



BREIRA

**COUNSEL
for
JUDAISM**

by RAEL JEAN ISAAC

The Author:

Dr. Rael Jean Isaac, a political sociologist, has written for the *Alternative*, the *American Zionist*, the *Atlantic*, *Commentary*, *Congress Biweekly*, *Conservative Judaism* and *Judaism*. She is the author of *Israel Divided: Ideological Politics in the Jewish State*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976

Breira, an organization of American Jews established at the end of 1973 in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, describes itself as "a project of Israel-diaspora concern." It has a paid staff, since September 1975 publishes a monthly journal *Interchange*, organizes public meetings, provides speakers, inserts advertisements in newspapers as issues arise that seem to Breira to impel reaction, and has a growing list of chapters in cities with substantial Jewish populations. One of Breira's founding members, Gershon Hundert, wrote in Breira's newsletter in the summer of 1974, when the organization was only a few months old, that he felt intuitively Breira's moment had come, and events in the past few years would seem to bear him out. Breira is growing, attracting attention not merely in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* but as far afield as *The London Times*, winning funding, and gaining an ever longer and more impressive list of executive board members, editorial advisory council members etc. These include many rabbis, among them such distinguished figures as Joachim Prinz, Chairman of the World Council of Jewish Organizations and Vice President of the World Jewish Congress, Balfour Brickner, Director of the Department of Interreligious Affairs of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and cochairman of the Rabbinic Cabinet of the State of Israel Bonds, and Eugene Borowitz, professor at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, editor of *Sh'ma* and a practicing rabbi. Increasingly, Breira is also attracting writers and intellectuals. Most of the latter until recently were left-wing, but of late Breira's appeal seems to be broadening beyond that original base: Nathan Glazer, for example, who has become a major critic of every favored left-liberal institution or cause from the Supreme Court to busing to scatter site housing, has recently written for *Interchange*, and is now listed as a member of its Editorial Advisory Council.

Breira is Hebrew for "alternative"; what then is the alternative Breira offers? Actually Breira's statement of purpose indicates that it offers a series of them. It offers an alternative to Israeli government foreign policy to enable Israel to reach a peaceful settlement with the Arabs. It offers a perspective which seeks to emphasize the dignity, importance and role of the diaspora which Breira argues has suffered from the centrality given to Israel by American Jews since the establishment of the state. It hopes to channel some of the energy that American

Jews have put into support of Israel for "development of vigorous and creative Jewish communities in the diaspora." It calls for an alternative to the rubber-stamp character of American Jewish leadership in relation to Israel, hoping instead for open discussion and vigorous independent criticism, particularly in such areas of concern as Ashkenazic-Sephardic relations, "the schism between religious and non-religious" and "the erosion of the civil liberties particularly, though not exclusively of its Arab citizens." "Above all," Breira's statement of purpose says "we deplore those pressures in American Jewish life which make open discussion of these and other vital issues virtually synonymous with heresy." Finally Breira indicates that it stands within the general Zionist consensus, for its statement says specifically that it examines Israel "in the light of the idealism and thought of many early Zionists with whom we identify."

Not unnaturally, the major Jewish organizations have indicated that they have been anything but happy about Breira. From the standpoint of these organizations it violates the basic premise that the Jewish community should stand united behind Israel and if criticism there be, it be made privately and not through public forums. From the standpoint of the Israeli government, Breira increases the chorus of criticism directed against Israel from practically everywhere, and undermines what had been the only support Israel could count on: the Jewish community.

On the surface then it would appear there is a new Zionist organization devoted to criticizing various aspects of Israeli life in terms of Zionist ideals, and seeking to reinvigorate Jewish life in the diaspora. Other Jewish organizations may be unhappy with its inauguration of a policy of open criticism and discussion of Israel, but the dispute is tactical rather than fundamental, for all share commitment to the survival of Israel as a sovereign state and the enrichment of Jewish life everywhere.

PUZZLING FEATURE OF BREIRA

And yet, even if we linger for a moment longer on the surface, there is something puzzling about Breira. It lists many broad areas among its concerns but its journal, advertisements, forums and public statements concentrate overwhelmingly on a single highly specific policy recommendation: Israel should negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization to create a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza. In Breira's statement of purpose the problem of the Palestinians only receives two lines out of thirty-one and then the issue is raised in the form of a question: "In this context, is it not time to recognize the legitimacy of the national aspirations of the Palestinians, and to seek some way (possibly an independent demilitarized West Bank) to resolve this aspect of the conflict?" But what is thrown out as a question and a "possibility" in Breira's

statement of purpose turns out to be the overriding obsession of Breira: the solution to the Arab-Israel conflict is a PLO dominated state on the West Bank and in Gaza. Of course it could be argued that the achievement of peace between Israel and the Arabs is of such overwhelming overriding importance that any organization that believes it possesses the key to solution of the conflict must pursue it with single-minded determination before turning its attention to other matters. Certainly, judging from its determined advocacy, Breira appears to be convinced that the solution to the Arab-Israel conflict, which has evaded so many efforts over so many years, is available and depends upon Israel: give the PLO a state, and the conflict will be resolved. Someone who examined what Breira was actually doing, without reference to Breira's statement of purpose or the list of distinguished rabbis on the masthead, might conclude that Breira was an organization working for the benefit of the Palestine Liberation Organization. But that is of course absurd, for Breira is a Zionist organization.

Or is it? For it is time to go beneath the surface which Breira presents to the public and to examine who created it, who conducts its day-to-day operations, and the purposes some of those who have been central to its establishment and conduct wish the organization to serve. And to understand Breira it is necessary to go outside the context of Jewish organizations concerned with Israel, the context within which Breira is customarily seen, to the context of groups and organizations concerned with radical social transformation of the United States. We must step away from Breira and go back several years in time. Breira did not coalesce until December 1973 or begin its public activities until 1974. But the people who created Breira had met before and cooperated before, some of them in a whole series of committees, organizations and ad hoc groupings that flourished at the beginning of the decade in Washington, D.C. What follows may appear to the reader then a detour, but it is a detour that leads to the heart of our subject: we will be introducing leaders of Breira, their ideologies, and the methods by which they work to achieve their goals.

SOURCE OF BREIRA IN SOCIAL-ACTIVIST MOVEMENT

Breira is one of the many organizations which grew out of the social activist thrust in the United States that can be traced to the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960's. For some Jews the decisive experience was being pushed out of that movement. Jews were disproportionately prominent among whites within it, and when they found themselves accused by resentful blacks of usurping power in a movement that rightfully belonged to blacks, some of them began to reexamine and reassert the Jewish identity they had discarded in deference to universalist concerns for human justice and dignity. For others the decisive experience was not the civil rights movement but the anti-war movement and the student movement which it precipitated, and which led many to a whole new radical

politics, that of the so-called New Left. In this political vision America, especially the government and the big corporations, became the fountainhead of all oppression, of her own people and of the third world with which those in these movements identified. And the task became creating a revolution that would transform Amerika, which the activists customarily spelled with a "k" to indicate its surrealistic evil character, into America. Racist, oppressive, corrupt, imperialist, capitalist Amerika, through the revolution, would be transformed into egalitarian, socialist, free America.

The extent to which Jews in these movements, forced into some kind of affirmation of their ethnicity by the black movement, identified with Judaism varied. Some did no more than seek to work specifically in the Jewish community to win adherents, much as the Jewish social revolutionaries in the 1890's in Tsarist Russia decided to work with Jewish workers in the Pale because of the greater rapport they could establish with them, but for goals that were universal. Others turned to Judaism and sought to find new forms for expression and new meanings within the tradition that would give their political convictions greater richness and depth. There was experimentation with forms like the havura and in Washington, D.C. Fabrangen, which described itself as trying "to evolve a living process centered about the struggle for the messianic age" provided for Jewish study, prayer, community-building and social action. Arthur Waskow was described as the "guiding genius" of Fabrangen, and Waskow was in fact an organizing genius for the whole network of associations whose personnel was eventually to become important in Breira. Enormously energetic, imaginative, operating from his base as a Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies (of which more anon), Waskow was a prime mover in creating, besides Fabrangen (in 1971), the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty (also in 1971) which sought to establish a peace treaty between North Vietnam and the people of the United States in advance of any action by their government (this became Trees for Vietnam and still later Trees and Life for Vietnam), Jews for Urban Justice in 1967; and the National Jewish Organizing Project in 1969. Interestingly Waskow, with so many organizational achievements to his credit, in taking part in a symposium in the magazine *Response* in Spring 1976 that asked respondents "Have you sold out?" passed over most of these. He mentioned Fabrangen and noted "I helped to build Breira and Tzedek Tzedek." (Tzedek Tzedek in Washington, D.C. promotes Breira speakers and materials.)

Working with Waskow, not all of them in each organization but all in more than one of them, were a number of people who shared his perspective: Sharon Rose, who was executive secretary for Jews for Urban Justice, participated in Fabrangen, the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty and the National Jewish Organizing Project; Mike Tabor, who was National Coordinator for the National Committee for the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty, participated in the National Jewish Organizing Project, Fabrangen and Jews for

Urban Justice; Rosalie Riechman participated in Jews for Urban Justice and Fabrangen; Bob Loeb participated in the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty; Rabbi Max Ticktin participated in Trees for Vietnam and Fabrangen. Bob Loeb, Rosalie Riechman and Max Ticktin were to become important figures in Breira. Bob Loeb was to become a member of the first working committee that established Breira and became its Executive Director; Rosalie Riechman was to become Associate Editor of *Interchange* and a member of the Executive Board; Max Ticktin was to become one of the members of the first six-man Advisory Committee of Breira and then a member of the Executive Board.

RELATIONSHIP OF JEWISH ACTIVISTS TO JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS

The relationship of these groups to established Jewish community institutions was in the first stages uneasy but undefined. Opposition to the Vietnam War was widespread within the mainstream Jewish organizations and this aspect of the various Waskow-led operations won support, certainly from elements within the "establishment." Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty, for example, was supported by the United Synagogue Youth of America and the National Federation of Temple Youth and had the backing of such major figures in the Jewish community as Abraham Joshua Heschel. Fabrangen, with its effort to reach out to uncommitted or alienated Jews through a vigorous religious program, seemed to many within the establishment a creative plan that deserved encouragement, and it won United Jewish Appeal funding. The "establishment" concentrated upon the attempt of these young Jews to give a new meaning and relevance to Judaism; they ignored the extent to which the political radicalism of these young leaders would determine the character of their Judaism. Once this became clear there was bound to be trouble, and trouble there was.

A great many American Jews were prepared to oppose American policy in Vietnam. But their opposition was confined to that policy. They did not want to destroy the political system, the economic system, or even radically transform foreign policy. They were relatively satisfied with the United States as it was, and saw it as a country that had behaved with decency and good will to its Jewish citizens, offering opportunities for advancement in the broader society and free expression for Jewish religious life. But this was not the perspective of the new groupings. *Response* in 1971 published a position paper of the Jews for Urban Justice; it called "upon the Jewish people to free itself by joining in alliance with others to abolish the American empire that now oppresses the Jewish people." This was a perspective that most American Jews simply could not comprehend; they did not feel oppressed, but lucky to live in the United States. In the same vein Arthur Waskow, again in *Response*, and again in 1971 wrote: "We know

what we are supposed to do about Empires . . . We, the whole Jewish people, have been commanded by our tradition to preach the destruction of America."² This was a new Judaism indeed, but for those who wished to find in it confirmation of their radical political convictions, Judaism and radicalism were one and the same. Judaism called for justice and justice meant the political precepts of the radical left in the United States of the late 60's and early 70's. Waskow disrupted Yom Kippur services in 1969 at Washington's Tifereth Israel synagogue, calling for Jews to ask atonement for "creating, owning and supporting a system of grocery stores that starve some children into apathy and death while our children get fat."³ If Judaism meant service to the oppressed, such actions were necessary to remind all Jews of the true nature of the religion the majority misunderstood or failed to live by. Waskow wrote a new Passover Haggadah in which he used the exodus from Egypt as prototype for the liberation struggle now confronting all Americans, and especially American Jews. "They must stop collaborating. Jewish businessmen must not buy grapes from farmers who exploit their hired laborers; Jewish organizations must not lend money to banks that oppress Black people; Jewish political leaders must not serve the military-industrial complex." And Waskow celebrated the revolution ". . . it was time for the blacks (I've got a mind of my own!) to riot, to sweep through the Harlem night like a wave of locusts, breaking, screaming, bleeding, laughing, crying, rejoicing, celebrating, in a jubilee of destruction, to regurgitate the white bullshit they'd been eating for four hundred years . . ."⁴

GOOD GUYS — ISRAELIS OR PALESTINIANS?

All this might have been dismissed as the overheated rhetoric of the well meaning, especially in a period when language was being abused on a scale unimaginable a few years earlier. The real trouble came on the issue of Israel. In the politics of the New Left "blacks," "the third world" and "Arabs" had blended into a single oppressed "good guy" facing the imperial "bad guy" which was the United States and its assorted henchmen, from South Vietnam to Israel. This aspect of the new radical politics distressed many young Jews sufficiently to make them leave the movement altogether. But others internalized the critique. For Jews committed to the Judaism that was seen as one with radicalism, there could actually be a religious basis for the attack on Israel. If Jews were enjoined by their religion to "preach the destruction of America" then anything that prevented them from doing so interfered with the Jewish religion. And Israel stood in the way. Repeatedly in their organizing efforts within the Jewish community, the radicals found that the commitment of Jews to the preservation of Israel stood in the way of their willingness to embark upon an attack on United States foreign policy. Israel, then, far from advancing the distinctively Jewish mission, impeded it. The way was clear to supporting the political tastes of the far left for Arab over Israeli on Jewish religious grounds.

Fabrangen had funding from UJA of Greater Washington. It also had watchful eyes upon it. Several Jews in Washington, D.C. had been watching the burgeoning new Jewish radical groups with their interlocking leadership and began to attend Fabrangen functions. Members of the group were present at a lecture given by an invited rabbi on the subject of halacha when, during the question and answer period, the proceedings were interrupted by Marc Gellman, then summer director of Fabrangen (shortly to become a rabbi, Hillel director at Northwestern and a member of Breira's Advisory Committee) who reported he had just received a phone call from Sharon Rose who was very worried because of news concerning King Hussein's successful attack upon the Palestinian guerillas. It was announced that a demonstration on behalf of the guerillas would be held the following day at the Arab Information Center. A member of the "watchdog" group arrived on the scene at the appointed time to find Arthur Waskow and Mike Tabor outside, having apparently decided not to be part of the actual occupation of the Center, which was taken over by fifty persons who described themselves to *The Washington Post*, which reported on the demonstration, as supporters of the Palestinian revolution. The report of this incident generated controversy within the United Jewish Appeal of Greater Washington and there was discussion over whether to stop funding Fabrangen when the initial six-month period of the grant was over. Fabrangen appealed for continued funding and a hearing was held in which the charges concerning the demonstration were presented, and were not denied by the Fabrangen representatives. The final decision was to terminate funding.⁵

With all the organizing activity, there were of course efforts that did not come to fruition, or at least did not reach the stage where they assumed a public form. Over Waskow's home phone number an ad was printed in *The Quicksilver Times*, the "underground" Washington newspaper in June 1971: "A small group in Washington are interested in forming a Jewish Consciousness Raising Group. Women, Chicanos, Gay people, Blacks have all started groups which struggle in a collective way to talk about how Amerika's oppressed them. We think Jews, especially movement people who are Jewish, have had their sense of Jewish identity fucked over by the melting pot, by Jewish collaborationist leadership, and by their parents' definition of what it means to be Jewish in Amerika. As Leftists, Movement people and *non-Zionists* seeking to struggle collectively with like-minded people, we're interested in having others join us."⁶ [Italics added.]

WASKOW TAKES INITIATIVE ON ISRAEL

In 1971 Waskow took his first initiative on Israel, joining with another Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies, Paul Jacobs, who has openly stated he opposed from the beginning the creation of Israel, to place a full-page advertisement in *The New York Review of Books*, entitled "The Liberation of

Palestine and Israel." There is the familiar United States-as-villain. "...We have a stake in preventing the U.S. government and American corporations from pursuing business-imperial adventures in the Middle East; no matter which side they seek to support, the rulers of America pursue as their overriding aim the maximizing of their own power and profits in the Middle East, and use the power and profits they win there to increase their power over us." Apart from this there is a balancing of responsibility for the conflict in the Middle East: "Today both Israeli and Palestinian political leaders refuse to recognize the legitimate right of the other side to exist as a people" and insistence that the first steps toward peace must come from Israel, which must recognize a Palestinian state on *both* the east and west banks, and encourage the Palestinians to overthrow Hussein "so as to reunite East and West Banks under Palestinian rule." Apart from that Americans are urged "to expose and organize against the imperial adventures of their own government and huge corporations in the Middle East."⁷ This is the first statement of what was to become the program of Breira by someone who was to become a key figure in the organization: a Palestinian state under the aegis of the PLO to be accepted, indeed promoted by Israel. Of the thirty-three individuals who signed the ad, five were to serve on Breira; several others, including Sharon Rose and Mike Tabor were associated with Waskow's other enterprises, including Jews for Urban Justice, the People's Campaign etc.; others like Noam Chomsky, Abbie Hoffman and Benjamin Spock were familiar figures in New Left politics. Waskow followed up a year later with another ad, this one in the *Village Voice*, under the title "Israel and Palestine Committee," but using, like the previous ad, Waskow's home address in the appeal for funds. Again the call was for a Palestinian state, but instead of urging the public to rise up against the "imperial adventures" of the government, this one was addressed to the Presidential candidates and respectfully urged them to work for creation of a Palestinian state.⁸ Fourteen of those who signed this ad were to serve on Breira's Advisory Committee.

FORERUNNER OF BREIRA: CONAME

Individuals who had worked with Waskow went off in two directions when it came to organizational activity regarding Israel. Several joined CONAME, Committee on New Alternatives in the Middle East, established in 1970; Sharon Rose joined MERIP, the Middle East Research and Information Project, established in 1971. Waskow served as a sponsor of CONAME and cooperated with MERIP in ways that will be seen shortly. Breira is lineally descended from CONAME: its two first paid staff members, Bob Loeb and John Ruskay, both on the small working committee that created Breira, were with CONAME before taking positions with Breira. On the other hand, one of the three associate editors of Breira's *Interchange*, Barry Rubin, came from MERIP, and there is reason to believe, as we shall see, that Rubin was one of those seminal in the development

of the idea of Breira. For while to some extent individuals went off into different organizational frameworks contact continued within the common frameworks like Fabrangen or in the various descendants of the People's Campaign. Common assumptions, ideology and goals bound what might be called the Waskow inner circle together and ensured interaction and exchange of ideas.

The difference between CONAME and MERIP was essentially that CONAME formally accepted the existence of Israel and MERIP openly identified with the Fatah and called for its destruction. In point of fact, both organizations served as anti-Israel propaganda operations pure and simple. As Arnold Forster and Benjamin Epstein point out in *The New Anti-Semitism*, CONAME started as a front group for the Socialist Workers' Party, the party of the Trotskyite Communists in the United States. CONAME was founded in 1970 by Berta Langston and her husband Robert Langston. In January 1971 it was wrested from Trotskyite control by members who urged that it be less obviously pro-Arab in its search for "alternatives" in the Middle East. In resigning from the slightly reconstituted committee, Mrs. Langston declared that she could not "support an organization that is not clearly and unambiguously opposed to Zionism".⁹ Mrs. Langston could have remained, for as it turned out there was precious little ambiguity in CONAME's positions. The sponsorship of CONAME came from a whole series of anti-war organizations including the War Resister's League, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Jewish Peace Fellowship, the Friends Service Committee etc. and its steering committee included a number of Jews associated with anti-Israel positions like Noam Chomsky (who also signed Waskow's ad), Irene Gendzier, Rabbi Everett Gendler (who was to become a member of Breira's Advisory Committee), Don Peretz (who was to become a member of Breira's Executive Board) and Seymour Melman, who signed Breira ads. What CONAME did was to distribute literature, much of it relatively innocuous, and sponsor tours of speakers on Middle East subjects in the United States. And with that the ambiguity ended. CONAME sponsored a series of anti-Israel speakers, and of course its greatest coups were in bringing dissident Israelis.

CONAME SPONSORS BOBER, ROULEAU, SHAHAK

In 1970 CONAME sponsored Arie Bober, a leader of Matspen, a small group of Israelis, most of them living abroad, who advocated the dissolution of the state, and arranged speeches throughout the country before campus and church groups, as well as numerous television and radio appearances. (Waskow, incidentally was one of the sponsors of Bober's Washington, D.C. appearance, and was a speaker together with Bober at a meeting on July 4, 1970.) Since the Langstons were still involved in CONAME at this time, Robert Langston interviewed Bober for *The Militant*. Bober told Langston "the Zionist state,

which was created by turning a million Palestinians into landless, stateless rightless refugees, which continues to expel and oppress Palestinians, and which is allied to the imperialist oppressor of all the Arab masses, is eventually going to be defeated." Bober asserted that Matspen rejected Resolution 242 because that resolution assumed the continuation of a Zionist Israel. Asked what impact he thought his tour had made, Bober replied "I think I was able to reach a number of young, radicalizing Jews who naturally tend to be hung up on Israel and are especially influenced by Zionist propaganda." He cited a case in point: a young lady had come to him in tears, thanking him for opening her eyes, but saying "Still it's horrible to find out your mother was a prostitute." The Israeli consulate refused to send representatives to debate with him. Asked what he felt was needed from American Jews, Bober replied: "We are fighting to be able to continue working as a legal organization in Israel. The Israeli government is very sensitive to its image as a democracy; it is especially sensitive to world Jewish opinion. People here can be urged to demand the right of dissent inside Israel for the Israel Socialist Organization and other dissident groups."¹⁰ This was at the end of July and presumably Bober had been spreading this message on his tour.

Three and a half months later a group of Americans placed an ad in the Israeli daily *Haaretz* which did what Bober asked—proclaimed the absolute right of dissent in Israel. It expressed concern that the government was considering "severe measures" (it was considering a law to permit revocation of the citizenship of Israelis who slander the state abroad) to repress dissent. The law, incidentally, was not passed. "Do the dissenters against whom these proposed measures are aimed speak for a growing number of Israelis? Are some of their criticisms valid?" And the ad picked up the theme Bober had recommended urging "Much of the good will Israel enjoys in world opinion derives from its democratic image. Proposals such as those cited here can only have the effect of alienating enlightened world opinion, while endangering Israeli society itself and inhibiting debate at a moment when completely free and open discussion is surely as essential as at any time in Israel's history."¹¹ The ad was signed by the ubiquitous Arthur Waskow, Alan Solomonow, director of CONAME, Noam Chomsky and Paul Jacobs, both of CONAME's steering committee, Elmer Berger of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism, and Norton Mezvinsky, who has written extensively on the need for Israel's disappearance in such publications as *The Link*, published by the American Council for Middle East Understanding, a pro-Arab organization mainly of diplomats and churchmen who have worked in Arab countries and support Arab positions. The concern of these gentlemen for the spiritual perfection of the state of Israel, menaced, in the words of the ad "by the spirit of Joe McCarthy" can only be described as remarkable.

CONAME also sponsored Eric Rouleau, the French Jewish journalist who served as a confidante of Nasser and was well known for his pro-Arab views;

CONAME distributed, in connection with his visit, a series of articles by Rouleau on the plight of the Palestinian refugees and their determination to have Palestine restored to them. CONAME helped Palestinians like Jamil Hamad, an Arab West Bank journalist, to transmit their message concerning the "alternatives" open in the Middle East, i.e. the disappearance of Israel from the scene.

CONAME also co-sponsored appearances by Israel Shahak, a chemistry professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; for reasons that will be obvious there was considerable competition among pro-Arab groups for the sponsorship of Dr. Shahak. Shahak was head of the Israeli League for Civil and Human Rights, until his intemperate utterances led even the League to remove him. Shahak has become a man obsessed, touring the world for eager sponsors to describe Israel as the incarnation of absolute evil. Samples from Shahak speaking to the Association of Arab-American University Graduates in Washington D.C. in a speech entitled "A Principled Foundation of Peace." "I condemn the whole idea of the so-called 'Jewish state' as unjust and absurd, as leading necessarily to subjection, to oppression and to unlimited war." And "The experience in the Jewish community has shown time and again that any alliance with Zionists, any tolerance of racism leads straight to disaster, and the 'profits' in terms of long-range objectives turn out to be imaginary. It is a delusion to think that a Zionist party can be a part of a positive movement."¹² The Association of Arab-American University Graduates, incidentally, is described by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith as "the key PLO 'connection' in the United States."

CONAME SAYS: NO ARMS TO ISRAEL

While the Yom Kippur War was being fought, on October 20, 1973 CONAME's Bob Loeb (soon to be Breira's Executive Director) wrote: "We, for our part, will work to halt the flood of arms going to the Middle East from both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R."¹³ Since CONAME had no way of putting pressure on the U.S.S.R., this meant that CONAME was going to try to prevent the United States from sending arms and since during the war it was only Israel who stood to benefit from the shipment of United States arms, what Bob Loeb was in effect doing was to try to prevent Israel from obtaining the arms she desperately needed. CONAME also joined with other Arab and pro-Arab organizations including the National Ramallah Club, the American-Arab Association, the National Association of Arab Americans, the Association of Arab-American University Graduates and the Middle East Research and Information Project (Boston branch) in sending telegrams urging Congress to send no arms or advisers to Israel. When this was reported in the *Near East Report* of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee in the October 31, 1973 issue, CONAME was apparently disconcerted by the publicity, and denied that its name had been

authorized for use in the telegrams; the December 19 issue of *Near East Report* therefore carried CONAME's repudiation of its use. Had those who sent the telegrams included CONAME's name without permission? Given Loeb's open statement that CONAME would work against the sending of arms to the Middle East the same week the telegrams were sent, it is certainly reasonable to believe that the telegrams conformed to CONAME's policy.

It is worth noting that Arthur Waskow reacted in the same way to the Yom Kippur War: his overriding concern seems to have been to stop the war while Israel was losing it and to prevent American arms from going to Israel. On October 15, 1973 he sent out a "Dear Friends" letter which spoke of his "emotional, intellectual and spiritual agony." He urged that those to whom he wrote work to put pressure on American Jews and the American government for an immediate ceasefire, noted that the Israeli government did not want this, but said "I do not believe we should simply accept its judgment ..." And if Israel, against its will, had a ceasefire imposed, which in Waskow's phraseology became "If Israel gets this kind of help," then "it will not need more arms. So I would push solely for a ceasefire, not for more arms ..." ¹⁴

In late 1973, while still working for CONAME, Bob Loeb, along with John Ruskay, a member of CONAME's steering committee, became part of the small "working committee" that established Breira, and they left CONAME to become the only two paid staff members of Breira. Why did they do this? Why did they leave an organization which for all its "ambiguity" in Mrs. Langston's view, worked sufficiently openly against Israel that *Time Magazine* labeled it one of the Arab or pro-Arab organizations working in the United States ¹⁵ for an organization that actually identified itself as Zionist? For the answer to that question we will have to return to the other road taken by members of the Waskow circle, and trace the path of the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP). It leads again to Breira.

MERIP: PROPONENTS OF THE PALESTINIAN REVOLUTION

The Middle East Research and Information Project was established a year after CONAME, in 1971. Working for it from the beginning was Sharon Rose, who it will be remembered, was one of the Waskow circle in Jews for Urban Justice, Fabrangen, and the National Jewish Organizing Project. If CONAME had certain inhibitions, MERIP, described in B'nai Brith's *Facts* as "a propaganda mill of the Far Left" ¹⁶ was free from any and all of them. CONAME denied its signature on the 1973 telegram to Congress opposing arms aid to Israel; MERIP signed and did not deny it. While CONAME came into its own with its speakers, much of the literature it sent out was merely left-wing Israeli material; MERIP sent out such items as "Revolution until Victory" and "Political and Armed Struggle," both put out by the Fatah, "Basic Political

Documents of the Armed Palestinian Resistance Movement" published by the PLO's Research Center, "A Strategy for the Liberation of Palestine" of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and "Aims of the Palestine Resistance Movement with Regard to Jews" published by the Fifth of June Society in cooperation with the Palestine Research Center. MERIP also freely dispensed PLO buttons, posters and flags.

MERIP's main problem seemed to be whether it should identify with any particular one of the warring groups within the Arab terrorist movement, and it resolved this by identifying with the revolution as a whole, but not any faction within it. Thus an issue of *MERIP Reports* that carried an interview with George Hawatmeh, a leader of the Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, noted: "While MERIP is not aligned with any particular Palestinian organization, we think it is important to provide information about the positions espoused by the different groups." MERIP's anti-Israel assault was cast in the form of avowedly Marxist anti-imperialist analysis. Barry Rubin, who was to become associate editor of Breira's *Interchange*, and was one of the handful of people who worked with Sharon Rose to produce *MERIP Reports*, wrote following the Yom Kippur War in *MERIP Report* No. 23: "The principal reasons for the U.S.-Israeli alliance, though, have been more of a political strategic, rather than directly economic nature. The two countries have much in common in terms of mutual enemies—the Palestinian resistance, Arab nationalism and the Soviet Union—and in terms of friends—South Africa, Jordan and reactionary governments in general." In the same issue Joe Stork (of whom more anon) wrote in a review of *The Transformation of Palestine* edited by Ibrahim Abu Lughod that it was a pity the book was not in paperback "because it could help immeasurably to correct the collective amnesia that has characterized Western consciousness about the origins of the state of Israel and its war with the people of the Middle East." In 1974 *MERIP Reports* printed "Zionism and American Jews," a speech given by Sharon Rose to the convention of Arab-American University Graduates in 1973 which was also printed in *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, the Fatah sponsored journal published in Beirut. In it Sharon Rose addressed the question: "How did Zionism move from a tiny force to being accepted by most Americans as the equivalent of Judaism and what are the perceptible cracks in the political hegemony of the Zionist movement and what forces are likely to widen them?"⁷ But it is idle to try to multiply quotations from *MERIP Reports*. The interested reader is invited to sample the journal quite at random. MERIP could not even make up its mind on the desirability of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza: perhaps it would be desirable as a springboard for Israel's destruction but perhaps on the other hand it would slow down the revolution.¹⁸ Such were the problems of Sharon Rose, Barry Rubin, Joe Stork and the others who made the "collective effort," as it is described in the journal, to produce *MERIP Reports*.

Nothing gave MERIP pause. When terrorists gunned down Israel's athletes in Munich even the Communist *Daily World* condemned their action as "murderous banditry." Not so MERIP. MERIP issued a flyer for a meeting it sponsored at All Souls Church in Boston on the subject of Munich, part of which read: "Munich and similar actions cannot create or substitute for a mass revolutionary movement, but we should comprehend the achievement of the Munich action ... It has provided an important boost in morale among Palestinians in the camps ... It is regrettable when people are killed, Israeli or Palestinian or Lebanese or Syrian, but at the very least we should know where to put the blame."¹⁹ On Israel, of course.

NEEDED: AN ANTI-ZIONIST JEWISH ORGANIZATION

In 1971 MERIP conducted a forum at the Institute for Policy Studies where Joe Stork was a staff member and Arthur Waskow was senior fellow, whose proceedings were printed in the PLO's *Journal of Palestine Studies* in 1972. This was an interesting meeting because it brought to light a tactical disagreement between Barry Rubin and Sharon Rose, which may explain why the first went to Breira and the second did not. All participants agreed on the theme which was stated by Barry Smirnoff of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University: "I think the key factor in this whole discussion is the destruction of Zionism. The entire movement in the Middle East hinges on how Zionism can best be dismembered in order to create a socialist state." A number of ideas on how to achieve this were advanced but toward the conclusion of the discussion Barry Rubin offered the suggestion that a Jewish organization be created that would campaign in favor of the Palestinian cause. Here is what he said:

Of course, many of us here are Americans and our problem—one of our problems—is that there's been a recent revival of Zionist ideology in the United States, which I think is purposefully aimed not only to give aid and support to Israel but also to attempt to make people—especially Jews in this country—accept a racist, reactionary ideology which will also turn them against the American Left. I think ... there is a visible attempt being made to undermine one of the most important bases of the white left in this country, which is among the Jewish community. And what we have to do, both as American leftists and especially those of us who are Jewish, is to start waging a really strong ideological struggle against Zionism in the Jewish community ... perhaps putting together a leftist Jewish anti-Zionist organization ... I think it would be good to have Jews actively campaigning in favor of Palestinian needs. It immediately breaks up the myth combining Judaism and Zionism. In that case it's something that probably Jews can be much more effective in doing²⁰

Sharon Rose in reply insisted that no organization should be created that
was

exclusively Jewish: "I don't think that any organization can be left and Jewish. I think it has to be leftist."

After 1974 Barry Rubin's name no longer appears on the first page of *MERIP Reports* as one of those who have made "the collective effort" to produce the journal. Beginning in 1975 his name appears on Breira's *Interchange* as associate editor and he becomes a steady contributor to it. *Interchange* identifies him as a "PhD candidate in Middle Eastern history at Georgetown University and a freelance writer specializing in Middle East affairs." No mention of *MERIP Reports*. No mention of the radical left paper, *The Guardian*, of which Barry Rubin was foreign editor from 1971 to 1973. Sample of *The Guardian* (while Rubin was Foreign Editor) on the slaughter of Israeli athletes at Munich: "But no matter how wrong this assault of the commandoes was, it must not be allowed to obscure the genocidal expansionism and racism of the Israeli government and its U.S. sponsors. It is ironic that the Jewish state of Israel should be aping the tactics of the Nazis."²¹ Why did Barry Rubin leave the violently anti-Israel MERIP for "Zionist" Breira? Why abandon *The Guardian* for *Interchange*? Presumably Rubin saw Breira as the Jewish anti-Zionist organization which he felt was essential to work for the destruction of Israel. Why did Sharon Rose remain with MERIP? Presumably because she did not approve of the idea of a specifically Jewish organization working in this way. And if we ask again why did Bob Loeb join Breira, he may have felt similarly that the new organization offered a more effective way than CONAME to work for the same ends.

CENTRALITY OF WASKOW

MERIP and CONAME thus met in Breira. (That links between the two existed earlier is suggested by the fact that two CONAME steering committee members Noam Chomsky and Irene Gendzier provided endorsements for *MERIP Reports*.) And the old Waskow circle provided a wealth of recruits. Waskow himself had spoken of the need for an organization like Breira in his book *The Bush is Burning* in 1971, and detailed many of the themes that would be picked up by Breira: criticism of Israel, support for Palestinian self-determination, dissemination of the perspective of dissenters within Israel, emphasis on the diaspora. Thus Waskow criticized the "blind hysterical support" the Jewish community gave Israel, and said that the role of the diaspora should not be "as a 'support group' for Israel, but in its own identity, seeking to transform the world outside of Israel." Waskow notes in the book that he considers himself a "diasporanist" rather than a Zionist.²² By 1973 Rabbi Albert S. Axelrad, Hillel director at Brandeis, a sponsor of CONAME who had also participated in the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty, was also calling for a new organization, which Axelrad said would be "loyal and dedicated to the existence and the survival of Israel but critical of Israel policy."²³

Breira's expanded "Advisory Committee" included six individuals who had served on CONAME's steering committee or sponsored CONAME programs, five who had signed Waskow's first ad in the *New York Review of Books* and fourteen who had signed Waskow's second ad in *The Village Voice* in 1972. Rosalie Riechman of Fabragen and Jews for Urban Justice became one of Breira's three associate editors, along with Barry Rubin and Menachem Brinker, a member of the small far left Moked party in Israel. In Breira Waskow had an organization in which he could openly take an active role concerning Israel without losing all credibility in the Jewish community. Waskow had cooperated to some extent with both CONAME and MERIP. He had been a sponsor of CONAME. Waskow had not hesitated to assert publicly his affinity for the ideas of MERIP's Sharon Rose, for he used the following passage from an essay of hers as an appropriate supplementary reading for a Yom Kippur Service in *The Bush is Burning*:

*The revolution will come to Israel. There are indications that some left-wing Israelis have learned that they must help build it. The Palestinian Arabs will gain self-determination, despite the best efforts of the present regime of the Arab states and their oil company supporters. I believe that a bi-national, democratic, secular state, encompassing the entire area of the original mandate, will provide the best environment to carry out such revolutions, to create a truly just economic system for all the peoples of the area.*²⁴

Waskow's liturgies were nothing if not original.

Actually Waskow may have made a greater commitment to MERIP than he wished. His impressive organizational talents seem to have met only one impediment—a lack of available postboxes in Washington. Or perhaps the many groups with which he was associated were saving money. In any case Post Office Box No. 19162 was overworked. It was used for Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty (which also used Waskow's home phone 462-1982). It was used for Jews for Urban Justice. It was used to ask for responses to an article by Waskow in *Response* in 1971. It was listed as a source for copies of Waskow's Freedom Seder in his book *The Bush is Burning*. It was used for Trees for Vietnam, the heir to the Jewish Campaign. It was used for MERIP. When the embarrassing fact that MERIP shared a postbox with Jews for Urban Justice and Trees for Vietnam was brought out, Mike Tabor alleged that this was a mistake on the part of the person in charge of the box and that the mistake had immediately been cleared up by asking MERIP to use another box. Months after MERIP had allegedly ceased to use that box, an individual reported having sent money for *MERIP Reports* and receiving them from that box number, the literature still marked with that box as the appropriate address.²⁵

ANTI-ISRAEL ACTIVITY AT IPS

Waskow, and the Institute for Policy Studies of which he, along with Marcus Raskin and Richard Barnet, was a founding member, were not idle in relation to Israel in the early 1970's. Founded in 1963 as an educational institution for policy makers, the Institute lost its initial audience as it became progressively more radical. It did not, however, lose its funding, from the Ottinger Foundation, the Stern Fund, the Samuel Rubin Foundation, the Louis Rabinowitz Foundation (which also contributed to the Weathermen^{25a}), even from the Ford Foundation. The purposes of the Institute were summed up in *Think Tanks* by Paul Dickson:

*(IPS) is attempting to lay the groundwork for the new society that will replace the present collapsing one. It not only has dedicated itself to ushering in the new society by inquiry and experimentation but is also doing what it can to hasten the demise of the present one.*²⁶

Marcus Raskin, with Barnet a co-director of the Institute, in 1971 filed suit along with Noam Chomsky (of CONAME) and nine others to obtain "government studies on contingency plans for U.S. military intervention in the Middle East" because they feared "another Vietnam type entrapment for the American people without their prior knowledge or consent."²⁷ The attorney was Abdeen Jabara, who served in the late 1960's and early 1970's as editor of *Free Palestine*, at the time the main pro-Fatah organ in the United States. Jabara was also the original moving spirit of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, which in 1975 saluted the UN "for correctly identifying Zionism as a form of racism." Raskin was a speaker at the National Convention of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates in 1972.

The Institute had on its paid staff a number of anti-Israel activists. Joe Stork, one of the "collective" that still produces *MERIP Reports*, is one such staff member. Stork was a panelist at the 1975 Convention of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates and his name is included in the 1975-76 list of suggested speakers of the Organization of Arab Students in the U.S. and Canada. Another Fellow of the Institute, Paul Jacobs, who also served on CONAME's steering committee and was co-sponsor of Waskow's first ad in *The New York Review of Books* was a featured speaker at the national meetings of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates in 1972. The Institute's Barbara Bick and Leonard Rodberg both were connected with CONAME and were signatories of Waskow's early ads, Rodberg of the first and Bick of both. Eqbal Ahmad, a Fellow of the Institute, like Stork is included in the Suggested Speakers list of the Organization of Arab Students and his articles appeared in *Free Palestine*. In a "Dear Friends" letter dated October 4, 1972 Ahmad appealed for funds for MERIP to further its "struggle for progress and justice in the Middle East," and praised MERIP's "honest reporting" and "even-handed

judgment." Ahmad was one of seven individuals from the United States (Noam Chomsky and Allan Solomonow of CONAME were two of the others) who signed an international statement that appeared in the June 1976 issue of *Israel and Palestine*, a pro-Palestinian paper published in Paris. The statement, directed against Syrian intervention in Lebanon, defended "the national liberation movement of the Palestinian people represented by the PLO" and blamed the Lebanese situation on the United States, Israel and reactionary and "pseudo-progressive" Arab regimes. The Institute for Policy Studies' offshoot in Cambridge, Mass. offered a course on the Middle East taught by MERIP staffers and the catalogue description of the course stated that "research will be oriented towards eventual publication in *MERIP Reports*."

The Institute for Policy Studies has an overseas branch, the Transnational Institute. Tariq Ali, a fellow of the Transnational Institute, is the leader of the British section of the Trotskyite Fourth International and a member of the Fourth International's United Secretariat.^{27a} The Fourth International maintains contacts with terrorist groups worldwide. Ali, who has been barred from entering the United States, France, India, Japan, Turkey, Thailand, Hong Kong and Bolivia is reported by *Newsweek* of January 14, 1974 to have said: "We are dedicated to achieving socialism all over the world and not through peaceful revolution." The London *Jewish Chronicle* of July 11, 1969 described Ali and his journal *The Black Dwarf* as among "the best friends" of the pro-Arab forces at work in Britain. Prior to being barred from the United States Ali had spoken for Arab organizations and had addressed the Second Annual Convention of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates on "The Palestinian Revolution." A specialty of the Transnational team (of which Eqbal Ahmad is also a member) is counter-counter-insurgency, i.e. exposure of western intelligence operations. **The Transnational Institute received in 1974 alone \$1,200,000 from the Samuel Rubin Foundation.**²⁸ That Samuel Rubin, the retired head of Faberge, has established some link to Breira seems clear from the fact that when Breira sponsored Arie Eliav (a member of Israel's Knesset who broke away from the United Labor Party) on a speaking tour of the United States, according to the April 1976 issue of *Interchange*, "the climax of his U.S. tour was a cocktail party in his honor at the home of Sam Rubin ..."

The chairman of the board of trustees of the Institute for Policy Studies since 1970, Peter Weiss, is Rubin's son-in-law and vice-President of the Samuel Rubin Foundation. Weiss was a member of the steering committee of CONAME. Asserting concern for free speech, he in effect sought to help the Baader-Meinhof gang of West German terrorists, which had cooperated with the PLO and other Palestinian factions in various terrorist activities. Members of the group were on trial before the highest German court which had ruled to limit the number of lawyers defending the anarchists. *The New York Times* of April 15, 1975

reported that Weiss, with three other American lawyers, filed a brief challenging the court's action.

To describe the Institute for Policy Studies as a veritable hive of anti-Israel activity is putting it mildly.

BREIRA'S RABBIS: INNOCENTS ABROAD?

Thus far we have been describing a network of left-wing activists who came to Breira from frameworks frankly hostile to the State of Israel. The most distinctive feature of Breira has not been mentioned: the sixty or more rabbis who have served as members of the advisory committee or signed its ads. Where do they come in? Are they simply dupes of the sophisticated revolutionaries of CONAME, MERIP and the Institute for Policy Studies? What attraction has Breira had for so many of the American Jewish community's spiritual leaders? The answer is complex. Many of the rabbis who joined Breira seem to have been unaware of its more radical aspects; at least there is no evidence to link them to individuals or organizations that might have "educated" them concerning the nature of the company they kept in Breira. Some suggest a rather touching innocence. For example in the December 1975 *Interchange*, Jacob Neusner describes *The Journal of Palestine Studies* as the journal of "the enemy," all the more dangerous for possessing a deceptive veneer of objectivity. Presumably he had no conception that at the bottom of the very issue of *Interchange* for which he wrote the Barry Rubin who was listed as associate editor had been a steady contributor to the *Journal of Palestine Studies*.²⁹

In the case of other rabbis, the situation is not so simple. A substantial number of the rabbis who became active in Breira were involved in the anti-war movement and specifically in the Waskow-sponsored projects like the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty. And when the Vietnam war was over and those with whom they had established relations of trust and affection began to criticize Israel, these men were confused. Reform rabbis especially had been taught to identify Judaism with prophetic injunctions to do justly and struggle against oppression, and the self-assured arbiters of the radical left became a source of moral direction. Many who were eventually to join Breira were training to be rabbis in the Vietnam period and the personality of a man like Waskow had a strong effect on them. Rabbis like Arnold Jacob Wolf, Max Ticktin, Michael Robinson, Larry Kushner and Charles Lippman, all of whom joined Breira, were veterans of one or more of the Waskow operations of the late 60's and early 1970's. In fact a man like Waskow could become a rabbi's "rebbe," a prophetic figure with his strong moral convictions, his religious commitment, his tireless community activities, guided always by devotion to the highest ideals.

Even Rabbi Balfour Brickner, who was to become one of the more distinguished members of Breira, responded to the moral imperatives posed by Waskow, if not with the action demanded, at least with the conviction that true moral dilemmas were being posed for him. Balfour Brickner has described his "intense personal conflict" when in 1970 he was called by "a radical Jewish friend from Washington," who asked him to collect Jewish names for a petition against American intervention, then being considered to help Hussein as he was being threatened by Syrian intervention following his suppression of the Palestinian guerillas in Jordan. Brickner did not collect the signatures. But he agonized over his decision, noting "I have learned from these experiences that I live in a special sort of exile." He reports that when he called his friend to report his negative decision "he seemed to understand but, in talking, he threw me into turmoil a second time, asking how I would feel if Hussein overwhelmed the guerillas. Ouch."³⁰ Why did Brickner feel so terrible at the thought that Hussein might overwhelm the guerillas? Their avowed goal was to destroy Israel and they had been using Jordan as a base from which to infiltrate into Israel and murder her civilians.

CLERGY AND LAITY CONCERNED (ABOUT ISRAEL)

While the confusion was by no means confined to Brickner, he seems to have had more than his share. For in October 1973 Brickner co-signed a letter with Richard Fernandez, a Philadelphia minister who has made no secret of his hostility to Israel, appealing for funds to continue the work of Clergy and Laity Concerned. What Clergy and Laity were concerned about was the Vietnam war; however, as that drew to a close, they expanded their concerns to "The Empire" (American, of course), and as part of this broader conception turned some of their concern on Israel. By October 1973 *American Report* was proving itself one of the most viciously anti-Israel journals in the United States. Its issue of the very same month in which Balfour Brickner sent out his appeal for funds carried Israel Shahak's address to the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, excerpts of which have already been quoted. *American Report* printed Daniel Berrigan's address to the same group, also given in October 1973, his now well-known onslaught on Israel: "Israel has not abolished poverty and misery; rather it manufactures human waste, the byproducts of its entrepreneurs, its military industrial complex. Israel has not written justice into law; it has turned the law of nature into a mockery, creating ghettos, disenfranchised peoples, exiles, hopeless minorities, cheap labor forces, Palestinian migrant labor. Israel has not freed the captives: it has expanded the prison system ..." ³¹ (Interestingly, when Berrigan was asked what his sources of information were, since he had never been to Israel and had no special knowledge of the state, he replied: "I was always reading New Left literature and left Catholic literature. I read Arthur Waskow's stuff. Everything he did he always sent me ..." ³²)

American Report published a ranting diatribe against Israel by an Israeli named Simon Louvish whose flavor can be gleaned by its title "Yok, I say."³³ This sort of thing became too much for some Jewish readers. Rabbi Henry Cohen, Chairman of the Jewish Coalition for Peace, and Israel Stashefsky, delegate to Hashomer Hazair, wrote in to the magazine: "It is hard to avoid the impression that *American Report* searches high and low for the most vicious anti-Israel articles it can find ... This is no way to work for peace in the Middle East."³⁴ A Dr. Bernstein wrote in April 1974 cancelling his subscription complaining of "your editorial selection of emotionally disturbed radical Israelis" and a Norman Freedman wrote attacking *American Report* for "mere outbursts of vituperation and hatred, *not* serious, critical articles written in a spirit of friendly, or even objective concern."³⁵ Brickner does not seem to have approved of what was going on. He responded to Berrigan's speech with indignation, asserting that if advocating the "dove" position within the ranks of American Jewry had been hard before, it was now even more difficult.³⁶ (One of the few Jews to have good words for Berrigan was Arthur Waskow who wrote: "But some of what Berrigan said about Israel was true, although to face it is distressing."³⁷) Nonetheless Brickner never publicly dissociated himself from Clergy and Laity Concerned despite the virulent hatred of Israel it purveyed up until the end: *American Report* ceased publishing in November 1974.

ISRAEL: THE MORAL NEED FOR WEAKNESS

Several rabbis associated with Waskow in the Jewish Campaign for the People's Peace Treaty and later to become members of Breira wrote for *American Report*: it is interesting that they should have chosen such a forum and what they write can throw some light on the motivations of at least some of the rabbis who joined Breira. Arnold Jacob Wolf, who left his prosperous Highland Park, Illinois congregation to become Hillel rabbi at Yale, and is now chairman of Breira, sounded a number of themes following the Yom Kippur War. Although Wolf had been in the Jewish Campaign and was a sponsor of CONAME, he was no Bob Loeb or even Arthur Waskow—he concludes his essay with the hope that "Israel can begin again to be a light to the nations, a light which shall under God never be put out." But there are conditions which Israel must meet in Wolf's view: it must cease to be "intransigent." It must learn to be humble, "less arrogant." The future of "the inevitably little nation" of Israel "is not to rule but to serve."³⁸ In other words, what Wolf seems to find objectionable about Israel is its reliance on power. That perceptive Israeli scholar David Vital has pointed out: "It is ... ironic ... that at a time when the climate of public ... opinion in those parts of the world in which the Jews of the diaspora are largely congregated is more antipathetic to things military than ever before, we, hitherto the most peaceful and unwarlike of peoples, should emerge as a military force ourselves. More than that: it is our military force we must chiefly rely on."³⁹ For Wolf and other rabbis with a similar distaste for the use of sovereign military

power, this kind of Jewish state was not one with which they could identify. Wrote Wolf: "Zionism slowly commences to unravel. Concentrated in one center we are no less vulnerable than were our pitiable ancestors in the diaspora. The old Jewish policy of subtle, deferential, sometimes even deceptive accommodation is what kept us alive during the past; it (and prayer) is all we can count on now ..." (Rabbi Wolf seems to have forgotten Hitler.) He continues: "The enormous hutzpah and pride of the Israeli are shattered or at least chastened once and for all ... We are all *galut* Jews now, children of exile."⁴⁰

Rabbi Al Axelrad, adviser to Brandeis Hillel, in an essay in *American Report* in 1974 wrote of the need to disengage "Orthodoxy's destructive stranglehold" in Israel and asserted that until that goal was achieved Israel could "be of little if any help to Jews in Diaspora in our struggle to evolve a creative and attractive religious life." This sheds some light on the reason why it is Conservative and above all Reform, not Orthodox rabbis, who have joined Breira, with its emphasis upon downgrading the centrality of Israel in Jewish life. Conservative and Reform rabbis are not recognized in Israel. Those who consider themselves and are considered a spiritual elite in the United States lack spiritual authority and recognition in Israel. While the commitment of most Conservative and Reform rabbis to Israel has not been affected by this, it is not surprising that the humiliation inherent in this position leads a minority of rabbis to feel hostility and to seek a shift in the balance of power in Jewish life toward the diaspora.

THE HILLEL FOUNDATIONS: INCUBATORS OF BREIRA

A number of the rabbis who joined Breira revealed their confusion and naivete in a variety of ways; on occasion statements and behavior went so far as to make these a charitable description. Rabbi Axelrad appealed for support for the Black Panthers on grounds of Jewish concern for the oppressed, and while admitting that the Panthers used violence said that in any case "violence in America originates with the government and the military."⁴² Rabbi Everett Gendler, a member of CONAME's steering committee and one of those who placed the ad against repression of dissent in *Haaretz*, wrote that he was a non-Zionist and shared many of the "principled objections" which Noam Chomsky and Israel Shahak raise against the idea of a Jewish state. Rabbi Leonard Beerman was a sponsor of CONAME and sought to organize for it in California as did Rabbi Richard Levy, director of UCLA Hillel and Hillel area director. It was Rabbi Marc Gellman, now director of Hillel at Northwestern University, who, while serving as summer director of Fabrangen, announced the phone call from Sharon Rose concerning the demonstration on behalf of the Palestinian guerillas. Max Ticktin, Assistant National Director of Hillel, worked closely with Waskow in Fabrangen, and was in fact cited by Waskow as one of the nine key individuals (another was his wife Esther Ticktin) in its organization. It is

highly unlikely that an individual who worked so closely with Waskow could have been unaware of the anti-Israel activities of his close associates. The frequency with which Hillel directors figure among those whose activity has been most questionable is striking, as is their overrepresentation among the rabbis who have joined Breira. In southern California the situation has reached the point where a series was published in the *Jewish Heritage* exposing the behavior of Breira-affiliated Hillel rabbis who discourage Zionist programming and promote Arab-Israeli dialogues in which the Israeli side is represented by Arthur Waskow!" UCLA's Hillel responded to Israel's refusal to negotiate with the terrorists, at the time of one of the PLO appearances at the UN, by sponsoring a public lecture "Jewish Terrorism, Ancient and Modern," in effect supporting the Arab propaganda claim that Israel was founded on terrorism." Other Hillel rabbis who are members of Breira's Advisory Committee include Stanley Ringler, Executive Director for Hillel, in the State of Florida, Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller of UCLA, California Hillel, Rabbi Joseph H. Levine of Hillel at Carnegie-Mellon University, Rabbi Gerald Serotta, formerly of Hillel at City College, now at Adelphi (who served on Breira's original working committee), Rabbi Laurence Edwards of Hillel, Dartmouth (who served on Breira's working committee), and Rabbi Richard Davis of Hillel at Monroe Community College in Rochester. Peter Braun, the new director of Hillel at Temple University, is a member of Breira's Executive Board.

Hillel's parent group, B'nai Brith is aware of the problem but seems helpless to deal with it. An excellent article on Breira in *The American Zionist* notes: "Hillel Foundations have developed into something like incubators for Breira's perspectives and activators of its programs. Over a year ago, the parent group B'nai Brith sought to discipline its campus representatives who were particularly vocal in toeing the dissident line, but backed off when Hillel Foundation rabbis set off a hue and cry over the nefarious attempt to 'stifle freedom of speech.'"⁴⁵ But this is surely to miss the point. Freedom of speech was the issue raised by Fabrangen when UJA took away its funding; one local leader quite properly replied that the issue was not freedom of speech but UJA funding for it. Hillel Foundations are not funded to provide the material basis for rabbinical self expression. They exist to serve Jewish college youth in a manner that conforms with the community's consensus. Arnold Jacob Wolf, in leaving his synagogue post to become Yale's Hillel Director, noted: "It is surely clear that American Jews have done less and more poorly for their college young than for anyone else supported by their great agencies of communal weal." One questions whether the appointment of Breira-oriented rabbis can be characterized as anything but continuing in that unfortunate tradition.

BREIRA'S PRO-P.L.O. OBSESSION

And so, our detour completed, we return to Breira, but now with an understanding of the people and the concerns that went into its creation. If we now look at the very name "Breira" we can see the link with CONAME: CONAME was Committee on New "Alternatives" in the Middle East and Breira is simply "Alternative." (CONAME did not cease its independent existence until 1976. It is significant that in a letter dated April 23, 1976 announcing the merging of CONAME into the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Allan Solomonow, CONAME's former Executive Director, specified Breira as an organization continuing CONAME's work.) Since its inception Breira's activities have concentrated on promoting a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza to be led by the PLO. When Yasir Arafat came to the United Nations and American Jewish groups organized a "Rally Against Terror" to protest his appearance, Breira was present to hand out leaflets protesting against the protest. Breira criticized the demonstration for "reinforcing Jewish anxiety and Israeli isolation" and insisted upon the "necessity of coming to terms with the future role of the PLO in negotiations with Israel."⁴⁷ In June 1975 Breira sponsored an advertisement in Anglo-Jewish and other periodicals, again calling for an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. In April 1976, following riots on the West Bank, Breira's Executive Board sent a statement to Israeli officials deploring "the violations of civil rights and the loss of life which have taken place in the West Bank." The statement included a series of demands: that the Israeli government abandon its current development program in the Galilee; that it release those Palestinians who had been administratively arrested and allow those expelled from the West Bank to return; that it establish no further settlements in the occupied areas; that it state its willingness to create a Palestinian state "with any Palestinian leadership on the basis of mutual recognition."⁴⁸ On July 23, 1973 Executive Director Bob Loeb testified before the Near East subcommittee of the Senate saying: "The government of Israel should declare itself ready to negotiate with the PLO, directly, as the representative of the Palestinian people, on all future relationships between their two states."⁴⁹

Does Israel still hesitate? Does she persist in dragging her feet? Does she remain intransigent? Breira will find ways of moving her. Breira sends out a special supplement to *Interchange* in January 1976 delivering Arthur Waskow's proposal that there should be no further waiting for negotiations, but that the United Nations Security Council should formally decide that the West Bank and Gaza are a State of Palestine and set up a commission to work toward creating a provisional government. The commission would hold hearings in the West Bank and Gaza and elsewhere, consult with the PLO and the Israeli government, issue Palestinian passports, dictate a schedule for Israeli withdrawal.⁵⁰ Does the world still wait? Does Israel still balk? If need be, Breira will move without her. Arthur

Waskow and Max Ticktin took it upon themselves to meet with the PLO in November 1976, along with several other Jews, one of whom, Herman Edelsberg, subsequently leaked the names of the others.⁵¹ One of the two PLO officials with whom they met, Sabri Jiryis, an Israeli Arab before he was arrested, imprisoned and eventually expelled from Israel for treasonous activity, has been described by Israel's "dovish" paper *Haaretz* as "obsessed with burning hatred for Israel."⁵²

Breira has hired a new Associate Director, Dan Gillon, Loeb remaining Executive Director. Gillon, an Israeli citizen, was editor of *The New Middle East* in London and in it pressed editorially for creation of a Palestinian state. He signed an ad appealing for funds for "the education of Palestinian refugees" which specified that they had been "driven out" of Palestine and there were now "two million Palestinians living in exile."⁵³ (The only other Israeli who signed the ad was Uri Davis, another of those with "principled objections" to a Jewish state.) Gillon's determination to participate in pro-Arab conferences was tested when, the only Israeli who agreed to speak at one featuring PLO representatives, he was not invited to the thirtieth birthday party of the Arab League, with which the conference was timed to coincide. Gillon, insulted, refused to speak, but was persuaded to change his mind. Incredibly he accepted an invitation a month later to another similar affair, was again not invited to the accompanying cocktail party for Arab dignitaries and this time really did walk out. These rather comical proceedings were reported widely in the English press.⁵⁴

There is enormous hubris in the behavior of Breira's leaders. Irving Howe points out in *Interchange* that no one "can be entirely certain that they know the best way of preserving Israel as an independent and democratic nation."⁵⁵ Then from whence comes the self-righteous certitude of Breira that a Palestinian state run by the PLO will be the means for ensuring Israel's security? Surely it is also possible that a Palestinian state would become a lethal irredentist base against Israel. This is what the PLO leaders, those "moderates" ready to accept the idea of such a state at all, say it would be, and surely it is the height of arrogance toward the PLO for Breira's leaders to simply dismiss what their leaders say. A radical Soviet-backed irredentist base a few miles from Tel Aviv? It is only those within Breira who see it as a "Jewish anti-Zionist organization actively campaigning in favor of Palestinian needs" who can take comfort in such a prospect.

OPPOSITION TO BREIRA-WITCHHUNTING?

American Jewish organizations have not been happy with Breira and criticisms have come from a variety of sources. Breira's immediate response is to cry "witch hunt" and "McCarthyism." The assumption in such a reaction is that

there are no witches and the accusers are pursuing figments of their imagination. The sober reader is invited to examine the evidence and judge if what is being hunted here lacks reality. The cry of McCarthyism refers to the repression of dissent. Breira is for free speech and those who criticize Breira's exercise of that right become McCarthyites. Thus Irving Howe in an article "For Free Discussion in the Jewish Community" reports how shocked he is by a Hadassah bulletin of May 17, 1976 for "the coarseness of language and innuendo with which it attacks Breira." Breira, says Howe, "should be criticized for its point of view, not for its right to have one." Yet Howe begins his article by saying: "For myself, all discussion of Israeli policy, or of the relations between American Jews and Israel takes as its unbreakable premise the need for Israeli survival as an independent nation free to develop its own course and protect itself against all enemies. With anyone who refuses this premise one can engage in battle; but among those who accept it there can—indeed, should—be vigorous discussion and debate."⁵⁶ Professor Howe seems to have no conception concerning the scope of "discussion" those in Breira whom he defends so vigorously have promoted in the CONAME sponsored tours, the pages of *MERIP Reports* and *The Journal of Palestine Studies*. Breira's Rabbi Eugene Borowitz has even more stringent requirements for Jewish dissenters. In a speech to the Synagogue Council of America in the summer of 1976 Borowitz asserted that he accepts two limitations on the right to Jewish dissent: "First, I think critical views worthy of attention particularly when they come from people who are demonstrably loyal Jews, that is, people who have sent letters and telegrams on behalf of Israel, who have attended rallies, maintain organizational memberships, make pledges to Israeli causes, pay them and, in my book, are also preferably educated, believing and in some way, observant Jews."⁵⁷ Presumably Rabbi Borowitz does not have in mind the kind of telegrams sent by CONAME "on behalf of Israel," or organizational memberships like MERIP, or rallies like those attended by his colleagues on Breira in behalf of the Palestinian terrorists. But if he has such criteria for dissent, why did a sophisticated intellectual like Rabbi Borowitz not check more closely into the backgrounds of his companions in dissent?

Breira makes much of the existence of Israeli groups whose perspective it shares, and has taken over from CONAME the promotion of anti-Israel Israeli speakers. *The Jerusalem Post International Edition* of December 7, 1976 carries a letter from a man who had attended a meeting of the Philadelphia Chapter of Breira where Marcia Friedman, an American born member of Israel's Knesset, had spoken. He writes that she launched into "a one and one-half hour tirade of anti-Israel pro-Palestinian propaganda"; she described "the Israeli government permitting armed Jews with killer German shepherd dogs to attack Arab neighbors in Kiryat Arba," and informed the audience of "Israeli policy brutality with a sickening description of the ways and means Arabs are tortured in Israeli prisons." The writer of the letter concludes that the citizens of Israel "should know how diligently one of your representatives is actively working to destroy any semblance of your country's credibility."⁵⁸

As far as dissent is concerned, we do not propose to muzzle even those who do not share Mr. Howe's "unbreakable premise." What is attacked in these pages is not the Middle East Research and Information Project or the only slightly more circumspect Committee for New Alternatives in the Middle East. What is under attack here is Breira. And the reason is that it is only Breira which serves as a "front" group, where the majority who join are unaware of the purposes of the minority who shape the path of the organization. If Jews want to organize on behalf of the Fatah, that is their privilege. But let them call it "Jews for Fatah" and not "Breira."

DISTANCING ONESELF FROM ISRAEL: THE APPEAL OF BREIRA

That Breira exercises an appeal to American Jews is obvious; the organization has grown in size, has won significant funding, and has attracted, especially of late, respected intellectuals. Its appeal is not based on its specific program, its passionate advocacy of a Palestinian state for the PLO, although the fact that Breira possesses the "solution" to the Arab-Israel conflict may give some American Jews a sense of optimism. What attracts most to Breira is that the organization gives legitimacy to their growing sense of distance from Israel, the feeling in their bones that may never be allowed to rise to consciousness that in the future Israel will be for them not a source of pride and a haven against possible storms but a burden, economically, politically, emotionally. To quote David Vital again: "Doubts about the capacity of Israel, government and people alike, to fight its way through the present crisis and the one that will no doubt follow it, and the one after that are liable to eat slowly into the posture habitually taken in recent years by so many Jews outside Israel—open sympathy and support, along with general acceptance that the safety of Israel must be the overriding **national** concern of modern Jewry."⁵⁹ Breira is the first organization that has come to open up the wedge and in this sense perhaps Gershon Hundert, quoted at the beginning as saying that Breira's hour had come, may be right. Breira asks "Are the interests of Israel and the diaspora different? Can they in some cases be antithetical?"

Breira invites criticism of Israel, makes indeed a virtuous and courageous act of it. One therefore need not feel guilty about one's growing sense of alienation from the Jewish state. Israel has "behaved badly," "oppressed Palestinians," "ignored the prophetic mission it was her task to fulfill," "has not really sought peace." And when the time comes, as American Jews know it will, when the United States brings pressures to bear that the government of Israel feels it must resist and Israeli leaders turn to American Jews for help and support, Breira's adherents can in all good conscience reply that they are only being forced to do what they should have done from moral conviction and that they, the members of Breira, have been telling them all along that what is demanded is for the good

of their souls and the peace of Israel. And then there is no need to take a stand against the American government. Not that anyone can doubt the willingness, especially of the Jews of Breira, to take a stand against the government. But this is not an issue of universal concern, like Vietnam. This concerns the lives of Jews, and is not popular in "progressive" circles.

This aspect of Breira, its challenge to the centrality of Israel, which has received less attention than its Palestinian formula, may well ultimately be the most dangerous aspect of its work. If Jews in the diaspora, above all in the United States, distance themselves from Israel as Israel's need for moral, political and financial support becomes more pressing than ever before, the outlook for Israel's future is grave indeed. Even now an organization like Breira becomes valuable to those in the Congress and the government who wish to distance themselves from Israel: Breira proves that even American Jews recognize Israel's intransigence. And if those Jews who distance themselves in the hope of maintaining their own positions (which may come increasingly under threat as Arab economic power grows and is turned against Jews in western countries on the view that they are all Zionists) are wrong, and the Jews of the world turn out to be bound more than ever before by a shared fate, such a shift in direction may be fatal to the Jews of the diaspora as well.

We may fight against these tendencies; it is possible that they cannot be altogether restrained. But one thing American Jews can at the very least demand and that is a minimal honesty. Organizations like Breira, which withdraw from Israel, should not be able to pass themselves off as "prophetic" critics and dedicated guides for her policies. It is the basic dishonesty of Breira, which abandons Israel in the name of commitment to her future, that has made it such an attractive tool for those hostile to the state. The American Council for Judaism is a much less damaging organization than Breira. If there are Jews who wish to draw back and assert what they feel to be their own interests against those of Israel, in the last analysis they may do so. But let them not lay that flattering unction to their souls that they save Israel as they in fact facilitate her destruction. It is this that is the true corruption of Breira.

REFERENCES

- "The Oppression and Liberation of the Jewish People in America: A Position Paper by the Jews for Urban Justice, Washington DC." *Response*, Vol. 5, no. 2, Fall 1971, p. 15.
2. Arthur Waskow "The Response Symposium" *Response*, vol. IV, No. 4, Winter 1970-71, pp. 122-3.
 3. This was reported in *The Quicksilver Times*, an "underground" paper in Washington D.C., of Oct. 1-11, 1969. See also Stephen D. Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), pp. 94-6.
 4. Arthur I. Waskow, *The Freedom Seder: A New Haggadah for Passover* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1969), pp. 19-20.
 5. See *The Jewish Week-American Examiner*, Washington D.C., Nov. 18, 1971, Nov. 25, 1971, Jan. 13, 1972, Jan. 20, 1972.
 6. The ad appeared in the June 2-16, 1971 issue of *The Quicksilver Times*.
 7. The ad appeared in the July 1, 1971 issue of *The New York Review of Books*.
 8. This ad appeared in the October 12, 1972 issue of *The Village Voice*.
 9. Arnold Forster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism* (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1974), pp. 141-2.
 10. *The Militant*, July 31, 1970.
 11. *Haaretz*, Nov. 11, 1970.
 12. *American Report*, October 29, 1973.
 13. *The Peacemaker*, Vol. 26, no. 13, October 20, 1973. Reprinted in *American Report*, October 29, 1973.
 14. This letter was not printed, but a copy is in the hands of Americans for a Safe Israel.
 5. *Time Magazine*, June 23, 1975.
 16. *Facts*, published by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, vol. 21, no. 3, Nov. 1972, p. 557.
 17. *MERIP Reports*, No. 29, June 1974.
 18. *MERIP Reports*, No. 31 (undated, received in American Jewish Committee library in October 1974).
 19. This flyer is in the possession of Americans for a Safe Israel.
 20. "How American Radicals See the Resistance Dilemma" *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 25-26.
 21. Quoted in *Facts*, Nov. 1972, vol. 21 no. 3, p. 557.
 22. Arthur I. Waskow, *The Bush is Burning: Radical Judaism Faces the Pharaohs of the Modern Superstate* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1971). See the chapter Israel and Zion, pp. 47-67.
 23. *The Jewish Post and Opinion*, June 1, 1973.
 24. Arthur I. Waskow, *The Bush is Burning*, op. cit., p. 71.
 25. Americans for a Safe Israel has in its possession MERIP literature marked with 19162 postbox. See also letter from Irving Saginor printed in *Jewish Week-American Examiner*, Washington D.C., May II, 1972.
 - 25a. Political Intelligence in the Internal Revenue Service: The Special Service Staff: A Documentary Analysis Prepared by the Staff of the Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary United States Senate, U.S. Government Printing Office, December 1974, p. 267.
 26. Paul Dickson, *Think Tanks* (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1971) p. 276.
 27. *The Jewish Week-American Examiner*, Washington D.C., October 14, 1971.
 - 27a. David Kelley, "For Socialist Alternatives," *Barron's*, August 23, 1976, pg. 5.
 28. Samuel Rubin Foundation IRS Form 990-AR for 1974. *Foundation Directory* Editorial File (updated).
 29. Rubin wrote articles in *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3; vol. 3, no. 2; vol. 4, no. 1 (in 1973 and 1974).

30. *American Report*, December 18, 1970.
31. *American Report*, October 29, 1973.
32. *The Village Voice*, January 31, 1974.
33. *American Report*, February 4, 1974.
34. *American Report*, Nov. 25, 1974.
35. *American Report*, April 15, 1974.
36. *American Report*, December 10, 1973.
37. *The Village Voice*, February 14, 1974.
38. *American Report*, November 26, 1973.
David Vital, "Israel and Jewry: Digging In" *Midstream*, November 1976, p. 39.
40. *American Report*, November 26, 1973.
41. *American Report*, January 21, 1974.
42. *JTA Community News Reporter*, Vol. X, no. 16, April 30, 1971.
Daniel Charles, "Breira: Alternative of Surrender" *The American Zionist*, Vol. 67, no. 2, p. 13.
44. *Los Angeles Jewish Heritage*, August 20, 1976.
Daniel Charles, op. cit., p. 13.
46. *Jewish Post and Opinion*, March 31, 1972.
The message handed out at the rally by Breira was reproduced in the ad Breira placed in *The New York Review of Books*, December 12, 1974.
48. *Interchange: A Monthly Review of Issues Facing Israel and the Diaspora*, vol. 1, no. 1, September 1975, p. 8.
Testimony was reprinted in *Interchange*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 8.
50. *Interchange Special Supplement*, vol. 1, no. 5, January 1976.
51. *Jewish Week-American Examiner*, New York City, Dec. 5-11, 1976.
52. *Haaretz*, Nov. 26, 1976.
The ad, for the Cambridge Fund for the Education of Palestinian Refugees, is in the possession of Americans for a Safe Israel.
In, for example, *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 28, 1975, *The Manchester Guardian*, April 12, 1975, *The Sunday Times*, March 30, 1975.
55. *Interchange*, vol. 1, no. 10, June 1976.
Ibid.
57. *Sh'ma*, September 3, 1976.
58. *The Jerusalem Post International Edition*, Dec. 7, 1976.
David Vital, op. cit., p. 43.

