

are those which grew out of the non-Zionist organizations rather than the Zionist movement itself. They have the advantage of involvement in the overall American agenda, while at the same time functioning as a single-issue bloc.

It was the 1967 war that did most to reinforce «Israelization.» Israel support work became the no.1 item on the agenda of all these organizations. A variety of reasons are cited for this, ranging from the need to fill the vacuum caused by the weakening of traditional religious values, to the war itself with its early evocation of holocaust memories and later boosting of Jewish self-confidence. According to the author, this was further reinforced by the perceived danger to Israel in the 1973 war, and the international support gained by the Palestinians in the ensuing years. The book also presents the premise of Steven Cohen that pro-Israelism emerged as «the politics of ethnic survival... a mass-based movement supplanting liberalism as the centerpiece of activity for most major Jewish organizations.»¹

Today, it appears somewhat paradoxical that it is the Zionist war of conquest in 1967 that did most to cement the American Jewish community's ties to Israel. Even before the Palestinian uprising broke out to pose the question of the 1967 occupied territories with unavoidable urgency, there were signs that American Jews were not unilaterally comfortable with all the consequences of that war, though public criticism was non-existent or muted. For example, a survey done by Steven Cohen in 1983 showed that only 21% of Jewish community leaders felt that Israel should maintain permanent control over the West Bank. Rather, 74% contemplated territorial compromise in return for peace guarantees; 73% thought Israel should talk to the PLO if it recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism; and 51% thought the Palestinians have a right to a homeland in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, if this doesn't threaten Israel.² No comparable percentages have yet been registered by surveys of Israeli opinion. However, surveys done during the 1982 invasion of Lebanon showed that the percentage of Americans Jews rejecting territorial compromise increased at a time when Israel was subject to criticism. All in all, the relation between American Jewish organiza-

tions and Israel is a complex matter. O'Brien's book has provided a wealth of useful information and observations, but important questions still remain.

THE EROSION OF LIBERALISM

The most interesting sections of the book deal with the dichotomy between the liberal traditions of the American Jewish community, and the demands of Israel support work which lead to increasingly reactionary positions and alliances. Here one best sees the colossal disservice done to Jews by Zionism, and the resulting distortion of a number of organizations. A prime example is the evolution of the B'nai B'rith's Anti-Defamation League which for over 50 years struggled against anti-Semitism and for civil liberties for all, opposing the extreme right (the American Nazi Party, KKK, John Birch Society, etc.). In 1967, the ADL hailed the June War as «The Miracle Victory» and by the mid-1970s, its main thrust was fighting what it considered the «new, more dangerous anti-Semitism» - critics of Israeli policy, including dovish Jews and others advocating Palestinian rights. Today, the ADL is aligned with the New Right and its «vigilance» is actually surveillance of solidarity and peace activists, with information being turned over to the US and Israeli intelligence services.

O'Brien notes that while the position of Jewish community organizations continues to be liberal on most social issues, major pro-Israel organizations supported Reagan's inflated military budgets and increased US military presence in the Middle East. This corresponds to the rise of the extreme right in Israel and of the New Right in the US, in a period also characterized by the erosion of American liberalism generally, with leading liberal advocates switching to the neoconservative camp. In this context, *Commentary* magazine, funded by the American Jewish Congress, has transformed from a liberal literary journal into a main mouthpiece for neoconservatism in all fields. This began with the 1967 war, when *Commentary* argued that only a «strong America» could guarantee Israel. Thus, *Commentary* added its sophistication to the thrust of AIPAC (American Israel Public Af-

fairs Committee), the official Zionist lobby, which works for Israel becoming a staging base for the RDF, and advocates US interventionism generally. The shift to more clearly militaristic positions has also led to the establishment of new organizations such as the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, founded in 1977, to promote Israel as a «strategic asset» in close cooperation with the Pentagon, surpassing the traditional reliance on political lobbying alone.

The alliance of Jewish establishment organizations with the New Right has elicited criticism from other voices in the establishment. One example was when Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the United American Hebrew Congregations, termed it «madness - and suicide» when in 1982, the ADL invited as a speaker Pat Robertson, the New Right's favorite Christian fundamentalist. In 1983, another respected rabbi, Balfour Brickner, publicly criticized the Conference of Major American Jewish Presidents for stifling dissent. He led a delegation of 18 rabbis to Washington to explain to congressmen that there were Jews who disagreed with Israeli policies in the West Bank.

Developments in the coming period will show if this long-standing dichotomy in the American Jewish establishment will serve as the axis for cracks in the pro-Israel consensus, under the impact of the ongoing Palestinian uprising, the PLO's peace offensive and the US decision to open a dialogue with the PLO. It is noteworthy that US Jewish leaders were cautious, but not vehemently critical of the US decision to talk to the PLO, in stark contrast to the reaction of Israeli political leaders. In fact, Rabbi Schindler called it a «step in the right direction» when a Jewish delegation met with PLO Chairman Arafat in Stockholm in December. In any event, *American Jewish Organizations and Israel* should be required reading for all those following these developments. ●

¹Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, 1983.

²Steven M. Cohen, *Attitudes of American Jews Toward Israel and Israelis: The New National Survey of American Jews and Jewish Communal Leaders*, Institute on American Jewish-Israeli Relations, American Jewish Committee, 1983. (This survey is included in an appendix in Lee O'Brien's book.)