

# Liberal Jewish press rejects ad seeking cuts in US aid to Israel

by Dan Friedman

WASHINGTON, DC, March 22—An ad placed by the Jewish Committee on the Middle East calling for recognition of the new Palestinian state and a drastic reduction of US aid to Israel has been rejected by three prominent liberal Jewish journals.

The ad—which has appeared in nine magazines including the *Nation*, the *New York Review of Books* and the *Progressive*—was rejected by *Tikkun*, the American Jewish community's leading liberal journal, *Israel Horizons*, a New York publication reflecting the views of Labor Zionism, and *New Outlook*, an English-language monthly published in Israel and distributed primarily in the United States.

The controversial ad begins, "We are Americans and Jews and we come together at this time publicly to express our strong desire to see the United States take meaningful steps to disassociate our country from the policies of Israel and to support mutual recognition between Israel and the new state of Palestine."

Pointing out that "Israel's course could not be maintained but for the continuing financial, political, military and covert support of the US government," the statement calls for a cut-back of US aid "over the next two to three years to much smaller levels." Currently the US bankrolls Israel to the tune of \$10 million a day.

The Jewish Committee on the Middle East was founded over a year ago to "give voice to American Jews who have this position," says Mark Bruzonsky, JCOME chair. "Ours is increasingly the mainstream view of the American Jewish community, but the pressure to remain silent on these issues in the Jewish community is intense."

The statement has been signed by over a thousand American Jews, including professors at over 100 universities. Among the signers are Noam Chomsky, the world renowned linguist and progressive political commentator, Fred Newman, a controversial founding member of the independent New Alliance Party, and Nancy Ross, executive director of the Rainbow Lobby, an independent, liberal issues lobby based in Washington, DC. The JCOME's advisory board includes rabbis Leonard Beerman of Los Angeles, Michael Robinson of Croton-on-Hudson, New York and Susan Einbinder of New York City.

issue for the international Jewish community."

"I found Bruzonsky personally obnoxious," Lerner told the *Alliance*. "Talking to him was like trying to talk with Kissinger or somebody. He treated us like we were the enemy."

"Bruzonsky's a loose cannon," *Israel Horizons* editor Arieh Lebowitz warned the *National Alliance*. "He's a personally embittered individual. Even if I were in agreement with his positions—which I'm not—I wouldn't publish his ad. Sometimes he gives magazines which don't deal with him the way he likes all kinds of trouble."

What kind of trouble? "He misquotes you," charged Lebowitz. "He says nasty things. He sends threatening faxes." What kind of threats does Bruzonsky fax? "He tells us he's going to publicize the fact that we won't accept his ad."

But behind the talk of cartoons, obnoxious personalities and threatening faxes, lies an attempt to set the limits of debate within the Jewish community.

## Setting the Limits

In the May/June 1988 issue of *Tikkun* Lerner opened fire on the JCOME ad—although he did not name the group. Instead he referred to "Noam Chomsky and friends," even though Chomsky neither founded JCOME nor was on its advisory committee, a fact Lerner acknowledged in a subsequent issue. "Noam Chomsky and friends even do a real disservice to the peace forces by buying advertisements calling for the cutoff of funds to Israel," wrote Lerner. "As a result of these advertisements, conservatives are able to lump together in one anti-Zionist camp all those who disagree with Israel's current policies." Lerner went on to compare the signatories to the Weathermen, a radical US anti-imperialist group that bombed military and government installations in the early 70's, because—Lerner charged—the signers, like the Weathermen, give the Left a bad name.

"I'm not saying that such a call [to reduce US aid to Israel] would never be appropriate, but at this time it gives the Jewish Right a red herring. They're on the defensive. Why give them something they can use against the peace forces?" Lerner asked the *Alliance*.

"What makes Bruzonsky think I was writing about him?" continued Lerner—although no other group has published such a statement. "He's

megalomaniacal. His group is largely irrelevant. It's ludicrous. It's a group of people who buy ads—that's all that they do. I'm in the middle of a political struggle with [Israeli Prime Minister] Shamir. Why should I be so concerned with JCOME? *Tikkun* is demanding that Israel negotiate with the PLO and we call for the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state. Those are our ideas! Do they think they're the only ones advocating them?"

Chomsky, responding to Lerner's and *Tikkun*'s position, told the *Alliance*, "Until very recently no one on the Jewish Left would touch the question of a Palestinian state. Now they're presenting themselves as if they owned the idea. The same thing happened with the Viet Nam war. Around 1970—after significant sectors of corporate America turned against the war—all the liberals came out against it and tried to portray themselves as long-time opponents of the war. Now that the US government is clearly shifting its policy in terms of the PLO and a Palestinian state, the liberals are all rushing to identify themselves as early proponents of the two state solution. Now they're charging that our call for a cutoff of US aid is getting in the way of peace!"

According to both Bruzonsky and Chomsky, the key question raised by the ad controversy is democracy.

"If we just criticized Shamir, they would be perfectly happy to take the ad, but we criticize them as well and that makes them hysterical," charged Chomsky. "They like to portray themselves as courageous fighters for liberty and Palestinian rights. And they're very self-congratulatory about it. They pat themselves on the back a lot. What they don't want is anyone from the Left criticizing them, exposing them as subservient to those in power. After all, they take ads from *Commentary* and other rightwing forces criticizing them from the Right, but they get hysterical when they're criticized from the Left—it's understandable. Their role is to set the limits of acceptable radical politics within the Jewish community."

But as the Palestinian intifada—along with the brutal Israeli suppression of it—continues into its second year, the American Jewish community more than ever needs open dialogue. Newman comments, "Just after I was *bar mitzvehed*, I began to question certain features of the Jewish orthodoxy. 'Why,' I asked, 'wouldn't my prayers be heard unless there was a *mitnyan*?' I am still questioning the orthodoxy—now it is the so-called progressive Jewish political orthodoxy. Why can't our views be heard unless there is a *Tikkun mitnyan* present?" ■

For the full text of the JCOME statement, see page 4.

## New Jewish Agenda expels NAP members

NEW YORK CITY, March 28—The New Jewish Agenda this week notified up to a third of its Manhattan Chapter's members that plans were underway to expel them from the organization on the grounds that they are also members of the Black-led, multi-racial New Alliance Party.

In a form letter signed by national co-chairs Kate Harris and Rabbi Marc Gruber, NJA informed more than a dozen NJA members that they are being expelled because "NAP takes positions which are antithetical to those in NJA's platform and policies."

NAP, which is chaired by the African American progressive Dr. Lenora Fulani and has many Jewish members, is anti-Zionist and has been outspoken in its criticism of the capitulation of Zionist leadership to US imperialism.

NAP supports the Palestinian intifada and calls for a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

"New Jewish Agenda is expelling progressive Jews from its ranks because they are active in the Black-led, Fulani-led New Alliance Party," says Fulani. "NJA is a racist organization, plain and simple. Liberal Jews must learn that the Black community will select our own leaders and they must respect that. I have been thrown out of no Black organizations for working closely with Jews. These outrageous and racist expulsions simply prove once again that the African American community is ready to work in broad progressive non-partisan coalitions, while the orthodox liberal Jewish leadership is nothing more than a racist front for the Democratic Party." —Dan Friedman

The JCOME statement marks the first time that a significant number of American Jews have come together in a public call for recognition of an independent Palestinian state and— even more radically—to advocate for a major reduction in US aid to Israel. For over 40 years the American Jewish establishment has sought to portray the Jewish community as monolithically united behind Zionism—a politic that does not recognize the national rights of the Palestinians and calls for unquestioning adherence to the policies of the Israeli government and its well financed connection to the United States government. So powerful has this projected consensus been that even the Jewish Left—from *Tikkun* to the New Jewish Agenda—has bought into it, convinced that if they questioned Zionist assumptions they would find themselves outside the Jewish mainstream. The JCOME ad is a direct challenge to that enforced consensus, and opens the question of just how democratic the debate over Israel—and the future of the Jewish people worldwide—is going to be.

"These journals claim they're the mainstream of Jewish thought. If they're so sure of that, why don't they let their readers read what we've got to say?" asks Bruzonsky. "Are they afraid their readers may agree with us?"

"Bruzonsky is trying to create a big story here of censorship and a lack of democracy," charged *Tikkun* editor Michael Lerner. "It's just a bunch of baloney."

Lerner claims he wouldn't print the ad because of its accompanying cartoon, which depicted an Israeli soldier standing on a mountain of dead bodies complaining, "I'm willing to talk peace, but there aren't any Palestinians to talk peace with." Lerner maintains that the cartoon—which has since been replaced with one more specific to the new Palestinian declaration of independence—is anti-Semitic because it implies that the Israelis are committing genocide. "The question of whether the Israelis are engaging in genocide should be answered, not used to show that anyone asking it is an anti-Semite," says Fred Newman of Lerner's claim. "I believe they are. Lerner says they aren't. That's a real

# Independent Muñoz challenges Bradley in LA race

by Caroline Lawrence

LOS ANGELES, March 27—If you were a visitor here, it would probably take you a week to notice that the largest city in the country was electing a mayor in two weeks. The major daily, the *Los Angeles Times*, frequently goes three or four days without even mentioning the upcoming election, the major television stations have refused to cover the race, and four term incumbent Democratic Mayor Thomas Bradley has refused to debate his opponents.

But Bradley is facing nine opponents in the nonpartisan April 11 election, while South Central Los Angeles—the neighborhood that first elected him to public office as a city councilman 20 years ago but is today poorer than ever—simmers with anger. Community folks accuse Bradley of having deserted them in favor of the downtown white big business elite.

After 16 years in office, Bradley's two most significant challengers are 31 year old Peace and Freedom Party Chicana political activist Elizabeth Muñoz and African American City Councilman Nat Holden.

Muñoz, who first challenged Bradley in his unsuccessful run for governor in 1986, is a Yale graduate and bilingual public schoolteacher. Last year she won over 166,000 votes—over 2% of the vote—in her Peace and Freedom Party bid for US Senate, while supporting the independent New Alliance Party's Presidential candidate Dr. Lenora Fulani, an African-American.

Holden first attracted attention when he defeated Bradley's hand-picked candidate in the councilmanic race. He is best known for paying \$300 for semi-automatic guns to "get them

off the street" and into the hands of the police. This won him national media coverage and a full page in *People* magazine. However, many LA residents say they are more terrified by the Gestapo tactics of the Los Angeles Police Department than by unregistered Uzis and AK-47's in the hands of the gangs.

Other Draconian measures Holden has proposed to end the gang violence that the residents of South Central and East LA face daily include a 10:00 p.m. curfew for all youth under 16, an anti-gun law, an anti-graffiti law, and job training—which he describes as street cleaning for disadvantaged youth. Holden, whose base is in the Black middle class, has so far only been endorsed by the policemen's union.

Muñoz provides a progressive choice for the unrepresented African American residents of South Central, the Chicano population of East LA and the progressive middle class residents of West LA. "The purpose of my campaign is to give Los Angeles African American voters the opportunity to reject the sellout leadership of Tom Bradley and his ilk," said Muñoz. In a recent community forum in East Los Angeles, she pointed out to a largely Chicano audience that, although Bradley is African American, "he no more represents the African American community than he represents the people in East Los Angeles. His policies favor corporations and the rich, but they have consistently ignored the police brutality and drug abuse, the lack of housing and jobs, and all the other issues of profound concern to both the Black community and the Chicano community." Muñoz also explained that she is running on a track record of building unity between Blacks and Chicanos, whose multi-ra-

cial support helped make her the top progressive independent vote getter in California last year.

Muñoz has won the backing of the Black Lesbian and Gay Coalition for Health and Justice for her militantly pro-gay stand. "Bradley is no friend of the gay community," she said. "There are exactly 12 beds in Los Angeles County hospitals for AIDS patients—in a city with the second highest number of people with AIDS in the country."

Muñoz has also indicted Bradley for his involvement in inviting the brutal Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko to Los Angeles for a city-hosted visit. Bradley's name was prominently displayed on the letterhead of an organization called the Friends of Zaire Committee, but Muñoz joined with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which first raised the issue, the Rainbow Lobby and the U.S.-Congo Friendship Committee in helping blow the whistle on that outrage, resulting in Bradley withdrawing his support for Mobutu and denying his involvement in the plans to roll out the red carpet for the fascist dictator. The city would have spent \$200,000 for Mobutu's planned three day visit—which would have included a side trip to Disneyland. Bradley, however, has yet to either denounce Mobutu or explain his connection with Friends of Zaire and its director Celestine Palmer, a Black LA Democratic Party activist. Nor has he explained how his name got on the letterhead in the first place. Of course Bradley's record on Africa is hardly auspicious. In 1982 he gave the key to the city to the South African consul.

"Tom Bradley has proven he is no friend of the people of Africa," commented Muñoz. "Just as he has proven he is no friend to Blacks, Chicanos, Asians and progressives here in Los Angeles. A vote for me this April 11 will send a message to the downtown developers and real estate barons that we've had it with their anti-poor, racially divisive policies. A vote for me is a vote for Black and Chicano and Asian unity. A vote for me—even though this is a nonpartisan race—is also a vote for the Peace and Freedom Party, a party independent of the Democratic and Republican Party hacks who have run this state for too long." ■