

A Survey of World Jewry and the Role and Responsibility of the American Jewish Community

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... there are two magnetic centers of gravity—one located in the United States and the other located in Israel. Both jointly share responsibility for the fate of world Jewry . . . We have to understand the simple proposition that we are neither impotent nor omnipotent.

Two profound developments of the twentieth century color any examination of the role of the American Jewish community and any assessment of the status and security of world Jewry.

The first, most obviously, is the creation of the State of Israel. For Jews, the State of Israel has been seen as the center of the Jewish universe. Israel conceived of itself as the defender of the faith, the protector of Jews wherever they might be. But it has also been forced by the nature of its existence to function as the defender of its own survival. Self-reliance has been the keynote of Israeli defense. And by "self," Israel and, indeed, world Jewry mean the Jewish people throughout the world, particularly those in North America. Occasionally this dual role produces a conflict between the Israeli national interest and the Jewish self-interest.

The parallel development has been the fact that the 20th century is indeed the American century. The influence of the United States is today felt in virtually every nation on earth. The American Jewish community has emerged as a secure and integral group in a pluralistic United States within the time frame in which this nation has become one of the two super powers shaping world affairs.

The American Jewish community enjoys a unique status. It is perhaps the first Jewish community that has been able to play such a vital role in influencing in some way its own fate and destiny, rather than being the passive victim of forces beyond its control. Thus, the reach of American power and the status of the Jew in America have imposed upon the American Jewish community a unique respon-

sibility and opportunity in regard to the fate of other Jews throughout the world.

The role we play is determined by three major considerations: how we define ourselves as Americans; how we define our relationship to Israel—that of equal partners or as junior partners—and whether the relationship is one solely of cooperation or whether there are points of conflict as we each undertake our appropriate responsibilities; and how we define our relationship to world Jewry—do we decide what is best for them or do we defer to their concerns.

In any survey of world Jewry, two features stand out: the American connection and the Israeli connection. In some way, each connection impacts upon the fate of world Jewry; in the case of Israel it is not only a question of influencing the fate of world Jewry but also of being influenced by events affecting the status of particular Jewish communities. Thus, each of these factors weighs heavily on what we as the Jewish community decide to do or not to do, and each of these connections is affected by what we do or don't do.

Security of Israel

The predominant concern of the American Jewish community is the security and survival of the state of Israel. Despite Israel's efforts to be self-reliant, Israel's security is a function of American foreign policy. Thus the American Jewish community sees its role as acting to influence and affect American foreign policy in the Middle East. It plays this role out of a sense of its own security in American life. No longer is the issue of dual loyalty a matter of concern among American Jews as it was in the

years immediately following the creation of the State of Israel.

In carrying out this role, we have deferred to the State of Israel. We conceive of our role as that of the interpreter and advocate of Israel's needs, rather than attempting to substitute our judgment for the policy-making role of the government of the State of Israel.

Nevertheless, when we see erosion in U.S. government support as well as public attitudes in regard to the State of Israel, and when we feel that we can identify the causes of such erosion, we as an American Jewish community have the right and indeed the responsibility to convey these judgments to the government of Israel. The government of Israel has never contested that role. The issue therefore is not whether we express judgments that may differ from judgments of the Israeli government but how we express those judgments and to whom we address our concern. The Israeli governments, through Prime Ministers and Chairmen of the Jewish Agency, have again and again stated that their doors are open to American Jews' meeting and discussing with them matters of mutual concern.

The fact is that we have been reluctant to play such a role out of fear of its effects upon the image and status of Israel in the eyes of the American community and the American government.

That discreet channels are available was illustrated by the conversations this past April with key cabinet leaders including Prime Minister Begin, by representatives of the NJCRAC and three of its national member agencies—the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. But those channels are not only available to the American Jewish community leaders visiting Jerusalem. There is hardly a city in the United States which does not in the course of the year have visits by key Israeli leaders, particularly members of the Cabinet and the Knesset, and there are opportunities for discreet discussions with such individuals on matters of concern to the Jewish community. There is no need to

address our remarks to the Israeli government through the pages of the New York Times or Time magazine or whatever public platform is urged upon us by those whose interest in regard to Israel may differ from ours.

However, if we choose to play the role of interpreter of the American scene to Israel, then we must do so with restraint and understanding. We are required to deepen our knowledge and understanding of all the issues which touch upon our concerns and to refine them so that the statement of our concerns represents a serious expression, rather than frivolous and superficial criticism.

The Nature of Israeli Society

When we look inside the State of Israel, to how its society is shaped and functions, we see a series of contradictions, not unlike the American dilemma as Gunnar Myrdal described it in his classic work. As in the United States, we find in Israel a society dedicated to egalitarian concepts, which contrast sharply with evident differences in status and class. We find contradictions between its deep commitment to liberalism and the needs of security; between its aspirations and reality; between its cosmopolitan outlook and its parochialism; between its affluence and its poverty; between its need for *aliyah* and the strains that *aliyah* place on the Israeli society. In the face of such contradictions, it is incredible that Israel has achieved so much in such a short period of time.

Religion and the State

Since the very creation of the State of Israel, even including the debate on the language of its Declaration of Independence, a critical social issue has been the relationship of religion and the state. As American Jews, we have a direct stake in the policies growing out of that relationship. By those policies, we as Jews are defined. Those policies affect the entire fabric of Israeli life: the law of return, which seeks to define who are "the Jews;" the State's enforcement of *Halachah* in behavior reaching from cradle to grave; the nature of

Jewish observance; the legitimization of rabbis; and the nature of the educational system.

In regard to this most fundamental issue, the American Jewish community has a responsibility to make its views known. The issue is not whether, but rather how, when and to whom we address our concerns. The fact that we have not spoken as clearly on this issue as we should again grows out of reluctance based on our fear that drawing attention to this problem would adversely affect the image of the State of Israel in the United States. We also fear that our pressing this issue would impose serious strain on Israeli society at a time when security must be its paramount concern.

How long should we maintain such restraint? If, because of security reasons, we do not speak out, then decades may pass before security considerations would permit us to make our judgments known on these issues. By then Israeli policy and practice may have been cemented into Israeli society. If this issue resists solution today, then imagine the difficulty that we would encounter ten, twenty, thirty years from now if at that time we sought to confront the issues growing out of the relation of religion and the state.

The Social Gap

The problem of the social gap is well known to us as Jewish communal workers. We know that it reflects the exceedingly difficult economic and social problems both of which have gripped Israeli society for more than three decades. We know that there is a coincidence in Israel between ethnicity and poverty, but we also know—or ought to—that the problem is not one of ethnicity so much as of class. The election of Yitzhak Navon as President of Israel symbolizes this fact. What we find in the Oriental community of Israel is that 90 percent of its families have seven or more children; that the birth rate and household size is double that of the Ashkenazi community. We find that the majority of those in Israel's lowest income decile are Oriental. On the other hand, only one Oriental family

out of twenty families is to be found in the highest income decile. Welfare among the Orientals is double that of the Ashkenazim. In a recent study of 160 disadvantaged neighborhoods in Israel, it was found that 45,000 families live in sub-standard housing and 27,000 of them live in condemned housing. Eighteen thousand of them live in apartments where three or more must share one room. Put another way, of those families which are forced to share apartments where three or more must live in one room, there is an 8 to 1 ratio in terms of Orientals to the Ashkenazi population. Despite the size of the Oriental population, in the Knesset, there are only 18 out of 120 members who are Oriental. In municipal government, the situation is somewhat better.

In the final analysis, we recognize and Israeli officials recognize that these problems pose a severe threat of social and even political disintegration. It is not from lack of concern or lack of effort that these problems not only remain but have grown in severity. Israel's great economic problems grow out of the fact that 40 percent of its *gross national product*, not 40 percent of the government *budget*, must be devoted to security. Furthermore, Israel has a need to maintain a European standard of living because of the essential need to attract Western and Soviet *Olim*. The problem is further exacerbated by the need of Israel to give preferential treatment to U.S. and Soviet *Olim* as a means of encouraging this *aliyah* to Israel.

Once again, the issue is not whether the American Jewish community plays a role in trying to affect these problems in some way but how we play a role. Just as we have played a major role in the United States as interpreters of Israeli policy to the people and government of the United States, we have involved ourselves in these social problems primarily through the unprecedented financial contributions we have made to Israel. Should we play a role that goes beyond philanthropy? Should we involve ourselves in social planning and policy-making that is required for there to

be some amelioration of these problems? We have seen movement in this direction. In recent years, the Jewish Agency was reorganized to enable the leadership of the American fundraising community to participate in its decision-making. This past Spring, American Jewish leadership played a decisive role in the process of electing a key officer of the Jewish Agency, something that was not the case in previous years when essentially our role was that of acquiescence in decisions made by Israeli political parties as to the officers of the Jewish Agency. The American Jewish leadership is now playing a larger and more critical role in regard to the budget of the Jewish Agency. As a result of this partnership, there is now an agreement on a major program to attempt to alleviate in some way the serious problems gripping the 160 distressed neighborhoods described earlier. A major effort costing \$1.2 billion will be made in regard to the housing and social and economic needs of those who live in these neighborhoods. Fifty percent of the funds will be provided through voluntary gifts from abroad and the other half by government expenditures over the course of the next five years.

But should we be going beyond this? Israelis tell us that they have a desperate need for the kinds of skills that typify the American Jewish communal worker. Do we have a responsibility to find some means of making available on a continuing and planned basis the skills and services of experienced workers in the American Jewish communal service field, possibly by enabling top staff to work in Israel on a one-to-two year basis, and/or more widespread use of retired workers for this purpose?

Do we not also have a role as a Jewish communal service to serve as a critic of the various programs that are undertaken in Israel; to use our expertise in identifying in precise terms problems that we observe in the social service programs in the State of Israel; a responsibility to serve as an advocate for certain kinds of programs that we believe are absolutely essential to deal with those prob-

lems? Indeed, a number of Israelis intimately acquainted with the issue of the social gap have urged American Jews and in particular American Jewish communal workers to play such roles. They maintain that only through our playing this advocacy role, as well as the role of critic, will the Israeli government be more receptive to dealing with these problems in a manner that we propose.

But again, it has been our own reluctance that has kept us from playing this role, a reluctance that grows out of our recognition of the reality of Israel's enormous economic difficulties and an awareness of Israel's security needs. Nevertheless, we have to begin to search for and create appropriate channels that will enable us to play this role.

Soviet Jewry

When it comes to Soviet Jewry, Israel and the American Jewish community have shared a common cause and have shared the responsibility for dealing with their plight. The origin of the campaign in the United States which today is one of our top priorities can be traced to an Israeli initiative in the early 1960's. It was they who urged us to engage in a major program to expose in the public spotlight the repression of Soviet Jews. They felt that only the American Jewish community could have an impact on the policies of the Soviet government. Because of the tenuous ties that they had with Soviet Union in 1963—at that time, the Embassy was still open in Moscow—Israel had to exercise restraint in regard to this issue.

Since 1963, the American Jewish community and the United States government have had a significant effect upon the Soviet government and upon the morale of Soviet Jews. The issue, which in the early 1960's was at best a peripheral concern of the United States government, has become a major issue on the agenda in U.S.-Soviet relations. On the local level, Jewish communities throughout the United States have organized and structured themselves for a sustained campaign on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Thus, today the

American Jewish community plays a partnership role with the Israeli government in joint decision-making on policy and strategy.

A third partner has emerged. The Jewish community in the Soviet Union, formerly silent and fearful, has now become forceful and courageous in asserting its own demands. In the light of this development, should we decide what's best for Soviet Jews, or should we defer to their judgments? In recent years, the Soviet Jewish movement has influenced the nature of the demands and goals that have been the focus of our campaign. The very nature of the campaign by Soviet Jews forcefully expressing their demands requires us to take their aspirations into account, but we also have to recognize that we have a special understanding about the potential as well as the limits of U.S. government action and possibly in some respects we, in the U.S.A., have a better perspective on the Soviet government than do those who reside in the Soviet Union. This grows out of the very fact that the Soviet Union is a closed society and information is not readily available to Soviet citizens including Soviet Jews as to the maneuvering that takes place within the Kremlin.

Neshira

Since 1963, the nature of the emigration demand has placed strains on the partnership between American Jews and Israel. Originally our campaign on behalf of Soviet Jews was reflected in the slogan "Let My People Go" without specifying the destination. This continued to be the essence of our demand up until 1970 when the first Brussels Conference modified it to "Let My People Go To Israel." That grew out of the Jewish movement in the Soviet Union itself declaring that their struggle was for emigration to Israel.

The problem of the *noshrim* is a function of the success of the campaign rather than its failure. And the prognosis is that emigration will continue and conceivably even grow in the years ahead. For the Soviet Union, as in Czarist Russia, the Jews have been regarded as indigestible. The pattern of emigration will

also possibly increase from those major cosmopolitan cities that have been under Soviet rule since 1918 such as Odessa, Kiev, Moscow and Leningrad, where more than 75 percent of the emigrants have opted for the United States.

In regard to this issue, we must take into account what the Soviet Jews themselves want, but to whom shall we listen? The Jewish movement has earned the right to be the spokesman and for the most part they declare that the emigration demand must be tied to *aliyah* to Israel. They suggest that any modification of such a demand could have dire consequences for the Jewish movement itself and possibly on the Soviet attitude towards emigration, the Soviet attitude being reflected in the fact that all those who leave do so with Israeli visas.

On the other hand, the thousands that have left the Soviet Union in the last several years have also been voting. They have been voting with their feet. Upon arrival in Vienna, from 50 to 60 percent have chosen to go to destinations other than Israel, primarily the United States. Do we defer to their demands? Have we fulfilled our responsibility to them by the campaign which enabled them to escape from the Soviet Union and arrive in the Western World at Vienna? Do we have a further obligation to facilitate their move to destinations other than Israel?

In this debate over the issue of *Neshira*, there are fundamental areas of agreement between Israel and the American Jewish community. We agree on the basic principles, but perhaps differ in how we rank them. Firstly, Israel agrees with our judgment that Soviet Jews do have a right to choose their ultimate destination. Indeed, Israel has made available in a variety of ways the means for Soviet Jews to make this voluntary judgment. Israel could have had a profound effect in limiting their options if they chose to modify their existing practices. Israel has not done so and gives every indication of not intending to do so in the future, despite their concern about this problem.

Secondly, there is agreement that the *raison d'être* of the campaign for Soviet Jews has been based on the Jewish dimension. We have not engaged in this campaign because of our concern for the material well-being of Soviet Jews. The danger is in terms of the cultural extinction of three million Jews. It can be argued that they would more likely enrich themselves Jewishly in Israel.

Perhaps, there might be some differences among us in regard to the principle: that Soviet Jews are more likely to fulfill their Jewish goal, their Jewish potential, in Israel, rather than the United States. However, I believe that most of us would even concede this likelihood, despite the fact that we are increasingly recognizing that we have a responsibility to assure the enrichment of Jewish life for Soviet Jews as part of their absorption into the United States.

Finally, we in the American Jewish community do accept Israel's contention that *aliyah*, particularly from Europe and America, is vital to the security and creativity of Israel, and that Soviet Jewry represents the most likely community to fulfill the *aliyah* needs of Israel.

We are faced with a choice between the needs and aspirations of the individual and the historic long run needs of the Jewish community as a collective whole. Continuity of Jewish life and the special needs of Israel place a heavy demand upon us, but so do the concerns of the individual. The issue of the *Noshrim* requires decisions by American Jews as well as Israel and recent statements by Israeli leadership have made clear their recognition of this fact. They will not act unilaterally.

Whatever the ultimate solution that is agreed upon, one hopes it will heed the caveat that in such a contest of sharply competing needs and interests, sweeping grand solutions may in the end be the worst solutions. The remedy may be even worse than the problem. In fact, the remedy may simply have the effect of assuring that Soviet Jews will come to the United States under auspices other than those

of the Jewish community. Obviously, that would not contribute to our attempt to instill Jewish values in Soviet Jews. Thus, we had best limp along with band-aid remedies that may reduce but not eliminate the difficulties involved in the problem of the *Noshrim*. They may accommodate in a limited degree the interests of the Jewish community as a collective without doing too great a damage to the needs and interests of the individual.

The Falasha

When it comes to another Jewish community facing severe difficulties, there may not be a sense of common cause between the American Jewish community and Israel and in fact there may be latent potential sources of conflict involved in the problem of this Jewish community. I refer to the Falasha of Ethiopia.

First, let me stress that we are talking about Jews. Today, in 1978, there are few differences of opinion in regard to this description of the status of Falasha. The rituals they observe dating back more than 2,000 years are direct evidence of their Jewish tradition and commitment. According to judgments of the rabbinate, including the chief rabbis of Israel, they are regarded as Jews. According to the policy of the Israel government as stated in their interpretation of the Law of Return, they are regarded as Jews. According to the practices of both the Israeli government and Jewish agencies such as JDC and ORT, they are regarded as Jews. Why else were a hundred and twelve Falashas permitted to emigrate to Israel from Ethiopia in the last ten months; why else did JDC and ORT expend \$150,000 in Ethiopia during the year of 1977? To avoid any misunderstandings or even personal tragedies in the future in Israel, the Falasha upon arrival in Israel undergo a symbolic conversion.

We are talking about 28,000 black Jews who represent a remnant of a quarter of a million that lived in Ethiopia more than a century ago and they in turn represented a remnant of more than several million who lived in that country in preceding years. Their numbers

have been diminished by the fact that they have been caught again and again in the middle of hostilities that have taken place in Ethiopia and they have been the scapegoats as Jews have been in other countries. Their life is that of marginal existence, living and existing only on the edge of starvation, and they are also faced with the dangers that arise from the current fighting in Ethiopia between the government and the Eritrians.

They and others see their only salvation as emigration. Thus, we are faced with the nagging questions that Graenum Berger again and again places at our door: Why has there been such indifference to the fate of the Falasha Jews; why has not the issue of their predicament been openly ventilated and debated within our forums? Why has there not been a mass rescue operation?

Again, here as elsewhere, we are faced with the obvious Israeli connection. Some have suggested that the reason for the difficulties lies in the problem of absorbing a primitive population into a modern European-like state. But there are indications that these people, who are farmers and craftsmen, have made a better adjustment than some other *Olim* and in fact have learned Hebrew more rapidly than American or Soviet Jews. Some have attributed the resistance to Israeli attitudes, but polls among Israelis show that they do not entertain hostility toward these black Jews.

Perhaps the problem lies in the national interest of Israel. Ethiopia sits astride the narrow neck of the Red Sea from which point Israel can be blockaded as effectively as the closing of the Strait of Tiran. Thus, for Israel, Ethiopia's location has profound implications. Israel had been involved up until recently, in a very limited role with the Ethiopian government. Some have suggested that Ethiopia's Marxist government could not permit a situation where it appears that several thousand of the population were seeking to flee. The question is whether any pressures on Ethiopia would permit their rescue? Would they jeopardize even more Ethiopia's posture toward Israel?

But while there are some who point a finger at Israel in terms of this situation, we also have to point a finger at ourselves. There are very few leaders either among the lay leadership or the professional leadership of the Jewish community who are unaware of the situation of the Falasha. Perhaps our reluctance to act on this issue grows out of our doubts about their Jewishness—doubts that we don't entertain in regard to white Jews who are identified as Jews, even though in the Soviet Union, for example, there's been a severe problem of intermarriage. Others say it grows out of our deference to Israel including our concern about the potential of the Falashas for successful integration into Israeli society or our concern about the security of the State of Israel in and around the Horn of Africa. Others question whether we can have any kind of effect on Ethiopian policy because of the negligible influence that the United States has on that government.

Such considerations have not paralyzed us in regard to the plight of Jews elsewhere such as the Soviet Jews or Syrian Jews. When we launched our campaign in 1963, we had no illusions as to the formidable character of the challenge we were agreeing to undertake. We recognized that the influence of the United States government was negligible; that Israel's relationship to the Soviet Union was delicate and that we possibly might do harm to Soviet Jews themselves by such a campaign. Nevertheless, we chose to move forward on this campaign, and we have seen the results of our doing so.

What's required of us is to increase the consciousness of the American Jewish community on this issue, to undertake a serious, in-depth study of the nature of this problem, and why it resists solution. Then we could more wisely formulate the options, weigh the consequences of those options and debate them to arrive at a sound position from which to deal with the needs of the Falasha. In short, just as we did in the 60's in regard to Soviet Jewry, we have to make the Falasha an issue on the agenda of the American Jewish

community and on the conscience of the world.

South Africa

In dealing with the problem of the South African Jewry, we are faced with a conflict between Jewish values and Jewish interests. South African Jewry, composed of 110,000 Jews plus 22,000 *Yordim*, is a rich and vital community, creative in fostering distinctive forms of Jewish life. In fund-raising, they raise the highest amounts per capita of any Western Jewish community. In 1977, they raised \$33 million for Israel and in the previous year, they raised \$7 million for internal needs. (South African Jewry alternate their campaigns annually for internal and overseas needs.) Of all Western countries, they have the highest percentage of their children receiving Jewish education; the highest percentage of their population (90%) affiliated with Zionist organizations) the highest percentage of *aliyah*. They have a dynamic communal life with 325 active organizations, and they have strong central coordinating bodies in the Board of Jewish Deputies, the South African Zionist Federation, the Board of Jewish Education and the United Hebrew Congregation.

Furthermore, the South African Jews enjoy the privileges of the white establishment. They are an affluent Jewish community and they do have "a good life."

Since the Nationalist Party came to power in 1948, neither the party nor the government has espoused anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, there is some reason to be anxious about the predisposition of many within the Nationalist Party. During the 1930's and early 1940's, there were manifestations of pro-German and pro-Nazi sympathies among the top leadership of the party. Even today, there is reason to believe that there may be many within the party receptive to anti-Semitism. An illustration of such attitudes may have been reflected in an incident in which South African television network carried a series on World War II, but cut out the episode dealing with genocide.

South African Jews, above all others, are deeply conscious of the fact that they are a party to all that is happening in South Africa. Their burden is living with racial purity laws as beastly as the Nuremberg laws. They are also well aware that the influence of the Jewish community in South Africa is minimal.

The Board of Jewish Deputies has no declared policy on apartheid but recognizes that individuals are free to speak as individuals on the issue of apartheid. Jews including Jewish leaders in their individual capacity have done so. They have decried the injustices of the security legislation, and its corruption of law and order and justice in South Africa. They have called for moves to dismantle the complex legislative underpinning of apartheid. They have criticized the government's failure to move against the most painful aspects of apartheid.

South African Jews have a deep anxiety about the future. There is little hope for a multi-racial government in the near future. They anticipate that violence and bloodshed are unavoidable as in the case of Rhodesia. They fear the growth of anti-Semitism among both whites and blacks. But they continue to declare that they are not leaving South Africa, although there are some indications of less than unanimity in this, particularly in the emigration of young Jewish professionals.

In this situation, how can we as an American Jewish community, so conscious of the world's indifference to Jewish persecution at the hands of the Nazis, not speak out? But will speaking out jeopardize the status and security of South African Jewry?

The consequences might fall harder upon Israel, a nation with so few friends among the nations of the world. In South Africa, the mass media extols Israel. Despite tight fiscal controls maintained by the government, the government permits campaign funds to go to Israel. Despite the government's anti-emigration policy, its attitude on *aliyah* is liberal. Finally, since 1969, trade between Israel and South Africa has gone from \$3 million to more than \$80 million. All of this

could conceivably be affected by a South African government reaction to vigorous opposition by the American Jewish community to apartheid.

On the other hand, it could be argued that a forceful position by the United States government might begin to accelerate the gradual process away from apartheid to avoid the more fearsome consequences that could arise from the failure of that government to deal with it. In short, if the South African government were to begin to make a start toward dismantling the apartheid structure, perhaps this would avoid the violence which would place South African Jews in severe jeopardy.

Nevertheless, do we really have a choice? Jacob Neusner on returning recently from South Africa said "that the dark skin of the black is the yellow star of the black African." Even in Israel's interest, one could see the damage to Israel in this country if she is perceived as overly identified with South Africa, despite the fact that Israel was among the first in the United Nations to declare its abhorrence of apartheid, a position that it has repeated year after year after year in the General Assembly of the United Nations. Perhaps the only question for us, and for that matter for Israel, is how far we should press the government of the United States, and other governments for that matter, to go on trying to bring about a change in policy of the South African government by means such as a general embargo and the withdrawal of American investments. In dealing with this issue, expediency should not be our only guide, as it apparently was in the case of Western democracies' posture towards Nazi Germany forty years ago.

Resurgence of Neo-Nazism

Recently the Canadian Jewish Congress adopted a resolution warning of the renaissance of fascism. It cited neo-Nazi rallies as a daily occurrence in West Germany; the numerous fascist National Front candidates running in election in the United Kingdom; the

increased activities of Canada's Western Guard and other racist forces in Canada; the marching of the Nazis in Skokie. It concluded that the proponents of evil are stirring throughout the world.

Is it true?

As to the strength of the neo-Nazi movement in the United States, suffice it to say that the high visibility in the media of Nazi lunatics in Chicago, and in other major cities throughout the United States, have provoked a reaction which may lead to a distortion in our assessment of the strength of the neo-Nazi movement in this country. The reality is that there is greater national awareness of the Holocaust among the people than at any time since World War II.

Canada

And as to Canada itself, the concern of the Canadian Jew is not with the Western Guard. Its concern is with the shock waves that came about from the election to power of the Parti Quebecois in Quebec. The election of that party reflects the reaction to the inferior status that has burdened the French Canadians for more than a century. The French Canadian, making up 80 percent of the population of Quebec, has been at the bottom of the economic ladder, subjected to exploitation by a variety of forces including the Catholic Church. In many respects, the French Canadian is somewhat comparable to the exploitation of the Irish by the British in Ireland for many, many centuries. It also reflects the enormous difficulty of the French Canadians maintaining a French civilization in the face of enormous pressures upon them from the West in Ontario and the balance of Canada, and from the South in the American colossus.

In a statement that has shades of Herzl in it, Rene Levesque described the French Canadians as a common people with a common history and a common heritage and a common culture and a common destiny rooted in an identifiable territory called Quebec. What the French Canadians seek is their "place in the sun." They seek a French renaissance—the

Frenchification of all aspects of life in Quebec. In short, to make Quebec as French as Ontario is English.

As Allen Rose, Executive Director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, described it, it poses an "exquisite dilemma" for the Canadian Jew. Levesque and other leaders in the Parti Quebecois feel that the Jews especially should understand the desire of the French Canadian to fulfill his destiny in a creative expression of French civilization in North America. Nevertheless, there is anxiety among Canadian Jews that this movement may trigger anti-Semitism. Indeed, there has been some evidence of this in an article that appeared in *Quebec Ici*, a publication with government support, and some anti-Semitism that has appeared on French television.

However, Rene Levesque himself was a foreign correspondent who was among the first to enter Dachau when it was liberated and it is Levesque who has excoriated Jewish audiences for failing to maintain their consciousness of the Holocaust.

There are also fears that this movement closely identifies itself with Third World forces as a dynamic, secular nationalist expression. There is fear that it can adversely affect Canada's attitudes towards Israel. Rose recalls that ten years or so ago those who were involved in this movement described themselves as the Canadian version of the Israelis; today they describe themselves as the Canadian Palestinians, and look upon Israel as "the white settlers" in the Middle East.

In the final analysis, the principal consequences will be the same for Jews as for the English, only more so. Specifically, it can have immediate effects on the curriculum of the dozen day schools that exist in Montreal. The *raison d'être* of these day schools is the Jewish studies aspect of the curriculum. It is seen as an essential component of the Jewish community's survival. Premier Levesque intends to make sure that 70 percent of the curriculum of the schools in Montreal will be French. If that is the case, it must be achieved at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum of

the day schools. Shall it cut down on the Jewish studies and the instruction of Hebrew, or will it affect the instruction in English, which Jews regard as absolutely essential to the "bread and butter" needs of every Canadian, especially in the light of Canada's location and relationship to the United States, and the overwhelming English culture that exists west of Quebec? It will require Jewish students to become trilingual in English, Hebrew and French. The fact that these schools receive 60-80 percent of their funding from the Quebec government indicates the severe pressure upon them to respond to the demands of the Quebec government.

The issue for the Jewish community is whether the Parti Quebecois will seek to achieve their goals by coercion and discrimination, and whether this movement for French nationalism can tolerate smaller minorities within their midst. The issue for Quebecois Jewry is also the manner in which the government moves to redress the wrongs suffered by French Canadians over these past couple of centuries. If it fails to redress effectively the wrongs, then there can be severe and dangerous consequences for all of Canada and indeed for North America itself.

What this requires of the Jews of the United States is an understanding of the nature of the situation facing Canadian Jews and the recognition of our need to develop much closer ties with our North American brethren. But it requires no more than that. The Canadian Jewish community has a strong and effective communal structure, and Montreal in particular is one of the great Jewish communities of North America. Its communal structure, its social service, its support for Israel is second to none, and nationally the structures are capable of effectively responding to the needs of the Jewish community, and the nation of Canada as a whole is sensitive and responsive to the concerns of the Canadian Jewish community.

Neo-Nazism and Western Europe

Is the judgment about the growth of neo-Nazism more accurate in terms of Western

Europe? There is, of course, special sensitivity to any manifestation of neo-Nazism in Western Europe. That sensitivity will be found above all among the small remnant that remains from that once-large and dynamic Jewish community. Today there remain in Western Europe 1.2 million Jews; even with that reduced figure the Jewish community of Western Europe ranks the fourth largest, after the United States, Israel and the Soviet Union. In France, there remain 100,000 out of the original one-half million population, but France's total Jewish population reaches six or seven hundred thousand, with approximately 200,000 former North Africans and 300,000 who fled from Eastern Europe. In Great Britain, the Jewish population is approximately 450,000. In West Germany there are only 30,000 left from the original population of 500,000.

This spring the World Jewish Congress stated that the growth of neo-Nazism in Western Europe did not warrant concern. It was especially concerned about the increase in Lower Saxony, and cited the growth of violence and the wide distribution of neo-Nazi literature, which attempts to prove that the murder of six million is a myth that was created by the Jewish community. The West German Minister of Interior two years ago warned about the glorification of Nazism. Just in the latter part of April, the Minister of Interior warned that the militancy of neo-Nazi circles clearly has grown. A weekly neo-Nazi newspaper, the *Deutsche National Zeitung*, has a circulation of 130,000. It is believed that there are 140 far right and neo-Nazi organizations in West Germany, with a membership of approximately 18,000 including many young people.

Perhaps the problem of West Germany is less that of neo-Nazi activities than the fact that the West German people have still not thrown off the subordination of citizen to state, the ruled to the ruler. Last January, the West German television released a poll that showed 26 percent of the population of West Germany desire a strong leader, and 36 percent

want one single strong party.

Nevertheless, Abe Karlikow, the Director of the American Jewish Committee office in Paris, believes that the right wing is not a meaningful threat to the status and security of Jews of Western Europe. Indeed, he points out that right wing havens have been disappearing in Europe, such as in Portugal, Spain and Greece. He describes the right wing parties of France and West Germany derisively.

The facts are that the National Democratic Party of West Germany, the largest neo-Nazi party, lost all of the seats it held in the state parliaments in the 1960's, and has been unable to get the five percent minimum of the votes required to hold a seat in the Bundestag. The membership of right wing and neo-Nazi groups has dropped from 38,000 in 1967 to 18,000 in 1976. However, it should be noted that the figure has now grown to 23,000 in 1977, and that includes a youth section which has grown from 1,200 in 1975 to 2,000 in 1977.

In France, the extreme right wing is riddled with factionalism and dissension, and in Italy the neo-fascist groups have been significantly reduced in their size and impact.

Furthermore, attitudinal studies in Western Europe, particularly in France, show fundamental changes in basic attitudes towards Jews in reflecting a warmer, more positive view of Jews.

The one country in Western Europe which traditionally has been free of strong right wing and neo-Nazi groups is Great Britain, and for that very reason there is concern about the growth of the British National Front. It is seen by many as a serious political threat in Great Britain. It is the fourth largest party, and in the May, 1977 local elections received over 120,000 votes. In some of the major cities which are suffering urban blight, this group received more than 25 percent of the votes. Its membership is now nearing 20,000, although none of its leaders comes from any of the power centers of Great Britain.

Its success is as a result of exploiting widespread resentment toward the two and a half million blacks that have immigrated to Great

Britain over the past thirty years. Until recently, the British National Front was careful in veiling its overt anti-Semitism, but more recently it has become openly anti-Semitic.

Nevertheless, more and more authorities in Great Britain believe that the British National Front has peaked. In the local elections held in May, 1978, this party took a thrashing and there was a sharp decline in the votes that were received in the urban areas. It appears that Great Britain is waking up to the danger of home-grown Nazis, and part of this increased awareness has come as a result of the vigorous public denunciations by the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Today and in the future it will probably remain as a painful irritant, provoking violence in some sections of some cities, such as London, and, most dangerously, pulling all the British political parties to the right.

Western Europe, Israel and Status of Jews

However, the basic problem that faces Jews in Western Europe grows out of the politics of the Middle East, and again we find the Israeli connection. The status of the individual Jew in Western Europe continues to improve. The Jews are affluent and well-integrated in the societies in which they live. In Great Britain, for example, forty Jews sit as members of the House of Commons, the largest single block of Jews in any Western parliament. While the status of the individual Jew has been growing, the status of Israel has been declining. Western European Jews strongly identify with Israel and are strongly identified with Israel. At first, it enhanced the status and self-esteem of Western European Jews, but today they feel defensive and beleaguered as a result of the growing attacks upon Israel. In some respects this situation may appear similar to the situation in the United States. However, there are key distinctions:

To begin with, Western European governments are much less supportive of Israel than is the government of the United States, and they are even more vulnerable to the threats of

oil embargo and the circulation of petrodollars.

Secondly, several major political parties have anti-Israel planks firmly fixed in their platforms, specifically, the Communist parties of France and Italy, which have available for their anti-Israel campaigns the propaganda apparatus of the party including daily newspapers with large circulations.

Intellectuals, who play a much more influential role in Western Europe, have become increasingly anti-Israel and have identified with the New Left and the Third World. In the universities, the atmosphere is also increasingly anti-Israel, bordering on anti-Semitic. In France there are more Arab students in its universities than Jews. On those campuses, there has been inflammatory anti-Israel propaganda promulgated by Arab groups and reinforced by the New Left. In Great Britain the National Union of Students attempted to expel Jewish student groups from local N. U. S. bodies, in effect attempting to expel them from campus, on the basis that they were pro-Zionist and hence racist by the definition of U. N. resolutions.

Thus, the future prognosis of the status and security of Western Jews depends in a large measure on the progress that is made in the peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt.

Obviously, other factors will have an effect on Western European Jews' well-being, particularly the developments in the region as a whole. This region has just undergone an unprecedented economic growth but which is also resulting in severe economic dislocation. This economic dislocation has provided fertile soil for the turbulence and violence fostered by the extreme left and extreme right.

Also, Western Europe faces the problem of a high rate of assimilation and intermarriage among their young Jews, and it is unlikely that there will be an effective counter to this tendency.

Latin America

The impact of social and economic conditions upon Jews is especially profound in Latin

America, a continent in turmoil. It is an underdeveloped continent which most likely will produce increasingly severe conflicts between the "haves" and the "have-nots."

The violence that has characterized Argentina is a case in point. These struggles have bred intense nationalistic feeling, especially dangerous xenophobic tendencies. Argentina as well as the other nations of Latin America is deeply opposed to the concept of cultural pluralism as we know it in the United States. There is a deep suspicion of the immigrant, who is seen as an alien, even many years after that person has immigrated. Furthermore, there is intense anti-American feeling and hostility to those who have close ties to the United States.

These conditions have nurtured strong anti-Semitism to be found both on the extreme right and on the extreme left, and have nurtured strong neo-Nazi and Marxist tendencies. There is also a growing anti-Israel feeling fostered by an increasing number of Arabs in Latin America and the growing ties between Latin America and the Arab oil world. Despite its periodic moves of a limited nature against anti-Semitism, particularly the circulation of anti-Semitic literature, the Argentine government is a military dictatorship with anti-Semitic cadres to be found in its ranks. While the violence of Argentina is usually nondiscriminatory in terms of race, religion and political party, there have also been periodic manifestations of violence directed specifically at Jewish institutions and anti-Semitic literature is commonplace on the newsstands of Argentina, including books by Hitler, Goebbels and other leading Nazis. A number of Jews, particularly young Jews, have disappeared in what the government denies as sweeps by its security police, albeit on a nondiscriminate rather than anti-Semitic basis as such.

In this particular situation you find the classic Jewish condition—a community that is buffeted by the tides of history over which it has little control or effect. Ben Gurion's prediction that the American Jewish community

faced either pogroms or assimilation or both, while not realized by the American Jewish community, may indeed apply to Latin American Jews. As one Jewish community relations authority on Latin American Jewry put it, the Jews of Latin America are indeed a Jewish community in *galut*, in exile. They are the wandering Jews and they are perceived and perceive themselves as "in transit." The majority of them originally came as refugees from Nazi Germany to Latin America as a way station to move on to more permanent havens such as the United States or Israel. Thus they are perceived as aliens—as aliens who are closely linked to the Jews of North America and are directly identified with Israel, seen almost as Israelis. Indeed, the Israel Embassy is used by Latin American governments almost as though it were the "Papal Nuncio" of the Jewish community. For example, in the midst of the crisis that developed over the Mexican vote in the "Zionism as racism" resolution in the U. N., the President of Mexico sought a meeting with Mexican Jewish leadership by requesting that the Israeli ambassador to Mexico convene such a meeting.

The largest Jewish community of Latin America is to be found in Argentina where approximately 450,000 Jews reside. This Jewish community, despite the various manifestations of hate literature and violence, gives the appearance of security and of engaging in vigorous counteraction against such hostile forces. This Jewish community maintains that it has never hushed up anti-Semitism, but it has cautioned against exaggerating the nature and extent of anti-Semitism in Argentina.

In Argentina the Jewish community gives the appearance of being effectively organized. The fact is that the many organizations of the Argentine Jewish community are seized by divisiveness and factionalism, and some of their divisions reflect the divisions among Israeli political parties. Furthermore, these organizations rely primarily on lay people. The level of professionalism is primitive and there is resistance among lay leadership to the development of the kind of sophisticated

professional force that exists in the United States.

The Jewish community is rent by extensive assimilation and intermarriage, and there are great fears that there are no heirs to the founders' generation. Young people find Jewish cultural and religious expressions empty and stultified. A disproportionate number of the young people are to be found on the far left, and some of them exhibit strong anti-Israel feelings. However, *aliyah* still remains high.

In this assessment of Latin American Jewry, one cannot help but see the future of this Jewish community as gloomy and dismal. This Jewish community indeed is sitting on a live volcano, and has to make its plans accordingly.

In considering the implications of the situation for our own role, we have to be cognizant of the caveat by the central organization of Argentine Jewry, DAIA, about the delicacy of the situation. The DAIA has emphasized that every move must be carefully planned to avoid dangers which could seriously damage the position of the Argentine Jewish community. In the eyes of the Argentine government leadership, what the American Jewish community does is perceived as having been triggered by the Jews of Argentina. The perception is that any U.S. government action is a direct result of demands of the North American Jewish community which, in turn, they believe, responds to calls for action by Argentina's Jewish community. Therefore, we must exercise restraint and defer to the concerns and judgments of the Argentine Jewish community. However, because of the special situation in which the Argentine Jewish leadership finds itself, we have to assess their judgment in the light of their circumstance, and to recognize that they are at times inhibited from arriving at judgments that might appear alarmist to the government of Argentina. What this requires of us is watchful vigilance and the need to strengthen in fact the links between the American Jewish community and Latin America. Furthermore, we must inten-

sify our readiness to help build a stronger Jewish communal life in Latin America. Perhaps, what is required is to make available in some manner Jewish communal professionals for limited periods of time.

Conclusion

In our survey of world Jewry, what we have found is not only Israel serving as the center of the Jewish universe, but we have also found that there are two magnetic centers of gravity—one located in the United States and the other located in Israel. Both jointly share responsibility for the fate of world Jewry, which suggests that the American Jewish role is to function as an equal partner with Israel on most of the issues which I have described.

That this role is derived from our unique status means that we have to become increasingly aware of the nature of this status, and to cultivate the distinctive strength that we have in the American Jewish community. In doing so, we have to be aware not only of the potential of our strength, but the limits of our influence as well in influencing American public attitudes or U.S. government policy. We have to understand the simple proposition that we are neither impotent nor omnipotent.

It further requires us to be aware of one important principle of the American democratic system that applies to all distinctive groups, and that is that we cannot function in isolation in the pursuit of our own goals. However particularistic are our interests or the issues in which we are involved, they must be recognized as universal in order to assure support from other segments of the American population. Furthermore, just as we have to be aware of the potential as well as the limits of American-Jewish community influence, by the same token we must also be aware of the potentials and limits of the American government's capability. We have to develop a sophisticated understanding of what it cannot do. In short, the Jews of the world require that we preserve the credibility of our status and strength in the American community.

Our world-wide responsibilities also require

of us as well as of Israel a sensitivity and also the readiness to defer to the wishes of other Jewish communities. It requires us to exercise great care and caution before we move to deal with any issues that directly affect the status of other Jewish communities. We also have to be cognizant of the varied character of Jewish communities throughout the world, and the condition in which they survive; in other words, we have to have a consciousness of the pluralistic character of the Jewish world.

Finally, because of the responsibilities thrust upon the American Jewish community, it is incumbent upon us to develop a deeper understanding of these Jewish communities and to strengthen our links to them. The understanding of the American Jewish community about these other communities is exceedingly limited and our ties to them are most tenuous.

The role that we as Jewish communal

workers should play in regard to world Jewry grows out of the place we should have on the entire agenda of the American Jewish community, and that is to be more than simply civil servants. It calls upon the Jewish communal worker to serve as leaders of the American Jewish community. What we as workers identify as the problems of world Jewry becomes part and parcel of the agenda of the American Jewish community. The most important role we may play is in placing these issues before the leadership of the American Jewish community, and secondly, laying before them the options we have in dealing with these problems. If the Jewish communal workers are concerned about a particular problem, then you can be sure that this concern will be reflected in the attitudes, policies and programs of the American Jewish community.