Central Congress of Grand Rabbis is directed by the Satmar chassidic dynast and includes those chassidic rabbis who follow his theology. As may be known, this particular congress holds militantly anti-Zionist and anti-the State of Israel views. It believes that only some metaphysically ordained Messiah may re-establish the (theocratic) Jewish State. On the other hand, all of the other rabbinical associations adhere to a more or less dedicated allegiance to Zionism.

Supporting Israeli Political Orthodoxy

Established in 1902, the UOR, comprised of rabbis ordained in Eastern Europe, did not waste time before it turned its wrath on a 23-year-old rabbi by the name of Mordecai Menachem Kaplan — by 1922 the founder of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism/Reconstructionism. He had started out with an Orthodox congregation and UOR found his views to be close to heresy, if not beyond. He was soon to lose that pulpit, but his actions kept him on the UOR's hit list.

Because Kaplan rejected the dogma of the Jews' Chosenness and obliterated such assertions from the prayer books he edited, the UOR organized a public auto da fé of his prayer books. In 1946, the UOR proclaimed M.M. Kaplan to be excommunicated, placed in *cherem*. What about Reform Judaism and its Union Prayer Book? The UOR did nothing about Classic, authentic Reform Judaism. Since then motivations have radically changed and such is in consequence of the challenge to the State of Israel's chief rabbinical monopoly.

When in May 1948 the State of Israel was established, and certainly before that during the British mandatory period, the Jerusalem-based Chief Rabbinate's authority was not in dispute. Neither Reform nor any other section of Judaism contended with the Chief Rabbinate's absolute monopoly on all life cycle events and on the laws of inheritance. Not even the chancellor of Hebrew University, Reform Rabbi Judah L. Magnes, ventured any opposition, nor did those central European Liberal rabbis who settled in Israel.

This deplorable state of affairs lasted well into the 197Os. To be sure, a League for Religious Freedom in Israel started in the 1960s, but this association reflected no specifically religion-oriented venue. Principally, the League's leadership tried to advance a secularist-oriented philosophy, although not a few reform theologians initially supported its goals. This lack of an Establishment Reform (as also a Reconstructionist and a Conservative) presence has changed. The American Reform institutions have promoted a very visible presence within the State of Israel. Under the name of "Progressive," rabbis and lay persons developed effective strategies that were clearly designed to advance religious freedom and, therefore, a curbing of the Chief Rabbinate's extensive powers in the realms of marriage and divorce, inheritance and conversions to Judaism.

Separation of Religion and State

Unlike the United States and other Western countries where separation of religion and state is paramount, an Orthodox rabbinate in the Republic of Israel receives governmental funding and holds sway by dint of the existence of Orthodox-religious political parties and their loyal voting public. Of 120 members of the Israeli Knesset, 23 represent these Orthodox-religious voters, and some appreciable number of the "Alignment" (Likud) support Orthodoxy as well. As a result, it is difficult for any Israeli government to sustain its parliamentary majority without the full assistance of an ever increasing number of Orthodox deputies.

This state of affairs suits the UOR and its recent Declaration was largely proclaimed in order to bolster its Israeli friends: "Having caused havoc in the United States, leading Jews towards assimilation and intermarriage (Reform and Conservatism) now attempt to export their alien ideology to Israel. By promoting Pluraism in Judaism, they seek to be recognized as rabbis entitled — contrary to the existing law in Israel — to carry out Rabbinical functions . . . contrary to Torah law. In addition . . . from a Torah perspective it is imperative to support Israel's government in their refusal to change the status quo regarding the exclusive Orthodox Rabbinic authority . . . Unless Jewish family law remains under the authority of the sole (Orthodox) rabbinate, the Jewish nation would be hopelessly divided."

On the face of it, the UOR proclamation is a document destructive of democratic religious pluralism and is obviously contrary as well to the overwhelming consensus among America's Jewish population, and not only that of America. Yet there is one significant difference, namely that outside the reach of the Israeli chief rabbinate and its political parties in the Knesset, declarations of the UOR or any other rabbinical association carry absolutely no coercive power. Rabbinical sages and leaders within the UOR, however eminent and distinguished, however much schooled in the intricacies of Talmud and Codes, are entirely dependent on the assent of those who voluntarily wish to be governed by their rulings and mandated exclusions.

But It Hath Availed Thee Nothing

For all its desperate endeavors to imitate various and sundry rituals and customs of religious Orthodoxy, Reform rabbis and Reform religious institutions stand completely rejected by those whom they have tried to appease.

Orthodox Judaism's rock-bottom premise is still predicated on the Maimonidean Thirteen Principles, among which dogmatic acceptance of Divine Revelation holds pride of place. Unlike interpretations by the founding fathers of Reform Judaism, who differentiated between the eternal moral verities of Torah and such practices as that of using phylacteries-tefillin, obeying the dietary laws, or on prescriptions/prohibitions once pertinent to the Priestly (Kohantic, Aaronitic) cast within the Israelite community, Orthodox Judaism holds to adherence of the strictest kind.

It is true that talmudic ("halachic") dialectics sought legalistically to divine the Eternal's real intentions and thereby wisely tempering what was seen as God's immutable commandments. However, once all was accomplished by way of Halachic manipulation and Talmudic exercises, full acceptance of the "Torah min Hashomayim" — the Torah Revealed by a metaphysical God-Being to the Prophet Moses upon Mount Sinai remains the required belief within Jewish religious orthodoxy.

Transformation of Reform

In the case of the recent transformation of Reform Judaism, we see that even those immutable "moral" ethics of the Old Testamentary prescriptives have fallen by the wayside in contemporary Reform theology. Not one of Reform Judaism's early theologians would ever have assented to the sanctification of practices such as homosexuality. Reform theologians accepted

(continued on page 9)

Zionists and the Foreign Agents Investigation

by Leonard R. Sussman

Investigators are tracing hundreds of thousands of dollars from China funneled into the 1996 presidential election campaign in the United States. The issue: whether foreign governments and corporations not only broke election-finance laws but also sought secretly to influence American foreign policy through carefully pinpointed contributions to political candidates. The issue is not new in American politics.

In the late 1950s, I organized for the American Council for Judaism a speakers program which featured Senator Ralph Flanders (R. Vt.); Norman Thomas, six-time Socialist candidate for the U.S. presidency; the head of American University in Beirut; and other scholars.

Each speaker — prominent in American government, international affairs or mainstream religion — expressed concern over the rapidly increasing sublimation of Judaism to the nationalism of the state of Israel. When they had voiced such concerns these speakers were targeted for overwhelming Zionist pressures. They welcomed, however, the invitation to appear on a Council platform.

Prominent among them was Senator J. William Fulbright (D. Ark.). As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee he investigated compliance — or lack of it — with the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act, passed in 1938 to counteract foreign propaganda and subversion. After intensive investigations by the Senate staff, Fulbright held public bearings in 1963 to spotlight violation by agents of foreign governments.

Intent Was Clear

The intent of the act was clear: Americans have the right to know when fund-raising or political lobbying, however well cloaked, is undertaken by an agent of a foreign government, on behalf of that government. This would be particularly applicable to fund-raisers in the U.S. who had tax-free status with the Internal Revenue Service but whose policies were controlled from abroad through agents here, and whose funds were channeled through conduits to governments overseas for other than charitable purposes. Such contributions earned for donors and recipients tax-free status from the IRS.

Unlike the present case of contributions from China, presumably intended to alter U.S. policy, the Jewish Agency had a double purpose. It would support its friends in the U.S. but would also use tax-free "charitable" money to support state-building activities, including military and economic functions abroad.

Fulbright quietly authorized the examination of the Jewish Agency-American Section as an unregistered foreign agent. The JA was the American arm of the Jewish Agency for Israel, formerly the World Zionist Executive. That, in turn, was directly linked to the government of Israel.

Political Hazards

Fulbright knew he would face serious political hazards by focusing on the Jewish Agency. The year before, he had been harshly attacked as anti-Israel for complaining that U.S. government aid to Israel exceeded aid to all the Arab states together. He told me years later (I interviewed him for my book on the Fulbright scholarship program) that the United States and Israel each had national interests which did not always coincide. For Zionist attackers, however, that was tantamount to anti-Semitism. Fulbright was not an anti-Semite — only, as columnist Dorothy Thompson once wrote, "by appointment."

When Fulbright returned to Arkansas to take part in a state-wide political campaign he was harassed at his fund-raiser. Zionists badgered him over his "anti-Israel" views. The decision to expose the Israeli lobby, according to Fulbright's biographer Randall Bennett Woods, "was not Fulbright's but [staffer Walter] Pincus's, who was himself Jewish." His investigation, writes Woods, "had revealed clearly that agents of the Jewish Agency and other American Zionists had violated provisions of the Foreign Agents Registration Act."

That conclusion cast into question the major apparatus for raising funds in every Jewish community in the United States. Woods provides this account of what followed:

> FULBRIGHT — A BIOGRAPHY, by Randall Bennett Woods, Cambridge University Press, 1995; 711 pp, photos and notes; citations here from pp 583ff

Severe Pressure

Fulbright immediately came under severe pressure to suppress the information which Pincus had gathered on American Zionists. Several prominent American Jews asked to testify, but made conditions. They demanded that they not testify under oath, that no transcript would be kept of the meeting, and that nothing concerning the meeting would be made public. The committee rejected the demand, and Jewish Agency representatives testified. The committee announced the meeting to the press, but withheld a transcript of the closed-door session. The Executive Director of the Jewish Agency and his deputy testified in executive session because the White House intervened.

Fulbright next planned to read portions of the two men's testimony on the floor of the Senate as part of the effort to modify the Foreign Agents Registration Act. But, writes Woods, "a last-minute appeal by [President] Lyndon Johnson stopped [Fulbright]." In their testimony, says Woods, "the representatives of the Jewish Agency admitted that they had paid the expenses of Johnson and his entourage at the 1960 Democratic National Convention."

Major Improvement

The Fulbright-Pincus investigation resulted in a major improvement in the Foreign Agents Registration Act. It thereafter outlawed political contributions by foreign governments or corporations through their agents, required registration by agents of foreign interests with the Justice Department, and full disclosure of their financial dealings. The revision also required agents

Leonard R. Sussman is adjunct professor of journalism and mass communications at New York University. He has served as executive director of Freedom House, the human rights organization, and serves as its Senior Scholar in International Communications. He was the Council's second executive director (1955–66).