with or without trials. How can we expect the general community to react if even we are not angry?

In Vienna, a former Nazi writes about the Jewish community in Vienna's mass newspaper in the most antagonistic terms. In Buenos Aires signs appear: "Zionists to the Crematorium," and in Moscow, the Russian News Agency TASS equates Dayan with Eichmann.

Our enemies have almost succeeded in making their victim his own oppressor.

A prominent American said: "This credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with sweat and dust, who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, if he wins, knows the triumph of high achievement; and

who, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

I stated above that I have great faith in the individual integrity and collective strength of our professional community.

Although there will be much to divide us, to separate us, to polarize us, we can keep our community united and growing and strong. We can improve the quality of life in Israel; we can give hope to Soviet Jews; we can teach our Jews of silence, courage, hope and faith. But first we must all get into the arena together, sweat and struggle together; dream and dare together.

Before this meeting, I called Pinhas Sapir, the man who decided not to be the Prime Minister of Israel but the Chairman of the Jewish Agency because of his innate belief in the value and need of a united world Jewish community. He is an emotional man, as I am, and we have often cried together in tragedy and in triumph. I asked him for a message for you since we will all be working together. He said "Tell them *ain kemach ain torah* — without sustenance there is no torah." I said, they already know that. So he said "Remind them what we say in the synagogue after we finish reading each Book of the Torah."

Chazak – Chazak – Chazak – Venitchazek

Be strong. Let us be strong, for only when we are strong — only then — will we strengthen one another.