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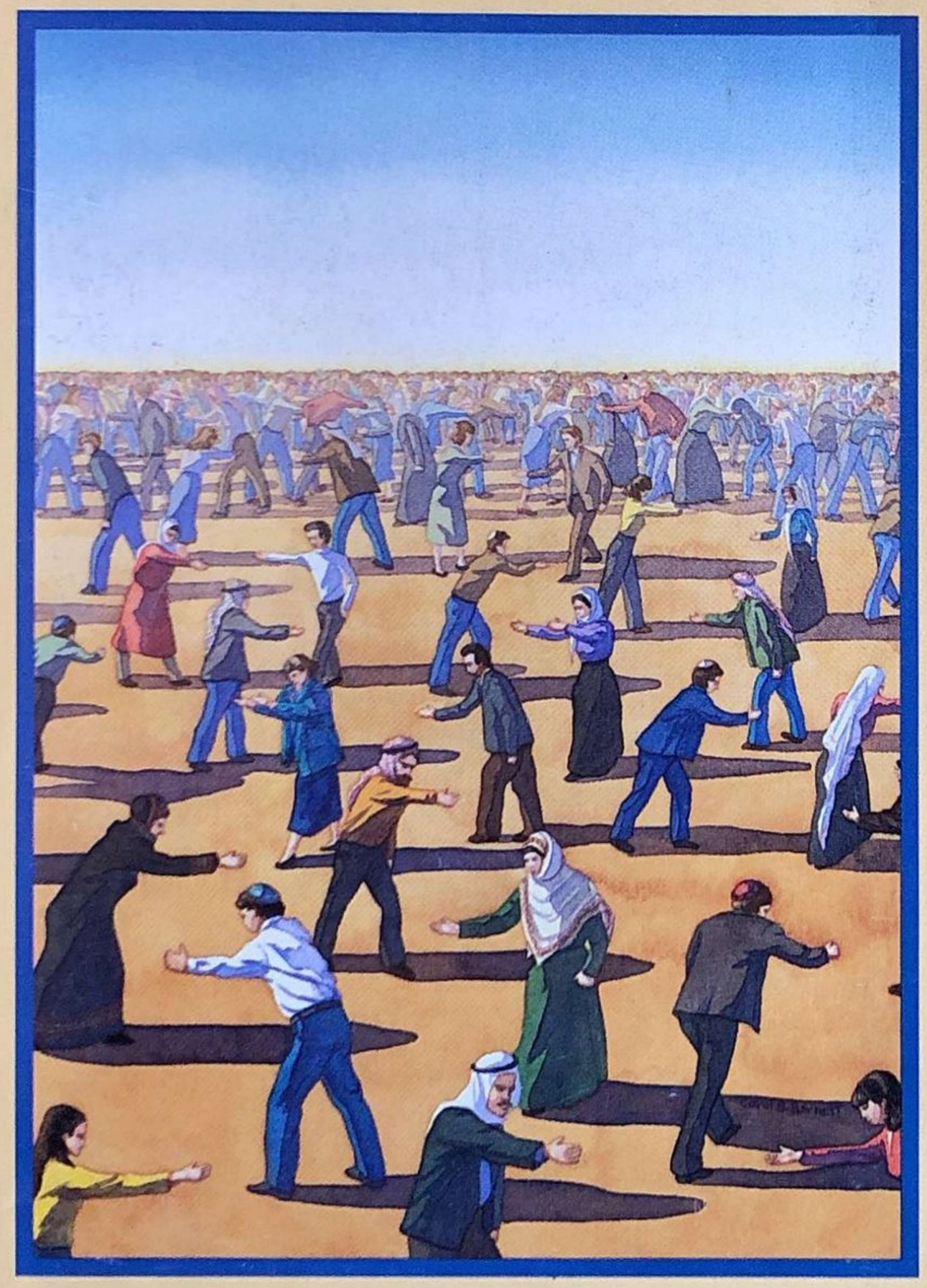
# TIKKUN

## CONSERVATIVES ON THE POLITICS OF MEANING

*A. Lawrence Chickering*
*Marshall J. Breger*

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1993 $6.00

## Mutual Recognition



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# TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 8 NUMBER 6



2 **Letters:** Clinton; The *New Republic*; ADLgate

## Articles

7 **Jill Goodman** *Reading Toward Womanhood* The Baby-sitters Club books are a phenomenal success, but what models do they offer for their avid audience of young girls?

11 **Mike Espy** *National Service and the Politics of Meaning* The Secretary of Agriculture argues that Bill Clinton's National Service plans embody TIKKUN's politics.

13 *Two Perspectives on Health-Care Reform* Does the Clinton plan adequately embody an ethos of caring and a coherent social vision? **Amitai Etzioni** doubts it, **Ronald A. Carson** believes it's a good start.

19 **Stephen S. Walker** *Genocide: We are Responsible* The author tells why his outrage at the immorality of U.S. inaction in Bosnia prompted him to resign his State Department job in protest.

82 **Paul Buhle** *A Revolutionary and a Scholar—E.P. Thompson, 1924-1993.*

85 **Raymond P. Scheindlin** *Museum of Life, Museum of Death* Visitors to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Jewish Museum come away with sharply divergent understandings of Jewish history.

## Current Debates

25 *I. Politics of Meaning* Two conservative theorists discuss our call for a new paradigm for politics. **A. Lawrence Chickering** says that conservatives should find much to support. **Marshall J. Breger** rejects the public arena as the locus for meaning. **Michael Lerner** responds to Breger.

37 *II. German Fascism and Anti-Semitism* **Martin Jay** *Postmodern Fascism?* The author cautions against interpreting Germany's alarming political phenomena through the lens of the 1930s. **Elliot Neaman** *Fascism and Postmodernism* A reply to Martin Jay. **Susannah Heschel** *Anti-Semites Against Anti-Semitism* They may march in anti-skinhead vigils, but the "other" Germans can't overcome their own prejudices.

## Special Focus: Mutual Recognition

TIKKUN *celebrates the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords.*

55 **Michael Lerner** suggests how to give practical support to the peace process and analyzes the possibilities for transcending Jewish paranoia and *goyim*-bashing as he sets the accords in historical and religious perspective.

62 **Wendy Orange** reports on post-accord realities among Israelis and Palestinians on the West Bank.

72 **Letty Cottin Pogrebin** argues we must begin now addressing the thorniest issue—Jerusalem.

77 **Yaron Ezrahi** analyzes the factors that led Israel to accept the accords.

79 **Michael Roth** explores the uses of memory in Yitzhak Rabin's speech at the White House signing ceremony.

**Sidra Ezrahi, Shimon Peres, Michael Rosenak, Anne Roiphe, David Biale, Marshall Berman, Michael Berenbaum, Gerald Serotta,** and **James Young** reflect on the meaning of these events to Judaism and the Jewish people.

## Reviews

88 **Jonathan Marshall** on Gerald Posner's *Case Closed* and Peter Dale Scott's *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*; **David Brody** on Barry and Irving Bluestone's *Negotiating the Future*; **Jonathan Kovel** on Lynn S. Chancer's *Sadomasochism in Everyday Life.*

## Fiction

23 **Ida Fink** *The End*


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# Letters

## CLINTON'S POLITICS OF MEANING

To the Editor:

The letters you send periodically to TIKKUN readers and donors helped me understand more about the way you think about the controversy that has emerged around the politics of meaning. You may be surprised to hear this, but many of my friends here in St. Louis never read the articles in The *New York Times* or *Washington Post* or *New Republic* that attacked you. But they did see the article in *People* magazine that talked of your unique influence on the Clintons and explained your politics of meaning as a call for programs that encourage caring and moral sensitivity. Many of them did see you debating William Bennett on "Larry King Live." This may amaze you, but for many folks here in the Midwest, you and Hillary Clinton are heroes. I wouldn't get overly influenced by your portrayal in The *Times*—you've popularized a brand new idea in American politics, and not many people get to do that.

On the other hand, when I've tried to get people to subscribe to TIKKUN, they don't make that step. For them, it's still a Jewish magazine, and they're not Jewish. Neither am I, I explain, and neither is Bill Clinton, and he seems to be reading it. This hasn't worked. There's some feeling that if you're not Jewish, you can learn about TIKKUN's ideas, but not subscribe to it. I can't say I suspect anti-Semitism, because these are my friends and I just don't think that's it. But no matter how often I explain to them that you don't have to be Jewish, etc., they still act as though I was asking them to cross some divide they can't cross. So I understand why you report in your letter that all this publicity hasn't really added up to new sales for the magazine.


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William Newsome
St. Louis, Missouri

*Editor responds:*

Getting these insider letters is one of the perks of subscribing. So it wouldn't encourage subscriptions if people could get it by just buying the magazine on the newsstand.

To the Editor:

I find it difficult to believe that the Clintons share your ethos of caring and community.

If the Clintons do indeed have the moral compass you write about, how can you explain the many blatant contradictions between what candidate Clinton promised during the presidential campaign and the policies he has advocated since becoming president?

I find it hard to believe that a president committed to an ethos of caring and community could or would turn his back on the misery in Haiti or on the horrific "ethnic cleansing" going on in the former Yugoslavia. One might try to defend him by arguing that caring and community stop at the water's edge—at the boundaries of the United States. But wouldn't such a defense be uncomfortably close to the "Am I my brother's keeper" defense discredited thousands of years ago?

I find your views on the politics of meaning to be original, incisive, and thought-provoking, and cannot understand why you believe that ascribing them to the Clintons somehow enhances them.

C.G. Schoenfeld
New York, New York

*Editor Responds:*

The Clintons have a part of them that shares the values of the politics of meaning, and a part of them that fears that they will merely be going out on a limb and isolating themselves if they try to vigorously implement these ideals in Administration policy. When they face public-opinion polls that indicate an unwillingness of Americans to act in a caring way toward Bosnia or Haiti, the Clintons may have to make a calculation about which battles to fight. Reforming health care isn't a bad place to start. I believe that the Clintons could do much more and could even change opinion polls if they were to provide more leadership, argue for their politics explicitly, defend a politics of meaning. On the other hand, when Hillary Clinton began to do that, she and I were both viciously assaulted in the press, while the millions of people who are already involved in a politics of meaning in their daily lives kept mysteriously quiet. Their failure to speak out publicly in defense of the Clintons or me helped convince the administration that it was risky to be too explicit about this ideal. I hope that the Clinton retreat was only from the language, but I share your criticism that in terms of policy the Clintons need to fight more consistently for an ethos of caring and community.

To the Editor:

I read portions of Michael Lerner's explanation of meaning aloud to a friend, and when I got to the part advocating affirmative action for empathy, he laughed so hard that he tipped over backwards, breaking one of my dining room chairs. I am counting on Lerner to compassionately endorse legislation that will provide me with an alternative dining area seating facility. Believe me, to one forced to sit on a leg-deprived chair, the playing field can never be level enough.

Joyce Milton
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

I applaud Michael Lerner's basic belief in President Clinton's determination to lead our country down a more humane path; and I applaud Lerner's recommendation that the President emphasize a broad vision of the common good, a vision in which a repair of values becomes a central theme in our politics.

People do generally feel pain and sadness at the lack of caring and community spirit in our society.

For many Americans, crime is the issue that most tangibly defeats their sense that a caring and connected community can be an achievable ideal. The fear of crime leads people out of the cities, leaving cities bereft of the sort of tax base that could be used to effectively address urban ills. I would suggest that Lerner urge President Clinton to make crime a major focal point of a politics of meaning.

The President should reassure anxious citizens by publicizing to a far


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greater extent his plan to add 100,000 police to the nation's streets, and he should propose funds for more prison construction in the states. At the same time, he should use the bully pulpit to highlight how social problems are connected with crime, and explicitly connect this to social policy proposals. He should tell Americans—not just once, but patiently over and over again—that if we want safe neighborhoods, we should invest in tough-minded yet fair welfare reform, better schools, youth recreation, and CCC-type programs that combine job opportunities with the socialization of disadvantaged young people in the work ethic and related values.

The crime issue, which has worked so well for right-wing demagogues, could instead be a terrific handle for promoting humane social policies. People who have bought into simplistic anti-tax rhetoric may think twice when they realize that the conservative cry for law and order is but a hollow phrase if there is not a sufficient pool of taxes with which to create larger police forces and prison systems; and President Clinton can help them realize that programs that would attack the social bases of crime likewise cannot be implemented without a sufficient tax base.

Daniel Burnstein
Highland Park, New Jersey

## The New Republic

To the Editor:

Though I'm flattered to be branded as politically incorrect in complicity with one of the finest magazines in America ("If This is the New Republic, Madam, Then You Can Keep It"), Linda Hirshman's analysis of the opposition to Lani Guinier's nomination as assistant attorney general for civil rights is downright silly.

Bill Clinton campaigned on an explicit pledge of favoring equal opportunity over forced equality of results. Guinier just as explicitly believes the opposite. She spelled out in detail her view that the Voting Rights Act compels a legislative quota system so that every minority group "has a right to have its interests satisfied a fair proportion of the time." Placing Guinier at the head of a powerful law enforcement arsenal would have been a risky proposition indeed.

We made verbatim copies of Guinier's articles plentifully available so that reporters and policy makers could read Guinier's words in their own context. Our concerns were echoed not only by The *New Republic*, but by The *New York Times*, *Baltimore Sun*, mainstream Jewish groups, Nina Totenberg, Cokie Roberts—and ultimately, of course, by the President himself.

By the way, contrary to Hirshman's assertion, I have never argued that public schools are unconstitutional. The Institute for Justice represents low-income youngsters in Chicago and Los Angeles who are consigned to abysmal public schools that do not sat-

## Free Associations Free Associations Free Associations Free Associations

### The New Republic Disease

In its latest direct mail campaign to potential subscribers, The *New Republic* has deviously turned TIKKUN's criticism of media cynicism into its new sales pitch. Urging people to "Catch the New Republic Disease" by subscribing to TNR, the letter begins: "The Washington Post recently reported that Hillary Clinton and her philosophical guru Michael Lerner, in their fervent quest for 'a politics of meaning,' had strategized about how to undermine cynicism—the New Republic disease." "Catching the disease" Mrs. Clinton and TIKKUN want to cure is the operative metaphor throughout. Nevertheless, TNR is careful to clarify for potential subscribers who really deserves the scorn in the White House through a little name-dropping: Bill Clinton and Al Gore, we're told, are among the "prominent, wise, and influential Americans" who read the magazine. (It's really only that uppity woman, Hillary, who's causing the trouble.)

We started feeling particularly queasy when we read that carriers of The New Republic Disease "prefer ibuprofen to the politics of meaning."

### A Jewish Response to Bosnia

Last spring, TIKKUN helped create a Jewish coalition on Bosnia, JACOB, which has done the following: • Held a teach-in for the Jewish community. Speakers included George Kenney, Robert Jay Lifton, and Michael Lerner. • Helped raise funds for the TIKKUN-circulated ad which appeared in the Sept. 29 edition of The *New York Times* under the headline "Stop the Genocide in Bosnia" calling for decisive U.S. action. • JACOB's rabbinic committee (Rabbis Roly Matalon, Michael Strassfeld, and Avi Winokur) wrote a prayer for Bosnia and distributed it to more than 1,500 congregations nationwide during the High Holidays, along with a copy of a suggested letter to President Clinton calling for an end to the arms embargo and for decisive American action showing there is a price to be paid for genocide. JACOB's next meeting will be Monday, November 15. Info: contact Sandy Mayers-Chen or Myron Schwartzman, c/o TIKKUN, 251 W. 100th Street, New York, NY 10025, or call 212-348-7748.

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isfy state constitutional guarantees. Slipshod journalism seems to be a Linda Hirshman hallmark.

Clint Bolick
Litigation Director
Institute for Justice
Washington, D.C.

*Linda Hirshman responds:*

Clarence Thomas's best friend and right-wing faxman Clint Bolick thinks The *New Republic* is "one of the finest magazines in America."

I rest my case.

P.S.—I hate to play law professor with someone from an "Institute for Justice," but the last time I checked state constitutions were constitutions and a failure to comply with them makes the system unconstitutional.

To the Editor:

In her eagerness to bash The *New Republic*, Linda Hirshman misses an opportunity to point out that the politics of meaning is turning up in the strangest places ("If this is The New Republic, Madam, Then You Can Keep It," Sept/Oct, 1993). While Hirshman devotes several paragraphs to upbraiding *TNR*'s Mickey Kaus, appropriately, for his attacks on Hillary Rodham Clinton, et al., she treats Kaus's book, *The End of Equality*, which is rife with POM sentiments, in a single sentence. I guess she didn't want to break the mood.

Whatever one thinks of Kaus's contributions to The *New Republic*, his prescriptions, in *The End of Equality*, to reinvigorate liberalism should be familiar to readers of TIKKUN: Liberals should strive to create a political culture where good citizenship, respect for community, and a commitment to dignified work take the place of money, material wealth, and status as the lodestars of social worth. To that end, Kaus argues, government should focus on expanding the "public" sphere, thereby fostering among people a sense of political community that transcends class barriers. Does this ring a bell?

Kaus regards public institutions—public schools, a unified health care system serving all elements of the population, the draft/national service, even parks and highways—as the key to reclaiming Americans' sense of national purpose and individual fulfillment. In these institutions, where money doesn't matter, the seeds of what Kaus calls social equality, what I call mutual respect and dignity, and what TIKKUN would call (ahem!) "caring" or "love" are planted. Empathy, it would seem, is learned.

It's always a little distressing, I suppose, when the fool (as here defined by Ms. Hirshman), speaks the truth. But still, I say, take your allies as you find them and enjoy the irony of whatever perverse synchronicities result. And besides: You can always argue over who said it first… .

Andrew G. Celli, Jr.
New York, New York

## ADLGATE

To the Editor:

Dennis King and Chip Berlet's disingenuous depiction of the Anti-Defamation League ("ADLgate," July/August) rests on an assumption of ADL power generally shared only by the paranoid extremist fringes.

The authors appear to hold ADL responsible for most of the bigotry in American life today. They trace what they call the "electoral mainstreaming of hate"—born in the conspiracy fever-dreams of the anti-Semitic political extremist Lyndon LaRouche, budding in the careers of David Duke and Pat Buchanan. In King and Berlet's scheme, ADL sat by cheerfully during this time, ensconced in Reaganite boardrooms and complacency. And when this hate achieved full flower at the Houston GOP convention last July—yes, ADL appears responsible for this, too —we were finally force-fed our just desserts, when "erstwhile ADL friends cheered" as the insidious Buchanan emerged as the party's right-wing hero.

King and Berlet's history engages so many false or misleading allegations that it defies a concise response. TIKKUN readers deserve some of the missing facts, however:

The assertion that ADL has been "ineffectual" or "nonexistent" in its response to LaRouche is ludicrous, and King and Berlet know it. The league began reporting and exposing LaRouche's activities in the 1970s, and while the authors may find our many reports on the subject "bland," neither LaRouche nor law enforcement do. The cult leader has sued ADL three times, and law officials used ADL's materials extensively in the federal prosecution that sent LaRouche and


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several of his associates to prison. As King and Berlet know—and most TIKKUN readers may not—LaRouche's publications maniacally attack and defame ADL, holding us responsible for LaRouche's incarceration.

Indeed, for extremists of all stripes—as a glance at their innumerable hate sheets demonstrates—ADL is public enemy number one. Right-wing hate groups like the Liberty Lobby and White Aryan Resistance, who fulminate constantly about the League, would be astonished to learn that ADL actually doesn't care very much about them.

The suggestion that because of political exigencies we kid-gloved David Duke and Patrick Buchanan is similarly duplicitous. King and Berlet suggest that we only responded to Buchanan after he attacked ADL. But they've got it backward. Our repeated condemnations of Buchanan prompted him to charge that a 1990 *New York Times* attack was "a contract hit" arranged by ADL; he accused the League of a national "pre-planned, orchestrated smear campaign" against him. His complaints notwithstanding, we issued two widely circulated reports that depicted his career as a "thirty-year record of intolerance unmatched by any other mainstream political figure."

King and Berlet's claim that we hid behind our 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status with respect to Duke is extraordinary: Do they think we like Duke? Their argument, based on our denunciation of Jesse Jackson's anti-Semitic remarks during Jackson's 1984 Presidential campaign, charges that we use our tax-exempt status for political purposes. When the offending candidate happens to be Black and leftist, they suggest, we ignore our tax-status restrictions. What King and Berlet don't tell TIKKUN readers is that we also denounced Lyndon LaRouche during his 1984 presidential candidacy, and were sued (unsuccessfully). They also fail to acknowledge that ADL issued three major reports about Duke during the years of his political ascendancy, between 1989 and 1992, despite the fact that he ran for office every one of those years.

More generally, if ADL pandered to conservatives, our many publications during the past twelve years would reflect a bias against the Left. As King and Berlet know, the facts indicate otherwise: From 1980 to 1992 the League published sixty-three reports concerning right-wing extremist groups and twenty concerning Left-wing extremist groups. Similarly, the ADL Law Enforcement Bulletin has contained sixty-eight articles on the far right and seven on the far left.

Obviously, ADL isn't perfect. But our mistakes don't derive from a right or left ideology. We are not a partisan organization. In order to work effectively on behalf of all Americans, we have sought throughout our eighty-year existence to maintain friendly and cooperative relations with the nation's leaders and lawmakers—whatever their political stripe.

At the same time, we don't allow our relationship with these leaders to compromise our mandate to counter prejudice and defend civil rights. King and Berlet wholly ignore major elements of ADL's record in this regard: namely, our longstanding support for abortion rights, civil rights for gays and lesbians, firm church-state separation, and liberalized immigration policies.

King and Berlet ignore this record because it belies their argument—one which doesn't finally concern the efficacy and integrity of ADL's work. For all their criticism of the way ADL has purportedly politicized the fight against bigotry, the real ideologues are Berlet and King. Their article ultimately reflects indignation that we haven't politicized our struggle against racism—politicized it, in other words, their way.

We agree with King and Berlet's polemic on one point, however. "The test of who to monitor," they suggest, "...should not be based on ideology, whether conservative or liberal, but on factual evidence that a group is promoting anti-Semitism." Unfortunately, the authors fail their own test.

Abraham H. Foxman
National Director, ADL

*Chip Berlet and Dennis King respond:*

Unable to answer us on the facts, ADL national director Abraham H. Foxman resorts to an old debaters' trick: He crafts an absurd caricature of our actual statements and then shoots down his own creation. TIKKUN readers, however, can simply compare our actual words to the caricature. We never said or implied in any way, shape, or form that the ADL was "responsible for most of the bigotry in American life today" (Foxman's characterization of our remarks). Here is what we did say: "The ADL is certainly not responsible for the bigoted beliefs of Buchanan's hardcore followers. Yet the ADL's minimal response made it easier for Buchanan to reach out to a larger audience..." Foxman's assertion that our viewpoint "rests on an assumption of ADL power generally shared only by paranoid extremist fringes" is ridiculous. The ADL we portrayed is a timid organization unwilling to use against bigotry even the modest amount of power that it does possess—i.e., its potential to rouse the Jewish community in self-defense against haters.

We never said the ADL sat back "cheerfully" during the rise of LaRouche, Duke, and Buchanan; we did say (and amply document) that the ADL did too little too late. We never said the ADL "likes" Duke; we did say the ADL was more concerned with its tax-exempt status than with fighting him. We never said the ADL was "force-fed [its] just desserts" when ADL's erstwhile Christian Right friends cheered Buchanan in Houston; we merely pointed out that they cheered. Does the ADL deny the reality of this event, which took place in front of millions of TV viewers? Can the ADL possibly deny that this event represents the implosion of its own ill-conceived alliance with the loathsome bigots of the Christian Right, entered into in the early 1980s at the expense of gays, Blacks, and women as well as Jews?

Foxman gives as an argument for the effectiveness of the ADL the fact that hate groups are constantly complaining about the ADL's activities. In fact, the ravings of hate groups prove nothing about anything. Hate groups love to fulminate against Jewish organizations and fantasize all kinds of plots. They would target the ADL even if it was doing zilch to threaten them, and would exaggerate any real ADL attacks to win sympathy and contributions from their far-right base (or, in the case of the LaRouchians, to divert attention from their own criminal activities). By citing such ravings Foxman is in fact utilizing the very assumptions of the "paranoid extremist fringes" that he previously accused the two of us of promoting. □

# Reading Toward Womanhood

## The Baby-sitters Club Books and Our Daughters

*Jill Laurie Goodman*

It is seven o'clock on a Sunday evening—or two o'clock on a Tuesday afternoon—and do you know where your daughter is? Chances are good that if she is between the ages of eight and twelve she is in Stoneybrook, Connecticut. Not literally, of course, since Stoneybrook is a fictional place. It exists only as the home of the Baby-sitters Club and its members—Kristy, Stacey, Mary Anne, Dawn, Claudia, Mallory, and Jessi—who are featured in the immensely popular Baby-sitters Club series, authored, more or less, by Ann Martin.

Your daughter may look safe, even fetching, curled up in a chair or sprawled across a bed, far from the perils of adolescent sex, drugs, and heaven only knows what horrors the 1990s may offer. After all, she's reading. That has to be good, right?

Wrong. If I were you, I'd take another look.

I did. Having two daughters who fall within the danger zone for major Baby-sitters Club addiction and believing in my heart of hearts that we are what we read, I became convinced that I had to know what these books were telling my children about themselves and the world. So I embarked on a reading program to find out about Stoneybrook and my children's experiences during the hours they spend there. The answers are a bit surprising and not at all comforting.

The answers are also well worth noting for anyone interested in what is happening to a generation of girls. Baby-sitters Club books sell in astonishing numbers. Since 1986, when Scholastic launched the series, over 78,000,000 Baby-sitters Club books have been printed. Each title—and twenty-odd titles were produced last year alone—has an initial printing of 500,000, with a second printing a couple of months later. Such volume is virtually unparalleled in the publishing world.

The Stoneybrook where a generation of girls spends so much time is, according to Mary Anne, who has never lived anywhere else, "a nice, shady, pretty place." Readers, however, never have a chance to see the streets or houses very clearly. What they are shown in high relief—what defines this place—is the densely woven fabric of relationships in which the seven girls of the Baby-sitters Club live and work and come to understand and rehearse their roles as females in this culture.

Relationships are what matter in Stoneybrook. Dense and enmeshing, they leave little room in the one hundred and fifty or so pages of each volume for much else. The formula, followed faithfully but not slavishly, calls for two mostly parallel plots per installment. Both plots center on a single girl, and both are neatly resolved by the final page. One has to do with the life of the girl herself—often a family crisis, sometimes an extracurricular interest—and the other with some difficulty in the lives of the children for whom the girls sit. But all of the plots, as well as characters and situations, are little more than fodder for the endless exposition of relations and points of view.

Families are where relationships begin, and in Stoneybrook families are frequently complex and often in flux. Instead of offering safe, stable havens, family constellations force these girls to spend their days maneuvering among the shoals of household relations. For example, when the series begins Kristy, the founder and leader of the club, has a divorced mother, a father who figures in these stories mostly by his absence, and three brothers. She quickly acquires a stepfather, a stepbrother, a stepsister, an adopted half-sister from Vietnam, and a widowed grandmother, who moves into her stepfather's house when her mother remarries.

Then there are Mary Anne and Dawn's families. When we first meet them, Mary Anne is living with her father—her mother died when she was small—and Dawn is living with her divorced mother and her older brother. But Dawn's brother is miserably unhappy in Stoneybrook and soon returns to California to live with his father. Then Mary Anne's father and Dawn's mother, who were sweethearts when they attended Stoneybrook High School, rediscover each other and

*Jill Laurie Goodman is a lawyer. Currently, she is counsel to the New York Judicial Committee on Women in the Courts.*

marry, thereby making Mary Anne and Dawn sisters.

Living in the midst of these families asks great things of these still-young girls. Astute beyond their years—beyond the capacities of most sane adults—they obsess about feelings. They notice minute changes. They watch and worry. Kristy observes her mother's ambivalence about holding a full-time job, even though she has to support four children and even though it makes her feel good to be independent. Mallory notices that when her father loses his job he sounds mad at her mother, but, as she explains to her seven younger siblings, "He's really mad at himself. Or ashamed. Even though he shouldn't be." And Dawn turns a keen eye on her mother coping with her brother's decision to return to his father in California: "I could tell that mom didn't feel nearly as sure of herself as she sounded. She must have been hurting—a lot—inside."

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*I fear for the girls who are bombarded so relentlessly by the conservative message of the Baby-sitters Club books: Life's work is assigned according to gender, and women's work is caring, nurturing, worrying about relations, making things right, and feeling guilty.*

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As if their families, for all their complications and altering configurations, offer too narrow a scope for these infinitely sensitive and consummately social girls, they create additional networks of family-like relations through their shared vocation. They baby-sit. And these are no ordinary sitters, who read to the kids, put them to bed, eat potato chips, watch television, do their homework, collect their wages, and go back to their own lives. These baby-sitters stay plugged in. Away from their young charges, they fret about their problems and grope for solutions to neglectful parents and social maladaptions.

Since the baby-sitters must write up each job in a common notebook (pages of which are reproduced in the distinctive handwritings of each of the girls, complete with misspellings), they all keep abreast of the dramas of the children's lives. They follow Kristy's progress with the autistic girl she convinces herself could fit in happily at Stoneybrook Middle School's special ed class (she's wrong). They help Mallory figure out how to dissuade her rich, bratty charge from using her swimming pool to commandeer friendships. They are concerned when Claudia seems to have taken a young, hurt charge under her wing as a way of filling the gap left by her grandmother's death. And they worry about the child. "Don't drop Corrie," Kristy warns Claudia at a club meeting. "I don't think you'll do that, though," Kristy continues. "I think you and Corrie are good for each other and just happen to need each other right now.... Be careful, that's all."

When the club members are finished for the day with their families and their baby-sitting, they have each other to care for. With the burdens they have assumed, they can use the help. But friends and the intense alliances for which the Baby-sitters Club stands create yet another circle of obligations. During the three weekly meetings, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 5:30 to 6:00 p.m., not only do the baby-sitters line up jobs with the parents who know they can reach a network of experienced sitters at once during those hours. They also exchange news, offer commentary on each others lives, provide the succor that is the club's glue, and ponder the meaning of friendship.

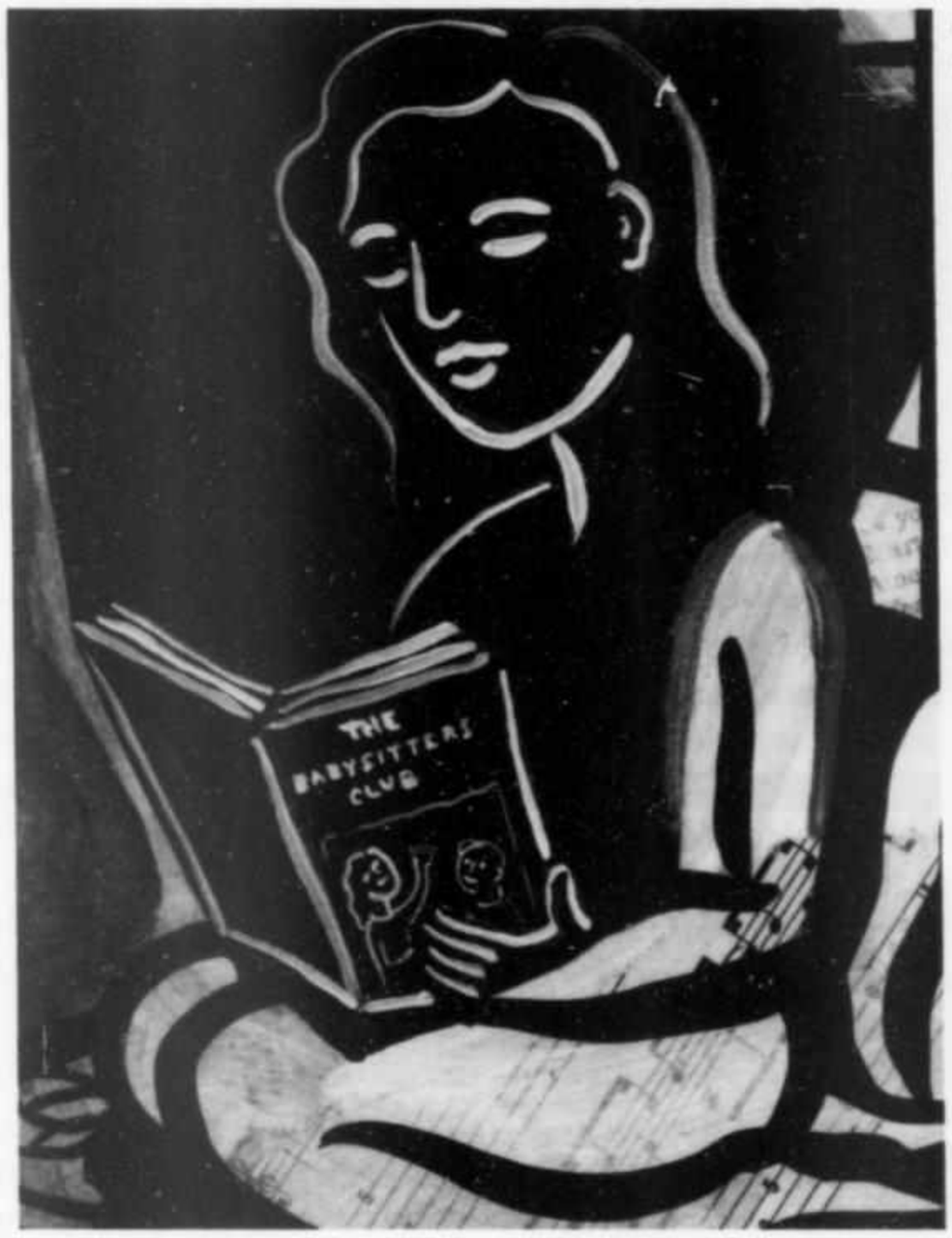
For these girls, friendship is no casual thing, and fun is only a small corner of its meaning. Friends are for understanding ambivalent feelings—at least that's Stacey's definition. Friends are for being there when you need them and sticking by you during bad times, as Mallory observes. In fact, she finds comfort from just closing her eyes and thinking about her Baby-sitters Club friends. And here's Dawn's ideas about friendship. Faced with a crisis in her family she says, "I needed to talk to someone. I needed someone my own age to say to me, 'It'll be okay. Honest. Call me anytime. We can always talk.' Which is exactly what Mary Anne did say, because she's the perfect friend."

Implicit in this definition is its femaleness. After all, this is a girls' club and its intimacies necessarily exclude boys, although the club did experiment with a male member. Sweet, sensitive Logan arrives from Kentucky and wants to join. He is a great baby-sitter, responsible and trustworthy, and he has all the credentials except gender. But it doesn't work. His mere presence at the meetings destroys their meaning, and he settles for an associate membership. He is on call for jobs when the girls are busy, but he stays away from the meetings, where he is neither welcome nor comfortable.

Indeed, the girls of Stoneybrook speak with uncanny—or perhaps calculated—clarity in what Carol Gilligan, in her enormously influential study of gender

differences in moral development, identifies as the female voice. The female concept of morality, according to Gilligan's *In A Different Voice*, concerns itself with "activities of care." Women, Gilligan tells us, "describe moral dilemmas by use of the words selfish and responsible," and they "imagine activities through which relationships are woven and connection sustained." Identity for women, Gilligan asserts, "is defined in a context of relationships and judged by a standard of responsibility and care."

But Gilligan's vision—and her thesis made manifest in the Baby-sitters Club—is troubling in a number of ways. Gilligan, having made some keen observations about the way women construct their worlds, unfortunately veers away from critical analysis. She too readily celebrates this different, female voice and too quickly passes over the implications for girls and women who speak it in too pure a form.




These implications are visible in the underside of life in Stoneybrook. The dark secret of Stoneybrook is guilt. It dogs the steps of these kind, responsible girls as they go about their business of caring in the most personal ways for their families, their baby-sitting charges, each other, and just about anyone else they stumble across. It trips them as they try to balance the immense burdens they take on, and it makes them doubt themselves in ways large and small and painful to observe in children who still need adults to care for and protect them.

These girls know guilt all too well. It is a vivid presence to Claudia, whose minute attentions to the moods and needs of her aging grandmother are finally too much when they conflict with a Baby-sitters Club meeting. She impatiently tosses the newspapers and magazines her grandmother has requested on her bed and runs to meet her obligations to the club. Later she characterizes her actions as "unforgivable." "I apologized to her three different times after dinner that night," Claudia says, "but I felt only a little better." Kristy too understands the contours of guilt. Acting bratty to her mother's boyfriend, soon to be husband, she cannot allow herself to feel freely her legitimate concern about the impending change. She knows she doesn't like this man horning in on her family, so she sulks and then feels guilty. Even a minor lapse in attention to a baby-sitting charge, one that has come to spend an entire week under Stacey's care while her mother and father attend to a sick grandfather, causes pangs. Intrigued by a mysterious, haunted house, Stacey asks, "Was I so involved... that I was forgetting to be a responsible baby-sitter?" Maybe, but Stacey is only thirteen, and a whole week caring for a child anxious about absent parents is a large undertaking. A few minutes thinking about something else is no great sin.

Leaving behind this nagging sense of never doing enough is difficult for those who ascribe to the mores of the Baby-sitters Club. Nor does Gilligan see a way to escape the paroxysms of guilt that afflict women who center their moral selves on an ethic of caring. She eloquently describes the plight that often paralyzes women as they enter adulthood. "Drifting" is the image women use, according to Gilligan, to portray themselves "caught in the opposition between selfishness and responsibility." These women, Gilligan says, "guided by the perception of others' needs... can see no way of exercising control without risking an assertion that seems selfish and hence morally dangerous." The closest Gilligan comes to a solution is to suggest that women as they mature come to include themselves in their circles of obligation as well as others and "thus sustain connections."

But this begs the question. Caring for oneself is a different enterprise from caring for others; sometimes they are in direct conflict. Yet caring for oneself is a necessary task to both survival and accomplishment. Women, indoctrinated to submerge themselves in others, must come to regard it as part of their life's work, legitimate in its own right. Only then will they be available, as complete rather than crippled human

beings, to sound a call for action, including a call to concern themselves intelligently and productively in the lives of others, to hear such a call and to answer it. Only then is there hope of achieving the balance implicitly advocated in Rabbi Hillel's questions: "If I am not for myself, who will be? If I am only for myself, what am I?"

A more basic conceptual problem clouds this vision of female webs and sustained relationships. Lurking in what Gilligan protests are empirical observations about female development is something else. Women, she seems to be saying, at least implicitly, not only are like this, but should be. She assumes that what exists is normative and embraces rather than critiques her observations about gender differences. Missed in this blindered vision is the opportunity, presented so obviously by Gilligan's material, to imagine a fully realized concept of human morality. Of course I want my children to grow into sensitive, responsible, caring people, capable of sustaining relations and committed to building communities. But I want this for my son as well as for my daughters. Women alone cannot transform the world. As a matter of practicality as well as equity, it must be a joint undertaking. Women are still the anomaly in our cultural constructs, their labor often unrecognized, their interests routinely undervalued. As long as caring for others is considered women's work, it too will be undervalued, doomed to exist on the margins of our preoccupations rather than at the center of our basic institutions. Much is to be gained on many levels by preparing girls and boys to work together at common enterprises. But neither Gilligan nor the world of the Baby-sitters Club acknowledges the possibility of, let alone the radical potential that lies within, a search for androgynous concepts of human development.

So I fear for the girls who are bombarded so relentlessly by the conservative message that gives the Baby-sitters Club books their meaning: Life's work is assigned according to gender, and women's work is caring, nurturing, worrying about relations, making things right, and feeling guilty.

And a bombardment it is. Twelve of the original-format Baby-sitters Club books are produced a year, plus two superspecials, and seven mysteries. To hook girls at a younger age, a Little Sister series about Kristy's step-sister Karen has been inaugurated, and they now appear at the rate of twelve a year, also printed in lots of 500,000. Pumping the popularity of these books, Ann Martin tours the country, signing autographs and encouraging girls to establish their own baby-sitters clubs for the books' readers. An aggressive licensing program keeps the Baby-sitters Club name ever present in the lives of young girls. When girls put down their Baby-sitters Club books,

*(Continued on inside back cover)*

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# National Service and the Politics of Meaning

*Mike Espy*

There has been an immense amount of discussion in recent weeks over the so-called "politics of meaning" championed by TIKKUN magazine and advanced by some in the Clinton administration, including the First Lady.

The phrase was debated on newspaper op-ed pages and dissected by television talking heads. The pundits gleefully argued over whether it was indeed possible to infuse politics with a greater sense of morality, purpose, community, and caring, or whether such a goal was hopelessly idealistic.

Yet for all this discussion of general philosophy, relatively little effort has been spent publicly analyzing actual policies that embrace the politics of meaning. One such policy is national service—a dramatically bold initiative that will reinvent the way government interacts with our citizens, and the way citizens interact with our government.

National service is a concrete proposal that will allow this country to move from the self-centeredness of recent American history toward a greater understanding that we, as Americans, are all in this together.

In the years preceding this past presidential election, then-Governor Clinton led a movement that was dedicated to reuniting the interests of the poor and the middle class by fashioning innovative new avenues of upward mobility. I was proud to have been a part of that movement.

We searched for fresh approaches to governing that would discard the failed and divisive ideologies of the old Left and the old Right, and would instead implement practical, real-world solutions for the unique new challenges of today.

We based our efforts on the idea that government should promote three fundamental principles: community, opportunity, and responsibility. One proposal more than any other—voluntary national service—embodied the very essence of each of those principles.

That is why, as a member of the House of Representatives, I was so proud to have been a co-sponsor of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which helped create national service pilot programs that prove that the President's more ambitious proposal will in fact work.

And that's why President Clinton has continued to adamantly insist that national service be a cornerstone of his administration.

## *Community*

This nation was founded, in the words of Benjamin Franklin, on the premise that "We must all hang together or we will most assuredly hang separately." A few decades later, a Frenchman touring the infant republic, Alexis de Tocqueville, wrote eloquently of how America was unique because its citizens banded together into voluntary organizations that worked for the common good.

Volunteers formed fire departments. They created granges. Built settlement houses. Started PTA's. It was the unbridled spirit of community service that made this the greatest nation on the planet.

National service brings us back to our origins as a nation. Properly executed, it will begin to tear down the walls that separate us. It will begin the process of giving all Americans a shared experience to which they can relate.

Some mistakenly view national service as a jobs program targeted at the poor. Others mistakenly view the idea as a "noblesse oblige" feel-good scheme for the well-off. It is neither.

National service is a civic compact in which any citizen can be tied to the nation by the simple virtue of making a difference in the lives of others.

National service can play a large role in healing this nation's gaping racial, religious, social, and economic divisions.

When young people spend their time together planting a tree or cleaning out cockroaches from the apartment of a low-income senior citizen or teaching younger children how to read, they simply don't have the time or the energy to hate each other. Not only that, with each wipe of their sweaty brows, they look into each other's eyes and increasingly come to the conclusion that

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*Mike Espy is the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture.*

they are as much alike as they are different.

That is why it would be such a mistake to turn national service into a targeted program just for the disadvantaged. Yes, we need new, innovative programs to help the less fortunate in society. My department is contemplating a wide variety of approaches to eradicate domestic hunger. This administration is sponsoring an array of empowerment initiatives to combine opportunity with responsibility to help citizens lift themselves out of poverty. Such targeted programs have an important role, but national service will play a much different role. By engaging young people from all types of backgrounds, national service can make this country whole again.

This is not some utopian pipe dream. It is already happening, in some form or another, in youth service programs now operating in each of our fifty states.

Because we believe in community, we believe in national service.

## *Opportunity*

We also believe in opportunity—the ability to advance in this society as far as your hard work, ingenuity, determination, and natural skills will take you. Every American deserves his or her fair shake at earning his or her own slice of the American dream.

Lack of opportunity is not only morally wrong, but it is economically stupid. President Clinton often says that "we don't have a person to waste." He's absolutely right. The only way we can compete successfully in the new global economy is to make sure that our best and the brightest have a real chance to work their way to the top.

One answer to this problem lies in the lessons of the original G.I. bill—the most successful student aid system this nation ever created. The Clinton national service initiative is a new kind of G.I. bill—based on the concept that Americans deserve a chance at upward mobility in return for significant service to their country.

It is true that national service is expensive, but it is not as expensive as wasting a life. We now pay for Americans in prison, on welfare, in hospitals with gunshot wounds, and collecting unemployment. The question is whether we continue paying for only hardships, or whether we want to start investing in success.

Not only will national service benefit the individual participants, but it will also provide valuable work to urban, suburban, and rural communities across America. This work—in schools, on public lands, in soup kitchens, on community policing patrols, for example—will also promote opportunity for the citizens served.

Because we believe in opportunity, we believe in national service.

## *Responsibility*

This President and this administration also believe in responsibility. It is truly amazing how some have come to the conclusion that citizens owe nothing, absolutely nothing, to their society. This administration has a very different philosophy. Our philosophy is that it is each American's responsibility to take advantage of this country's opportunities while avoiding its pitfalls. We believe it is this country's responsibility to make higher education available, but the responsibility of students and their families to make sure the students stay in school, study hard, and by serving their community, earn the privilege to attend institutions of higher education.

America's young people don't want handouts and charity, they want a fair opportunity to make it on their own. Young Americans want more responsibility to become full participants in this society, and we agree with that aim.

National service will also promote responsibility at every level of society, because the success of this initiative rests squarely on the shoulders of non-profit agencies, corporations, states, and local community groups. This program will not be run by a large and burdensome Washington bureaucracy; rather it will be administered mostly by committed citizens at the local level. And so, because we believe in responsibility, we believe in national service.

## *How My Department is Planning to Participate*

President Clinton has made it absolutely clear to his cabinet members that he wants every one of us to make national service a top priority.

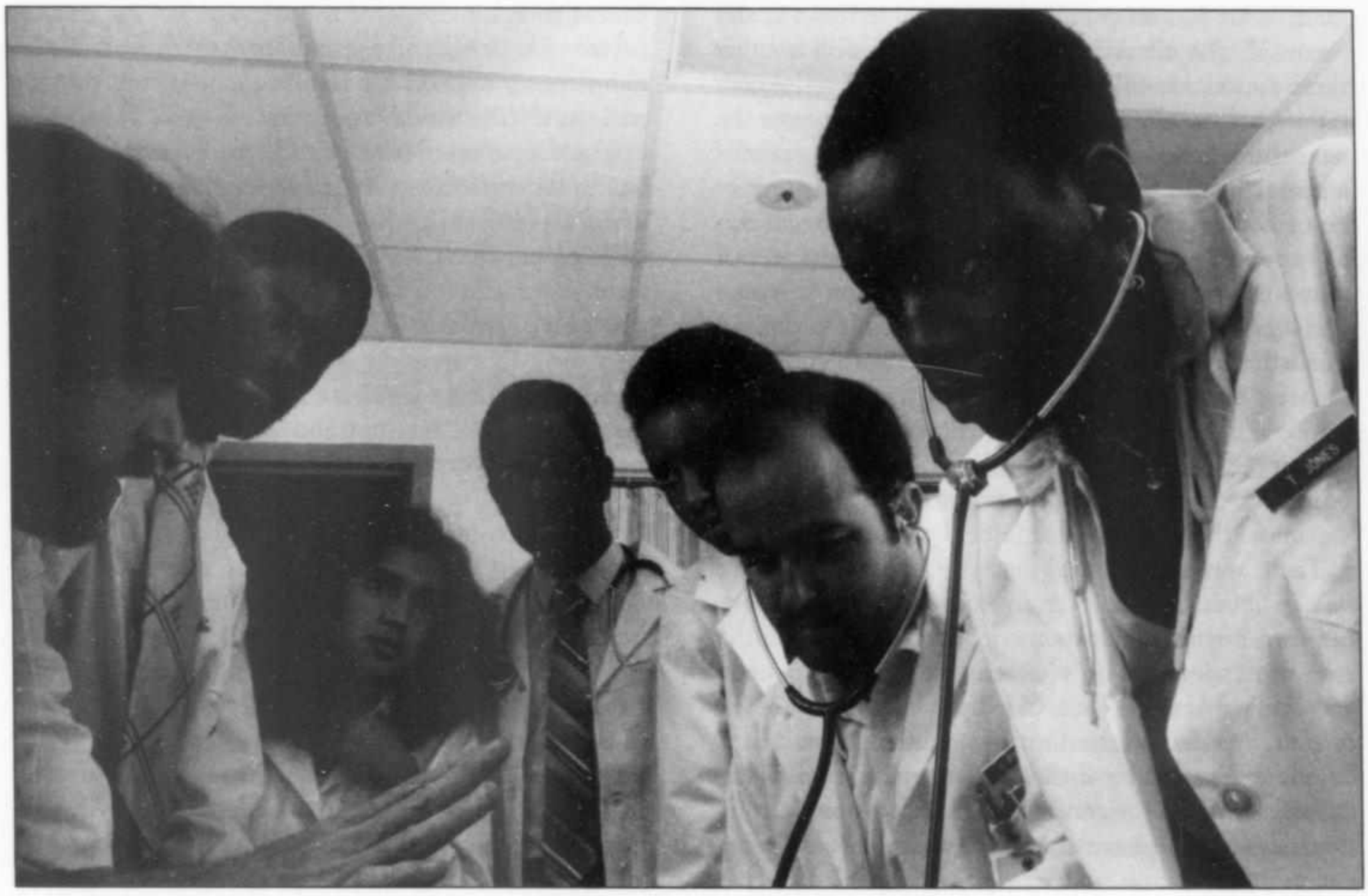
While most of the service participants will be managed by non-profit organizations, private youth corps, and state and local governments, a small percentage may be managed directly by the federal government. Toward that end, I have directed my department to prepare three different proposals for possible incorporation into the President's national service program: a National Empowerment and Anti-Hunger Corps, a National Conservation Corps, and a National Rural Development Corps.

If any or all of these proposals are eventually funded by the new Corporation for National Service, we hope to use our programs as models of reinventing government. They will be managed by existing employees and will be entrepreneurial and non-bureaucratic in design.

*(Continued on p. 96)*

# How to Transform Society
## The Health Care Example

*Amitai Etzioni*



How does one transform society? The present attempt by President Clinton to reform the health-care system illustrates both the short-term opportunities and the long-term challenges.

The narrative starts with the personal, moral commitment of a governor of Arkansas and his wife. Both Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton strongly believe that it is their moral duty to bring health care to America's 37 million uninsured. After Clinton won the presidency, health-care reform was one area that the Clintons resisted politicizing—on this issue, they did not want their promises to fall by the wayside of political compromise, and they remained steadfast to their basic commitment.

Next came the technocrats, consultants, and policy wonks, more than five hundred. They concocted the details of the plan, ignoring interest groups and their entreaties. Their program (very much like Carter's energy packages, concocted in the same offices by similarly isolated experts) became the subject of attack by those seeking to dismantle it before it saw the light of day.

Enter the lobbies. Insurance companies, drug manufacturers, hospital lobbies, and many others each got in their first licks before the President unveiled his plan. Suggestions that the drug companies should give up the huge tax benefits they gain for doing their work in Puerto Rico were largely scrapped. Any discussion of taxing the multi-billion-dollar windfall hospitals expect to gain when they will stop having to provide

*Amitai Etzioni is the founder of the Communitarian movement and the author of* The Spirit of Community: Rights, Responsibilities, and the Communitarian Agenda *(New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1993).*

free care to the poor (but still maintain their tax privileges) has ceased. Large corporations were allowed basically to buy out of the program. And so it went.

Then came Clinton's televised speech before a joint session of Congress and the country to outline his health-care plan. It was framed in traditional terms: a mixture of high doses of service to self-interest and to lobbies, and a small amount of national pride. The main focus was on promising every American "health security." The administration apparently decided that those Americans who are presently covered will accept diminished services and higher costs resulting from the new system, because it relieves an even greater national anxiety: the fear that they might lose their insurance, or be denied coverage in the future. To entice the elderly to support the plan, Clinton offered the prospect of reimbursement for prescription drugs soon to come and long-term care after the year 2000. He promised small business that the government would subsidize the new costs they will incur when they insure their workers. In a nod to the proponents of tort reform, he announced that trial lawyers would be allowed to keep "only" a third of the judgments they gain, the maximum they can hope for under current conditions.

There was a lot of well-placed passion in Clinton's speech about the fate of individuals who must choose between buying medications or food, and for health-care professionals who must choose between patient care and paperwork. He avoided playing to the politics of guilt, on the correct assumption that the country has largely exhausted its willingness to make significant commitments to programs that transfer money from the haves to the have-nots. The traditional liberal themes of doing justice, of attending to the downtrodden, to those on whom society has inflicted much pain and discrimination in the past and whom we have put into dire economic circumstances—the tale of two cities New York Governor Mario Cuomo invoked during his famous speech to the Democratic National Convention—were noticeable in their absence.

But Clinton failed to replace the old politics of guilt by a vision of a new society, just for all—a society in which the focus on well-being (in body and soul) significantly reduces health care costs; a society in which people care more for one another so they can rely less on nursing homes; a society in which grandparents help out their children's children and vice-versa; a society in which pollution, work stress, and handguns (not just semi-automatic weapons among teenagers) are reduced; and a society in which alterative forms of health care play a legitimate role.

With no strong, overarching, positive theme that could mobilize millions into a major commitment to the President's plan, it will now fall prey to the lobbies, as did the BTU/energy tax bill, the economic stimulus package, and national service. It is impossible even to begin to guess what will emerge in the end, but two predictions are safe: The resulting program will produce fewer benefits for the patients than promised initially (especially by stretching them out over future years), increase costs for the average citizen, further fatten the profit of special interest lobbies, and dangerously expand the deficit (i.e., the bill that we and our children will have to pay).

The deeper issue raised by Clinton's handling of the health-care reform issue, however, is what happens when a politician proceeds without having a base or building one, however noble his motives and smart his technocrats. Clinton was elected by a minority of those who voted, and his mandate (such as it was) was on restarting the economy. While there clearly was an urgent, objective need to attend to the health care of the uninsured, it was not and is not the subject of a major social movement. There were no demonstrations in Washington or any place else by the uninsured, or their protectors and allies. Compared to the issues championed by the gay/lesbian movement, the women's movement, or the environmental movement the sad truth is that health care for the uninsured is the subject of moral commitments and policy analyses, but it does not rank high on the agenda of any major organized social-political movement.

The result will soon become evident. The pro-establishment lobbies are well-heeled, organized, and effective. Nothing was done to defang them. They still control large pockets of money that politicians must raise if they seek to run for office or seek re-election. On the other side of the political matrix are the relatively few and weak liberal lobbies (compared to the insurance and pharmaceutical companies, National Rifle Association, and even American Medical Association, et al.). Given the combination of strong anti-Clinton-plan lobbies, weak pro-Clinton lobbies, and no mobilizing, overarching theme that could bring out the citizenry at large, one can predict the sad outcome: An emaciated health-care plan that will do more for the lobbies than for those who need care.

Historically, the only times we have had significant changes in direction that encompassed both basic changes in values and in power relations was when they were supported by a major social movement. There would have been no major desegregation, nor the 1965 Civil Rights Voting Act, and all that followed without Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision, the Freedom

Riders, and the force of the civil rights movement. Women would most likely still be the last to be hired and first to be fired if it was not for the vision of Betty Friedan and feminism's other founding mothers, and above all, the women's movement that followed. And the environment would be in much worse shape if it was not for Rachel Carson, Earth Day, and the ensuing environmental movement.

We now need a social movement that will make shoring up the moral, social, and political foundations of our society its main agenda. Charles Derber, in his response to my exposition on the communitarian position (TIKKUN, September/October 1993), closed by asking how we go about transforming society, a question most important to all politically aware and socially conscious people. Without a strong vision of what a rejuvenated society will look like and the mobilized citizenry to participate in creating it and support the needed political transformations, it is not possible. We may at best get some watered-down reforms, such as Clinton's modest national service program, far less ambitious than his original proposals, more acts like the one that promises ninety days' *unpaid* leave for those that work for corporations that have more than fifty employees (most of which grant such leaves already), and a rather diluted and costly health care reform. We cannot, and should not wish to, count on the moral commitments and fortitude of one couple, even if they occupy the White House, to carry the day for most of us. We all either own up to our part of the societal transformation, or we will share the responsibility for the maintenance of a somewhat reformed status quo. □

# Reconfiguring Health Care

*Ronald A. Carson*

How shall we take the measure of the Clinton health-care reform proposal? By asking two questions: What does it stand for? and, is it workable? Predictably, the preponderance of public attention is being directed toward questions of cost. But we neglect larger considerations of purpose at our peril, because the debate that is heating up is fundamentally an ethical debate. As Harvard medical economist Rashi Fein once sagely observed, "When debates about money displace those concerned with principles, it is the bookkeeper who dominates the discussion. Such debates, with their focus on the 'practical,' tend to ignore the vision of the kind of society and medical care sector we seek." In view of the irreducibly personal nature of health care, the ethical question of what the plan stands for should inform all other discussion. In the push-and-pull of the ensuing months, during the hard bargaining and the posturing that will threaten to dominate discussions of health-care reform, it will be necessary to keep circling back to the question, what is health care for?

The President used his September speech to Congress and the nation unveiling the plan to articulate his answer to this question, asserting that we have an ethical imperative to reform our broken health-care system. That imperative, he said, is animated by the spirit of sick people who cannot afford care, and by the reality that, as a nation, we are impoverishing ourselves to pay for a system that isn't benefitting us as it should. This is moral bedrock, and so far no one, not even the skeptics and critics of the Clinton plan, has seriously challenged it.

It is an auspicious beginning, allowing us to feel as if we might actually dare to hope for a more accessible, more affordable health-care system. What is more, a sense of pride is palpable in the land at the prospect of a president using his office to say what he evidently also personally believes—that we must be secure in our most basic needs, that health security speaks to human misery, and that we share a civic responsibility to look after each other in sickness and distress. It has been awhile since an American president gave voice to such a vision, and it is finding broad resonance. The

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challenge of the months ahead is to involve the populace in shaping that vision and in building the structures of health security.

What sorts of issues should we be paying attention to? We should be asking ourselves and each other what we realistically want from our health-care system. Perhaps we have unwittingly internalized the old Geritol ad: "If you've got your health, you've got just about everything." Certainly, good health enables one to flourish, but good health is not tantamount to flourishing. We should also question the assumption that because insurance companies play so prominent a part in our current health-care arrangements, they should necessarily be players in a reformed system. Maybe, maybe not. It depends on what they have to offer under a system reconfigured along lines of mutual aid.

We should weigh in on the issue of hands-on care versus high-tech treatment. It is reasonable to want both, but in what proportions? Everyone should have access to basic care, but how basic? And under what medical conditions should one be able to call on exotic therapies? Finally, if we intend to take seriously the idea of prevention, we will have to learn to look beyond medical solutions to the social conditions of many of our nation's health-care problems.

• *Medicalization*—One need look back no more than a generation or two to appreciate the astonishing degree to which our lives have become medicalized. Childbirth has become a medical event surrounded by the trappings of technology. Otherwise sensible devices such as ultrasound monitors are used indiscriminately to try to meet the demand for perfect babies and to minimize medical liability.

At the end of life, dying takes place in hospitals designed to be militant in the cure of disease, to get acutely ill patients through a spell of sickness and back into a familiar routine. Instead of rethinking the practice of admitting virtually everyone who is dying to a hospital, we legislate patient self-determination, creating instruments of resistance to medical intrusiveness and try to enforce them in intensive-care units. Routinely bringing our dying loved ones to a hospital is a bad habit that we acquired over the short course of a generation. It can be kicked like any other bad habit, but humane care needs to be available elsewhere. Since the proposed Health Security Act includes expanded coverage for home care and hospice services, we should be inventive in rethinking the uses of these forms of care. For starters, why not consider converting at least some of the nation's excess hospital facilities into hospice units?

The medical appropriation of birth and death is not beyond our control; we bring it on ourselves or assent to it. When there are sound reasons for medically monitored birth or death, hospital care is the clear choice and should be equitably available to everyone who needs it. Where medicine is not needed, we should create alternatives that are closer to home and that, not incidentally, do not cost a fortune.

• *Commodification*—We must become adept at resisting the trend to treat health care as a commodity. This is unlikely to be any easier under managed competition than it is now, as is clear from the corporate mega-mergers among insurance companies and other owners of HMOs occurring in anticipation of reform, all cleverly calibrated to increase market share. It is difficult to know how to tackle this issue, so apparently out of the average citizen's reach are the levers of control. But this much is clear: If the slogan "health security" is to have real substance, it must lead to a policy based on the values of shared need and mutuality.

The libertarian actuarial logic that prevails in the private health insurance industry, according to which individual responsibility and differences between people are accentuated, is inimical to health security. The pinched vision of justice underlying this view of the world holds each of us individually responsible for calculating risk and purchasing protection—in other words, for looking out for Number One. If fate deals us a bad hand, or accident intervenes, and we have miscalculated, that is unfortunate but we are owed nothing by others who have fared better. It's just tough luck. Actuarial logic makes a mockery of the very idea of social insurance. It is a competitive marketing strategy predicated on maximizing the number of healthy policy-holders.

Most Americans are healthy most of the time. Half of us account for only 3 percent of annual health-care costs. The sickest 10 percent account for 72 percent of costs. The problem is that no individual knows what tomorrow will bring by way of illness or injury. That's why societies agree to spread the risk and share its burdens. The Clinton plan recognizes this and would outlaw the pre-existing condition clauses in health insurance contracts as well as "cherry-picking," the practice of skimming off those customers least likely to claim their benefits.

But despite the Clinton plan's goal of removing such ruthless practices from the health-insurance system, its choice of managed competition as the economic engine behind the plan is likely to doom this goal to failure. How can skimming and other inhumane, profit-based practices be controlled if the profit motive continues to drive the system? The theory is that managed

competition will drive down costs by improving administrative efficiencies. But the spoils will continue to go to insurers whose sophistication in calculating risk positions them to corner the healthiest segments of the market. What, under such a regime, is the meaning of health security? As Deborah Stone, professor of law and social policy at Brandeis University, has written, "The politics of health insurance can only be understood as a struggle over the meaning of sickness and whether it should be a condition that automatically generates mutual assistance." For the foreseeable future, we will need to be vigilant advocates in what Stone calls the "struggle for the soul of health insurance."

• *Primary Care*—Under the rubric of "creating a new health work force," the Clinton plan outlines bold steps to restore a reasonable balance between primary- care practitioners and medical specialists. This is an eminently sensible proposal. Its implementation will not be painless, however, and the burden will fall disproportionately on academic medical centers.

The United States has never devised a national health-care work force policy that guides the training and demographic distribution of health-care professionals in response to societal needs. As a consequence, we have long had problems with maldistribution—too few minority physicians, too many practitioners in the more affluent urban and suburban areas, and too few in the inner city and in rural areas. But by far the most serious problem is the skewed mix of primary-care and specialist physicians in our system. In other industrialized countries, the proportion of primary care physicians ranges from 50 percent to 70 percent, whereas in the United States it is 29 percent and declining. The restoration of generalist medicine is a central feature of the Clinton health-care reform plan. With its emphasis on keeping people healthy by providing basic and preventive services, the plan creates a clear mandate to vastly increase the number of practitioners appropriately trained to provide those services. Despite the fact that graduate medical education is substantially supported by public monies to the tune of about six billion dollars annually, it has been left to medical educators to determine the number of residency training positions in various specialties. That practice should change as the federal government begins to use the leverage of public funding of physician education to increase the numbers of primary-care physicians.

Even so, it will take time to restructure the training system. The Clinton proposal would increase the number of primary care residency training positions by approximately 7 percent each year over a five-year period, during which time the number of specialty slots would decline by approximately 10 percent. At this rate it would take until 2040 for the physician work force to reach the 50-percent point. We could dramatically speed up this timetable, however, by retraining practicing specialists to become competent generalists.



Another strategy would be to train more nurse- practitioners, physician assistants, and certified nurse-midwives. As the number of resident physicians in oversupplied medical specialties declines, such nonphysician health-care professionals will be in demand to care for patients in teaching hospitals. This in turn will drive up the cost of care in those institutions, in that resident physicians don't work eight-hour shifts, but have round-the-clock responsibilities. The Clinton plan proposes to solve this problem in the short run by providing transition payments to teaching hospitals. The wisdom, indeed the necessity, of these reforms notwithstanding, considerable dislocations are bound to occur in academic health centers as a result. In the process, Americans will have to decide to what extent they

want their medical needs met by professionals other than doctors.

• *Prevention and Public Health*—In 1979, in one of his last official acts as the Carter administration's secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Joseph Califano, Jr., released Surgeon-General Julius Richmond's report on health promotion and disease prevention, calling it the opening salvo in a second public health revolution. The report, Califano wrote, "represents an emerging consensus among scientists and the health community that the Nation's health strategy must be dramatically recast to emphasize the prevention of disease." This consensus, he concluded, was as important as the 1964 surgeon-general's watershed report on smoking and health.

In retrospect, we can see that the announcement of impending revolution was premature. Nonetheless, Califano's insight was sound. The consensus around the concept of prevention has continued slowly but steadily to mount. In 1990, then-Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan released *Healthy People 2000*, which enumerated broad health goals prominently featuring the reduction of health disparities among Americans and increased access to preventive services for all citizens. This report cataloged some impressive gains since the late 1960s: the dramatic reduction in rates of death from heart disease and stroke, reflecting improvements in the detection and management of high blood pressure; a significant decline in cigarette smoking; and increasing awareness of the relation of diet to cardiovascular disease. Over the same two decades, deaths on the highway declined by nearly 30 percent, reflecting lower rates of alcohol consumption and increased use of seatbelts.

On other fronts, however, there is increased cause for alarm. Of the three leading causes of death in childhood—injuries, cancer, and congenital anomalies—injuries account for the most deaths. The leading cause of injury-related deaths—motor vehicle accidents—is the most amenable to prevention. Other injury-related child deaths—falls, fires, and the like that are more prevalent under conditions of poverty—could also be prevented, although not by medical means. Homicide is the second leading cause of death among young people and the leading cause among young Black men.

President Clinton made an impassioned reference to this phenomenon in his speech, saying that it is unconscionable for us to stand by and permit the steady proliferation of death-dealing weapons in our society. The proposed Health Security Act invites and encourages fresh ideas about how to act upon our outrage over the carnage in a constructive way. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York, for example, has made the altogether sensible suggestion that in view of the fact that Americans own 200 million firearms and that the federal government controls, through licensing, the manufacture of bullets, perhaps the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms should turn its attention to reducing the incidence of *bullet*-related injuries. The analogy to earlier debates about whether automobile safety is an issue of driver behavior or a public-health problem is instructive.

As Mr. Clinton's reference to gun control demonstrates, the idea of prevention has also expanded to encompass societal phenomena that have health consequences and that negatively effect our system of health-care provision. This is all to the good, but not without its own risks. We must be careful not to medicalize social and economic problems, but we must also squarely face the glaring fact that the bearers of gunshot wounds and overdoses, and the victims of violence at home, on the streets, and on the highways who populate hospital emergency rooms, account for an increasing measure of human misery in our society and not incidentally, drive up the costs of health care. The Clinton plan does recognize that we are not taking good enough care of each other and roots the imperative of personal security in an elemental sense of civic decency. It builds on the work of previous administrations, Democratic and Republican alike, and links funding priorities for reform initiatives to health-care goals articulated during the Bush and Carter administrations. This aspect of the plan deserves solid support.

I have discussed some examples of issues that require resolution if health-care reform is to lead to lasting health security. By their nature, such issues do not lend themselves to resolution from on high. It will not do to wait for government solutions; they will not be forthcoming. The Clinton plan challenges us to assume responsibility for our own health, not only as individuals but as citizens, too. It is an invitation to build a health-care partnership between the nation's citizens and their government.

Meaningful health-care reform is a long-term task. The sense of urgency that for now keeps national attention focused on this issue is likely to yield to disillusionment if, in the congressional debates over the coming months, we do not see at least the promise of progress on the two key issues of universal access and cost containment. The generally conciliatory tone of initial political reaction to the President's proposal and the rough similarity between it and Rhode Island Senator John Chafee's counterproposal increase prospects for early agreement on the broad principles

*(Continued on p. 96)*

# Genocide:
## We are Responsible

*Stephen W. Walker*



Here we are, almost fifty years after the Holocaust, approaching the twenty-first century, and we've apparently learned nothing. We call it "ethnic cleansing" because it sounds nicer, but it is genocide. Genocide is taking place again in Europe and we—yes, you and I—are letting it happen. Actually, we're not just letting it happen, we're encouraging it. We're encouraging the war criminals, the butchers, the rapists. We are responsible.

That's why I resigned my position as a specialist on Croatia at the State Department. I could no longer be a part of an administration that is aiding and abetting the Serbs as they try—successfully—to eliminate the non-Serb, primarily Muslim population in Bosnia. The trouble is, I'm still responsible. Being an American makes me responsible. It makes you responsible.

*Stephen W. Walker is a former U.S. diplomat who resigned from the State Department in August over U.S. policy toward Bosnia.*

### *"Ancient Ethnic Hatreds," or Good vs. Evil?*

Some, including the Clinton administration, would have you believe this is a confusing civil war where each group bears a fair share of the blame. They will tell you the war is the result of "ancient ethnic hatreds," that the people who live there are destined and determined to kill each other. If you believe this, we are absolved of any responsibility. But that's not how it is. The Serbs are committing genocide.

It is true that all sides—including the forces of the Bosnian government—have committed atrocities. Bosnian Croat and government forces both have killed innocent civilians and forced large numbers of civilians to abandon their homes and villages. In many cases these have been localized incidents, usually ordered by local commanders. Still, the political leaderships must

be held responsible and should be expected to punish those who commit such atrocities and to use all their influence and control to prevent future atrocities.

The Serbs, however, have waged a systematic, village-by-village campaign to wipe out or force out all non-Serbs in the territories they conquer in order to create a Greater Serbia. It is on a scale that dwarfs Croat and government atrocities combined. It is a grand campaign orchestrated by Serbian leaders in Bosnia and in Serbia itself. It is genocide.

The fighting in central Bosnia—which erupted between the formerly allied Bosnian Croat and government forces into a full-scale conflict this spring—is the direct result of U.S. and E.C. policies. When the United States and its allies clearly opted against helping the Bosnian Government this past May, the government and the Croats realized that each would be left with what they could win militarily. With only 30 or so percent of Bosnia between them and over 60 percent of the population, the pressure to grab territory from the weakest forces—each other—was unavoidable.

## *The U.S. Is Helping the Serbs*

If you push them, senior officials in the administration will tell you that the reality is that the Serbs have won, that the war in Bosnia is hopefully in the "endgame." Well, that's partially true. The Serbs have won—so far. Bosnia, however, is not over. Nor is the broader Balkan conflict, of which Bosnia is just one critical dimension. We are certainly not in the endgame. If we allow events to continue on their present course, the Serbs will continue to slaughter and rape innocent civilians and will eventually wipe the Bosnian state completely off the map. But they won't stop there. Serb leaders will continue to brutally victimize the weak—whether they be Bosnians, Croats, Albanians, Hungarians—in order to convince the Serb people that their vicious leadership is necessary to wipe out these "threats" to the Serbian nation.

The debate over Bosnia and the role of the United States has focused on whether our "national interests" are at risk and whether the United States should intervene militarily. Unfortunately, this debate has ignored a horrible fact—that the U.S. government is in fact encouraging the Serbs and their war of aggression and genocide. We are doing so in two ways.

First, the Clinton administration's public vacillations over Bosnia during the past several months have on several occasions given the Serbs a "green light." One such instance was Secretary of State Warren Christopher's July 21 press conference. The administration had been debating for several weeks what could be done to help ease the suffering in Sarajevo. Yet when asked if the United States would let Sarajevo fall, Christopher stated repeatedly that we were doing all we could consistent with our national interests. The next day the Serbs unleashed the most intense artillery attack of the sixteen-month siege on the capital. All the parties in Bosnia listen carefully to every statement made by senior U.S. officials. These statements have an immediate and direct impact on the ground and at the negotiating table.

Second, the Clinton administration has, since February, supported the Vance-Owen-Stoltenberg negotiations—named after the U.N. and E.C. mediators—that encourage and reward Serbian aggression. The Clinton administration initially criticized the Geneva talks for these very reasons, but decided early on that Bosnia was becoming a distraction and that a more active American role would inevitably lead to our taking on more of the responsibility for finding a just settlement. So instead, we have supported the negotiations, which are based entirely on Serb demands and the facts on the ground—which are determined by Serbian victories against defenseless Bosnians.

## *Clinton's Sham*

While the Serbs have continued their war of aggression against the Bosnian people, we have allowed the arms embargo against the Bosnian government to continue, denying the Bosnians the right to defend themselves—a right guaranteed by the U.N. Charter. We have blamed the Europeans for our own inaction and assured the Bosnian government that if they agree to the present proposal to partition Bosnia into three parts that we will send troops to guarantee the Bosnians get what's coming to them. Yet, if deployed to enforce a partition agreement, U.S. troops would actually be defending Serbian military gains and allowing the Serbs to finish the genocide in the territories they now control. Lucky for us—at least for now—U.S. ground troops will probably never see Bosnian soil or Serbian war criminals. President Clinton is pulling a fast one on the Bosnians. Having promised the troops to police a partition agreement, he is laying the groundwork for Congress to "block" the deployment, much as the Europeans "blocked" our feeble, half-hearted attempt to win support for lifting the arms embargo against Bosnia in May. The result will be the collapse of the negotiations and the inevitable defeat of the Bosnians, who will be left without their homes and their country. The conflict in the Balkans will return to Croatia and will likely

expand to Kosovo, where the Serbs will feel free within their own borders to "ethnically cleanse" Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority. More people will die, but Congress and the Europeans—not President Clinton—will be "responsible."

## *The Case for a U.S. Role*

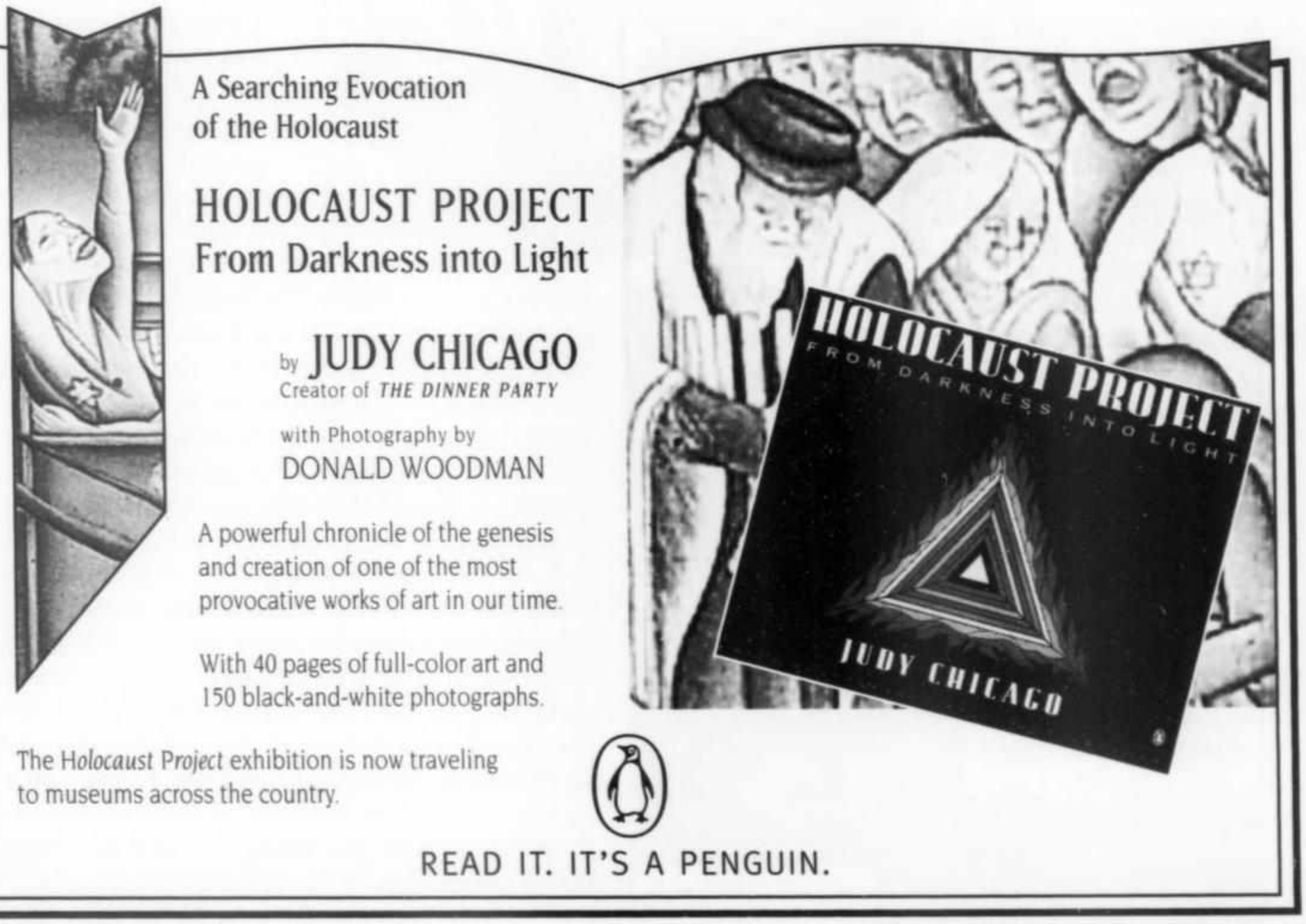
During my eight years as a Foreign Service officer, I considered myself a practical realist. I thought of U.S. foreign policy and national security in very practical terms and thought that our foreign policy should be guided by our national interests, not the other way around. I did, however, recognize that as the world's foremost economic, political, and military power our interests stretched across the globe and that we had more interest than any other country in protecting international peace and stability.

Bosnia has taught me that there should also be a moral content to our foreign policy. After all, a large part of the foundation for our Cold War conflict with communism was based on that system's moral corruptness. We devoted much time, energy, and resources to fight for the rights of the captives of that system. We realized that from a moral and a practical point of view, dictators and their abhorrent practices are inherently threatening, not only to their intended victims but to the health, security, and well-being of the international community as a whole. Failing to resist their aggression not only encourages their own dangerous behavior but also encourages other would-be thugs to use force and "ethnic cleansing" to address their own problems—whether they be in Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, or other parts of the world where our interests lie. That is why "Never again!" was one of the Cold War mottoes for the free and democratic West.

We also have other, practical interests in Bosnia and the Balkans. The threat of continued instability in Europe, greater numbers of refugees flooding into Western Europe, and spillover that could engulf the entire Balkan region—including one or more NATO allies—directly impact on American interests. Western Europe is our most important trading partner, and the stability and prosperity of that region directly affect our own. If the conflict continues and expands—and, until the Serbs are stopped, it will—we will inevitably be faced with having to intervene. Better to pay the piper now.

## *What Can We Do to Help?*

So how do we help the Bosnians without getting

into the kind of bloody quagmire we find ourselves slipping into in Somalia? The answer is one the administration has held since May: It's called "Lift and Strike." The "lift" means lifting the U.N. arms embargo against the Bosnian government so that it can defend itself—a right it has been unjustly denied by the United States and its allies. The "strike" means using U.S. and allied air power to take out the Serbs' supply lines and the artillery sites that shell defenseless Bosnian women and children on a daily basis.

The Bosnians must be allowed to defend themselves—it is their moral and legal right. While their forces have committed atrocities, they have clearly been the primary victim and are threatened with their extinction as a state if they remain defenseless against the Serbs. The fighting in central Bosnia between the government and the Bosnian Croats should be stopped, and we should make any military assistance on our part contingent upon a cease-fire between the former allies, unless the Croats violate such an agreement. There is a wide variety of carrots and sticks at our disposal to compel and encourage Croatian compliance.

If the Bosnians continue to be denied the right to self-defense, then the U.N. Charter provides that the U.N. will defend them. This clearly is not going to happen. The United States and its allies should not send ground troops into Bosnia to take part in the conflict. In fact, it is not even necessary. The Bosnians have the troops, they lack the weapons. In order to level the playing field and prevent the Serbs from seizing one last opportunity before facing a well-armed Bosnian force, we should be prepared—with our allies—to truly enforce the no-fly zone and to use our air power to silence the cowardly Serb artillery and cut off Serb supply lines. We owe this much to the Bosnians, and the risk would be minimal.

The results of such action would be both immediate and dramatic—on the ground and at the negotiating table. The Serbs have repeatedly backed-down when faced with even the remote possibility of Western intervention. They have waged a cowardly war of aggression, preying on helpless civilians, shelling a town from afar until most everyone is dead or has fled. When the United States and its allies considered adopting the lift and strike approach in May, the Serbs stopped dead in their tracks and signed on to the Vance-Owen Peace Plan. When the threat of intervention evaporated, the Serbs rejected Vance-Owen and resumed their attacks.

If we then played an honorable role by helping the Bosnians defend themselves at the negotiating table—rather than helping the Serbs as we now do—the result would be a negotiated settlement that the three parties freely agreed to and would stand a better chance than does the present partition plan of bringing peace, stability, and justice to the victims of Bosnia.

## *The Only Path to Take*

Clearly, we must abandon our policy that rewards the Serbs and threatens the Bosnians with complete and total defeat. We must begin to play a more honorable and sensible role in this tragedy. The course of action I have laid out is the only honorable and sensible course to take. It has the best chance for succeeding and does not require the use of U.S. ground troops. Regardless of its results, it also is the only moral course to take, allowing the Bosnian people to defend themselves against aggression and genocide.

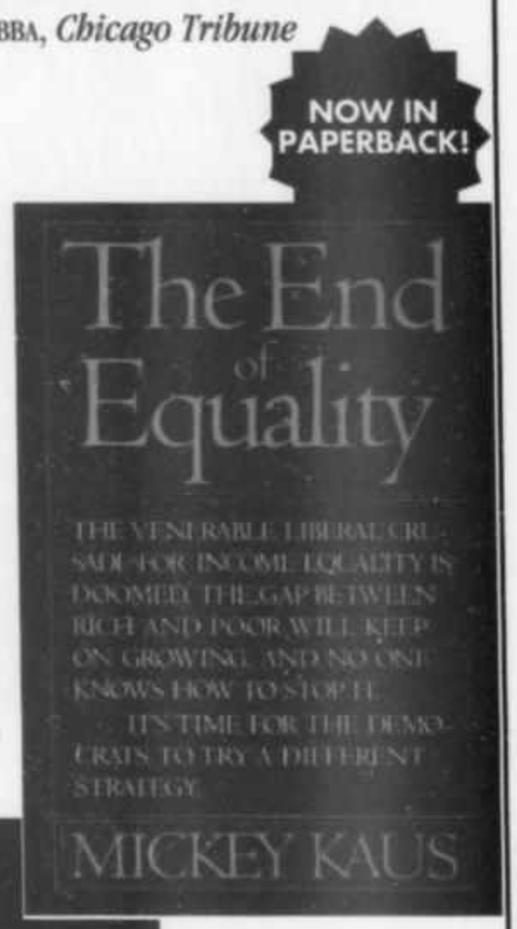
I, for one, am not content to passively accept the guilt of our unconscionable role in the Bosnian tragedy. I could not be a part of it, so I gave up my career as an American diplomat. For me, it was the only path to take. Some remark at the personal sacrifice I made for my principles. I marvel at the sacrifices the Bosnian people endure daily and their ability to somehow continue to resist the Serbs and their accomplices—including you and me. After all, we are responsible. □


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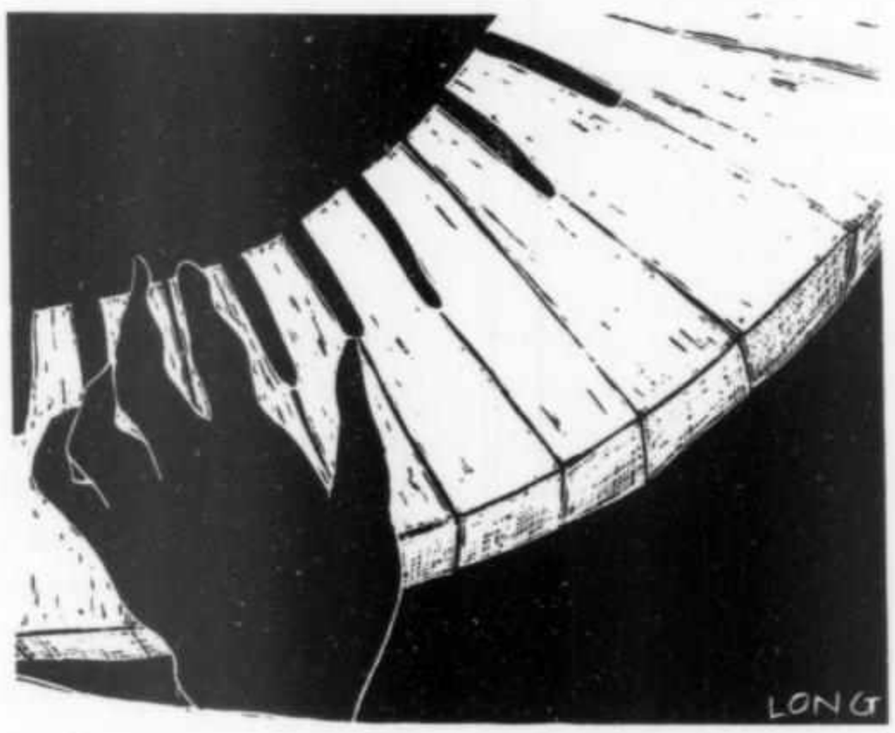



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# The End

*Ida Fink*

They were still standing on the balcony, although the night was already far advanced and there were not many hours left until dawn. Down below lay the dark empty street; the trees in the square looked like black tousled heads. It was quiet again, too quiet after what had happened. From time to time you could hear the distant sounds of a late trolley in the city center, or a car passing quietly. It was a steamy night, one of those summer nights when not a single leaf trembles, and the asphalt, overheated during the day, exudes a vaporous heat.




He slid his hand along the iron railing of the balcony and touched the girl's hand. It was cold, the clenched fingers defending the palm.

"You see," he said. "It was nothing."

She didn't look at him. She was looking over the roofs of the city, into the thick darkness, but she sensed that he, too, was straining to listen. He said it was nothing and yet he was listening.

"Don't be afraid, we can go to sleep."

And again he repeated, "It was nothing."

"I'm not afraid," she replied out loud, angrily; her words dropped onto the pavement like the patter of rapid footsteps.

"And I'm not a child. Don't you treat me like a baby. And don't lie to me. I can see that you're listening, too."

"But you really are a child," he laughed, "my beloved little child..."

"Why are you provoking me? And anyway..." She broke off in mid-sentence.

A noise reached them, distant at first, then already clear and close by. But it was just a truck.

"Do you remember when it started?" she asked, after the silence had returned. She had a clear, high-pitched voice. The boy shut his eyes and thought, I love her, I don't want her to be afraid.

"Tell me," she listened, "do you remember?"

"I remember. I could even sing that moment for you, only you know what a voice I have."

"Don't joke around now. This is an important night."

He put his arm around her and felt her trembling. "Darling, the night is important because it's ours..."

In the darkness he caught her angry look. She didn't want jokes, and rejected tenderness.

"I remember," he agreed hastily and in an instant the melody of that moment resounded in him.

He remembered it in the greatest detail: The strings were introducing the piano passage, preparing the way for the soloist. They were playing the first measures of the larghetto, which he liked so much. That was when he noticed a faint buzzing sound coming from the direction of the city. Something like a swarm of locusts approaching in the distance. Maybe not even locusts, but simply the dense tremolo of the strings, rising to a forte, closer and closer, foretelling the storm. The orchestra, which had again taken up the piano's theme, was speaking in a muted voice, and then it was as if a wind had blown across the audience—everyone turned in the direction of the now loud and brutal wave of rumbling. He caught the pianist's moment of hesitation, observed his fingers attacking the mute

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*Ida Fink is the author of* The Journey *and* A Scrap of Time *which won the 1985 Anne Frank Prize for Literature. She lives and works in Israel.*




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keyboard. Neither the solo instrument nor the full orchestra could be heard. The rumbling of tanks, the crunching of caterpillar treads, thundered down the street that ran alongside the park. The storm crested, subsided, passed. Again there was silence and the full whisper of the piano reached the last rows where they were sitting.

"I remember," he said again. "What an idea, to organize a concert in a park! What stupidity. . ."

"Piotr," the girl whispered. She always called him Piotrus and never used his formal name. "Piotr, think about it. . .three months of happiness. . .so little. . ."

For a moment he didn't understand that she was speaking about their own happiness. When he understood and wanted to respond the words stuck in his throat.

"And you keep repeating, that it's nothing! Why? Do you want to hide your head in the sand? All week long people have been asking each other, will it happen? Everyone knows that it will, that it's already very close. . ."

He managed to remain calm. "You're speaking nonsense, child, you're upset. Look, the whole city is sleeping, all the lights are out. This sleeping city is the best proof that nothing has happened. . ."

As if to spite him the darkness resounded with dull thuds. They raised their heads and listened. It was the same ominous music that had so forcefully overwhelmed the Chopin in the park that night. The artillery was riding down the city streets. Lights flashed on, voices could be heard at the windows. The girl looked into the boy's eyes.

"Let's go," she said.

She went inside the room and carefully locked the doors to the balcony, as if they could protect them from all the evil happenings of this night.

"Do you remember when I came here for the first time?" she asked, and stood still in the middle of the room, looking around. Piotr felt a chill run through his body. Was she unconsciously repeating that night? Then, too, she had run into the room with her rapid little steps, stopped still, looked at all four corners. . .

"Do you remember? It was March, a wet March, the snow was already melting. Everything you were painting then was green and your room was like a grassy field. . ."

She was already remembering! She was already returning to the past! He wanted to tell her, don't say it was, don't say you *were* painting. Say it *is*, you *are* painting.

"And you were playing Bach," he said.

"And I was playing Bach," she repeated. And added,

*(Continued on p. 95)*

CURRENT DEBATE

# A "Conservative's" View of the Politics of Meaning

*A. Lawrence Chickering*

The quest for a "politics of meaning" has arisen in response to the collapse of shared values and the resulting alienation in modern societies. Michael Lerner and TIKKUN deserve great credit for inventing the phrase, which has put concern about values on the political map. The issue is so important, and the hour so late to consider it seriously, that the more people of various political leanings who can be recruited to debate it the better. If the politics of meaning becomes known as the exclusive preserve of one political camp or the other, that will foreclose participation to many who have the potential to make important contributions to the dialogue.

While some people on the political Left may believe that concern about the decline of values is unique to them, it is not. I have a reputation as a conservative writer and founder of a conservative think tank. Although there is no well-developed conservative view of the politics of meaning, I believe conservatives have produced some of the best thinking in identifying and analyzing it—especially the problems associated with the value-neutrality of competitive markets. I hope other conservatives can be encouraged to join the dialogue and contribute their ideas.

It is not surprising that the September/October 1993 issue of TIKKUN, focusing on the politics of meaning, made no mention of conservative thinkers' perspectives. We take conflict between Left and Right so much for granted that neither side thinks it has anything in common with the other, or anything it can *learn* from the other. This attitude comes from each side's belief that it knows everything that can be known, and that its position wins 100-0 over any other. Under the circumstances, what reason would either have to listen to the other? What's to listen to?

I am convinced, however, that the search for a politics of meaning can only succeed if it finds a way out of the sterile Left-Right impasse that contaminates and paralyzes our politics. The two sides have far more in common than they realize.

First, let us clarify what conservatives do *not* believe. Although TIKKUN has argued that the conservative politics of meaning celebrates a "competitive marketplace, selfishness, and materialism," I do not know of any serious conservative whose idea of meaning has anything to do with selfishness or materialism. (The issue of competitive markets is more complicated, and I will take it up in a moment.) Concern about the decline of shared non-materialistic values is strong not only among traditional religious conservatives and neo-conservatives, but even among some libertarian conservatives. Concern about values and capitalism's indifference to them explains why Irving Kristol, in his book *Two Cheers for Capitalism*, gives capitalism only two cheers. Perhaps the most powerful conservative critique of capitalism, Joseph Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, written fifty years ago, predicted capitalism's demise for the same reason. And concern about values was also the central theme of Allan Bloom's book, *The Closing of the American Mind*. On the libertarian side, Milton Friedman has often said that the greatest threat to freedom in the world today is the decline of both personal and social responsibility.

Finally, even though Ayn Rand went out of her way to celebrate "selfishness," she used this term in a rather idiosyncratic way; she was not referring to materialism. In her biography of Rand, Barbara Brandon provides some clues about what Rand meant in an anecdote she tells about Rand when she was still a young girl in St. Petersburg. It seems that a classmate tried very hard to befriend her; and when Rand tried to find out what was important to her, the girl revealed that the only thing she cared about was wealth. Rand avoided her after that, mystified about how someone could be so utterly lacking a sense of self. In the same spirit, it is

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also important to recall that Rand's heroes, such as Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead*, are all idealists. While I would not want readers to take this as an endorsement of Rand's concept of self—I think it was in fact seriously flawed—the charge that she lionized materialism is a bum rap.

*If you look across the world, how well can you predict from a society's economic system the degree of selfishness and materialism it manifests? The answer is: not at all.*

Even though conservatives as well as liberals blame competitive markets for encouraging materialism and destroying values, I believe that any effort to explain the breakdown of values in terms of systems—in terms of economic, social, or political structures—will fail. Blaming the market—a system of free exchange—for materialism is like blaming liquor stores for alcoholism. Consider the following test: If you look across the world, how well can you predict from a society's economic system the degree of selfishness and materialism it manifests?

The answer is: not at all. The former Marxist countries showed rather dramatically that socialist economies and the commitment to "equality" provided no protection against materialism or selfishness. One answer to this might be that none of the so-called Marxist countries were really Marxist. They were really monopoly capitalist countries, which gave all the property rights to the ruling class and concealed the fact under Marxist rhetoric. Such an argument is in the spirit of disappointment expressed by many Marxists in the countries that seem to embrace their ideas. The argument appears to say—as a public choice theorist might—that regardless of the outward appearance of economic structures, all countries are really run by competitive markets. How might one imagine that a country could break out and become truly Marxist? The answer is: by achieving non-materialist, non-selfish values. And at that point it would not really matter whether the economy was outwardly capitalist or Marxist. This line of argument only underscores the need for a politics of meaning, focusing on the primacy of values over systems. Moreover, the tendency to see only selfishness and materialism in market exchanges conceals the enormous degree of cooperation that occurs with free, voluntary exchanges, which occur because both parties wind up better off. Comparing behavior in the Marxist countries is again instructive.

If markets are not inherently materialistic, what can we say about them? Hillary Rodham Clinton delineated the market's principal feature well when she said in her speech on the politics of meaning last April in Austin that, "The market knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing." The market knows the price of heroin, but not whether it is good for people. This is not a statement about materialism. It is a statement that the market defines value only as people see it. As a system of free exchange, it holds no value higher than any other—*including materialism*. The market is about freedom—the freedom to exchange what people value, whether material or not. This suggests why Milton Friedman regards the Israeli *kibbutzim* as one of the market's triumphs—because participation in them is *freely chosen*.

While some libertarian conservatives believe that freedom is natural and good and will produce a meaningful politics, they are very few. The truth is that most libertarians do not know how to talk about values other than to acknowledge their abstract importance. Thus, they are unlikely to make major contributions to resolving the issues raised by the politics of meaning.

On the other side, traditional conservatives appeal to tradition as the answer to the fostering of values of traditional family and religion. The left-liberal critique of the traditional family, on the other hand, often labels it oppressive and emphasizes the legitimacy of other family forms. I believe that the real issue between the Left and the traditionalist Right is the degree of volition necessary to make relationships meaningful. Those on the Left regard the forms of traditional families and religion as coercive and sustained by preconscious habit. Although many people in industrialized societies still live largely by tradition, the numbers of people who do so unself-consciously are declining.

## *The Unsolved Puzzle of Both Left and Right*

Political debate in America has become so steeped in dogmatism on both sides of the ideological divide that it obscures the issues that are most interesting for the politics of meaning, issues on which both sides feel great uncertainty.

The greatest uncertainty Left and Right share is how to integrate the two sets of values that virtually all people hold dear. These are freedom, individualism,

and rights on the one hand, and on the other, order, justice, community, and virtue—a sense of "connectedness," as one of the participants in the September/October 1993 TIKKUN Roundtable expressed it.

Although most of TIKKUN's discussion of the politics of meaning focuses on the caring/obligation side of the problem, the freedom/rights side of the equation is where the real dilemma of meaning lies. As modern people, we insist on being free *from* traditional obligations—for what? Just to be unconnected and separate? Not for healthy people, people who need meaning in their lives. They want freedom from tradition in order to make deliberate, volitional connections rather than those based on prescribed patterns of relationship. The dilemma for a society, or for any social institution, is to communicate a vision of connection and obligation that will stimulate voluntary commitment. That is the heart of the search for a politics of meaning, and most of the dialogue should focus on it.

We want and need both sets of values because they are complementary. Each is incomplete without the other, for freedom without order (community) is license or greed, and order without freedom is authoritarianism. Yet neither side knows how to achieve this integration, which is essential to the very coherence of our political discourse. This incapacity explains why it is so difficult to say just what conservatives and liberals believe. Unable to integrate these goals into a coherent worldview, both sides are tormented by split personalities that make serious arguments difficult and effective government virtually impossible.

In one "conservative" camp, for example, there are freedom conservatives, such as Milton Friedman, who are concerned most with individualism, freedom, and competitive markets. They oppose government interference in individual lives, whether in the military draft, or drug policy. Order conservatives, on the other hand, believe the opposite. They emphasize duty, order, and religious faith. They support the draft and current drug policy, and they are often suspicious of the market. This second group includes people ranging from Bill Bennett to Ross Perot to—in less sophisticated form—the Moral Majority.

Liberals are just as confused. How can you understand a word that includes both the mainstream Democratic Party, dominated by order liberals who seek to use the government to work for social justice, and a freedom liberal like Oliver Stone, whose whole career as a movie director is devoted to encouraging people to distrust the government? Liberals include both anarchists and the counter-culture, who are fiercely individualistic and opposed to all governmental interference in individual life, and socialists, whose passion is to use the government to force people to be good and society to be just.

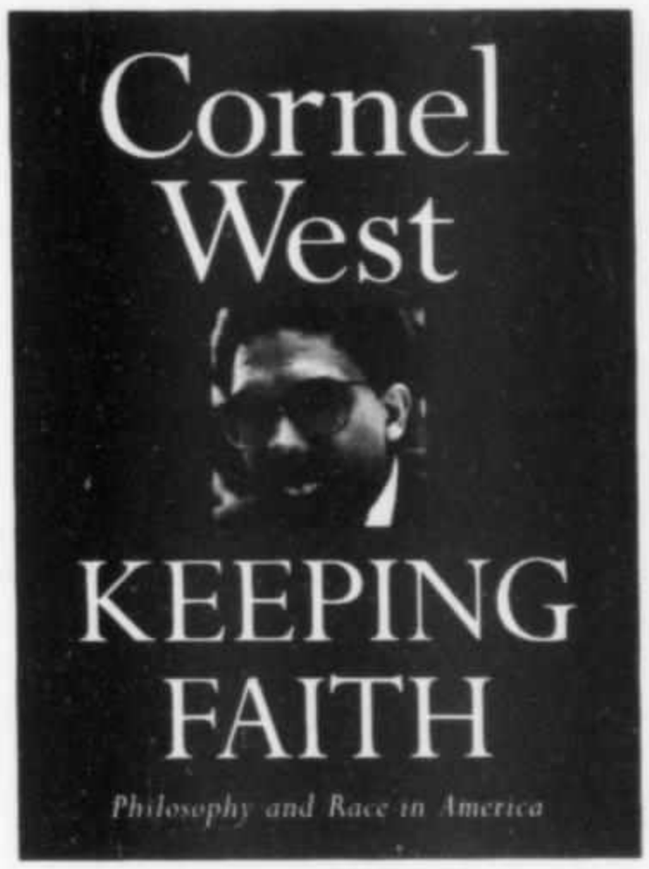
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*In office, conservatives do not know how to push, as President Reagan did, for free markets without destroying responsibility and obligation; and liberals do not know how to promote justice without imposing it by government fiat.*

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In office, conservatives do not know how to push, as President Reagan did, for free markets without destroying responsibility and obligation, producing accusations of a decade of greed; and liberals do not know how to promote justice without imposing it by government fiat. Both sides are defensive about their

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incapacity. Conservatives deny any decade of greed; yet they despair about a society in which individualism and rights are crowding out all sense of personal and social responsibility. When liberals try to impose responsibility—for instance by increasing taxes or regulation—and it drives people underground, they say we aren't trying hard enough and we must redouble the effort.

I believe that conservatives and liberals share a mechanistic, Newtonian worldview that traces everything of significance in political life to the central government. This leads both sides to a preoccupation with perfecting the government as their only political aspiration. Although they have different ideas about how to do this, both conservatives and liberals believe when we get the federal government just right—the right size, large or small, doing just the right things—we will be home, and political alienation will end. Bill Clinton believes this, and so did George Bush before him. I think that one great service the politics of meaning could perform would be to expose this belief as trivial and absurd. If anything, it is closer to the truth to say that this very belief, held by all major political groups, is itself the cause of our political crisis and the alienation that continues to grow. The belief that only activities inside the Beltway matter underlies the relentless movement of power and authority away from people toward Washington. How can anyone be surprised that people are alienated and angry?

The belief that political life begins and ends inside the Beltway could only be true if society were like a machine, with all of its lesser parts hooked up to the super machine on the Potomac. The view is flawed because it asks far more than governments can do and leaves no room for citizens working cooperatively in local communities for a better life. Yet even though it is flawed, the view has great appeal because it holds out the promise that we can have a good society on the cheap. The key turns out to be the almighty dollar: Liberals say we can have a good society if conservatives will only be more generous and be willing to pay for it; conservatives say we can have it if liberals will stop trying to buy it. Although there is certainly a money cost in building a politics of meaning, money is neither the only ingredient nor the most important one.

Among the other ingredients, two stand out: institutions and values; they represent the real content of the politics of meaning. The first is comprised of the institutions that will empower the disadvantaged—actually help them gain control over their own destinies and help them lead productive and happy lives.

## *Building Institutions*

The great dilemma of institution-building is how to decentralize while ensuring that the disadvantaged get the kind of assistance they need to share the benefits of decentralization. The answer requires borrowing from the best of both Left and Right: the Right's belief in self-reliance with the Left's compassion and caring; the Right's belief in decentralization with the Left's concern about the disadvantaged.

What institutions would combine all of these qualities? The answer is self-governing schools, housing, local community organizations, drug rehab programs, and all other institutions that substantially affect the lives of disadvantaged people. What would such self-governing institutions have in common? In spirit, they would reject system-blame, and would be organized with the belief that with even minimal help—if given in the right way—the poor can become self-governing and independent. They would be operated to allow the people affected by the programs to control and manage them while insuring the material and non-material assistance to guarantee successful operation.

Although some of the programs that are operating successfully are in their infancy and need additional help, there are many models. In education, we can look to Harlem District 4 in New York City. Before 1974, it was an enormous, bureaucratic and centrally managed district, unresponsive to the diverse talents of kids, and with no parent involvement or interest. It ranked last in New York's thirty-two school districts and had a graduation rate of less than 50 percent. In 1974, the district was broken up into a cluster of independent schools offering a diverse menu of options for the diverse group of kids who lived in that area. Schools therefore became responsive; parents became involved, achievement soared, graduation rates exceeded 90 percent, and most signs of inner-city dysfunction disappeared.

In drug rehabilitation, the Delancey Street Foundation in San Francisco has become a model in that kind of activity, and imitators are appearing in many parts of the country. The program, which is now more than twenty years old, operates on a voluntary model of self-governance. Participants are all former drug addicts and convicted criminals—the groups that are considered beyond rehabilitation by penal authorities and much of the public. Participants live in a community whose rules are self-determined and self-enforcing. There is absolute equality among the participants, who can live in the community for up to four years, at which point they must leave and go into

the larger community. The program is celebrated by everyone who knows about it, with both "conservatives" and "liberals" boasting that it represents the best of their philosophies.

Hernando de Soto in Peru has also developed a number of programs based on the same principles of self-governance aimed at the poor in his native Peru. His program has been endorsed across the political spectrum, from Marxist to conservative, in that country.

Perhaps the most famous example is the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, which lends only to the poorest people in the country (those whose annual income is substantially lower than Bengladesh's per-capita average of approximately $170 per year), after organizing them into small self-governing units. These units are really mini-communities that support and reinforce potential borrowers, for example, helping them to develop ideas to create businesses and devising plans for repayment of the loans. Each group meets once a week, to provide support to the new business owners. Loan repayments (averaging about $70) must begin one week after the receipt of the loan. The moment of empowerment or transformation comes when a borrower understands and experiences a real sense of control over his or her own life. That moment comes, according to bank personnel, not when the impoverished borrowers receive a loan, but when they make their first payment to repay it. That lesson underscores the importance of self-governance to any successful social-service program, and its implications overwhelm the premises on which most public assistance programs are now operated in this country. In the language of meaning, Grameen Bank has found an essential key to empowerment and meaning for its lenders.

What lessons arise for conservatives and liberals, trying to create a meaningful politics? Integrating freedom and order is possible only at the local level. Such integration can only come from conservatives living the order and responsibility they insist is part of their vision of freedom. They should leave Washington and work to build self-governing communities especially among the disadvantaged. Only then will liberals trust that conservative freedom can benefit all citizens.

Liberals can realize the integration in the same way, by leaving Washington and living the freedom that they insist is part of their vision of order—as well as living their commitment to responsibility and justice. They should work on the local level to liberate the disadvantaged from the dependency encouraged by programs that leave no room for self-reliance. Thus, they can show the trust and belief in disadvantaged people that is essential to free them to control their own lives.

Beyond institutions, we must explore problems of underlying values both to improve our understanding of the decline of values theoretically and to make more concrete our responses to the decline.

## *The Problem of Values*

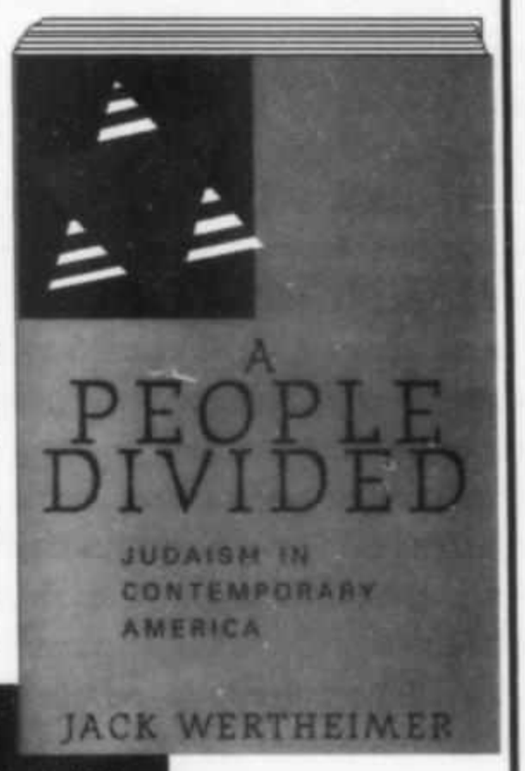
The decline of values is related to the decline of tradition. The loss of tradition has left us with no way to talk about obligations, community, and meaning. Everyone is uncomfortable with everyone else's formulation of these issues. So everyone jeers—at Hillary Rodham Clinton, at Michael Lerner, at Allan Bloom—for psychobabble, for elitism, in the end for just not saying it right. They have been pilloried for raising difficult questions about the indifference to values of both political liberalism and the economic market that many people worry about privately if not publicly.

There can be no dialogue on the politics of meaning until we acknowledge that it is legitimate to attempt simultaneously to talk about these issues while developing a language in which to do so. Why is there no language? The reason inheres in the dilemma of trying to integrate freedom and order: Because integration


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depends on propounding a vision of order and meaning to which people will voluntarily commit themselves. The difficulty arises because people who demand the freedom to control their own lives—to find their own way—legitimately fear that those who have a vision of meaning will seek to impose it on others.

The dilemma of values recalls the dilemma of materialism and growing preoccupation with self. The subject is so large that it would be absurd for me to pretend that I can more than mention some issues and questions that need attention:

• To explore possible non-mechanistic, non-system blaming analyses of the value crisis, I think a good starting place might be to look at the degree of individualism in different cultures. This will provide a far better predictor of materialism than political or economic system. Asian countries, where individualism is weak, seem thereby less materialistic than Western countries—more attentive to values beyond the self. (While Japan may seem to be an exception, it is not. Despite that country's material success, the Japanese maintain a strong Japanese sense of obligation to family and to the corporation in the work world, cultural tendencies that derive from the nonindividualist concepts of self in Asia.) The same is true in all more traditional cultures. However, all countries are becoming more individualistic—in Asia, Africa, Europe, everywhere—and everywhere this is leading to a decline of authority and values based on tradition.

The decline of traditional values is having the effect of pushing them toward materialism. The more materialistic and self-seeking a culture, the more corrupt both its government and its private market become.

• To understand the advance of individualism requires the willingness to look at the advancing consciousness of self in human history. While the mention of these words may provoke accusations of foggy New Ageism, since Hegel advancing consciousness of self has exerted a strong pull on how we view the world both philosophically and in simple common sense. Moreover, the willingness to explore the implications and consequences of advancing subjective consciousness and the dilemma of people as subjects quickly dissipates the epistemological chasm that currently separates public from private reality—an enormous consequence.

• If the value problem is associated with advancing consciousness of self and psychological individualism, one cannot avoid the conclusion that the value problem is most pronounced in intellectuals and artists, whose consciousness of self is most advanced—thus pushing them further from tradition than most other people. But the currency of their 'materialism' is not money, which they regard as a low-order form of external reward. The principal currency for which they long is *recognition*—fame.

TIKKUN has agonized about the cynicism in the media toward the politics of meaning. It is especially true among Washington, D.C.'s insiders, who have difficulty imagining higher motives; for many, money-grubbing and prestige-grubbing is all there is. They are talking about themselves—people see in others what they see in themselves, as Jung observed. Their own values are the principal source of their cynicism.

What values stand out among those most significant in the dilemma we face? One crucial value is social trust, for its decline encourages every political interest group to think only about its own short-term advantage. This is also an artifact, in my view, of advancing individualism.

Another important value is the valuation of rewards. I have already mentioned intellectuals' own place in this dilemma, which may have extraordinary consequences for many social problems, such as homelessness. For the more external rewards are regarded as measures of a successful life—and I think our preoccupation with them is growing—the more materialistic a society is, the more people who end up at the bottom will feel their lives are failed and without meaning. This could well be a major cause of homelessness in our society, and no public policy can do a thing about it. We do not, at present, even have a language to discuss the problem.

In the Roundtable in the September/October issue of TIKKUN, Michael Sandel objected to appeals to psychology in constructing a viable politics. While I sympathize with him, I do not see how it is possible to explore seriously the modern preoccupation with self without considering issues and arguments normally associated with psychology.

By now, it should be clear why I put quotation marks around the word "conservative" in the title of this article. Although some conservatives have expressed discomfort with the ideas I have expressed here, I have found that most people who consider themselves conservative agree with most of them. The quotation marks are nevertheless necessary because I cannot find in this approach anything distinctly "conservative" or "liberal."

I see a broad range of people worrying about the same issues. In addition to Hilary Rodham Clinton and Michael Lerner, I have mentioned Irving Kristol, Allan Bloom, and Milton Friedman, who have stated in various ways concerns related to the politics of meaning. I think it is time the debate was seriously joined. The future of our free institutions depends on it. □

CURRENT DEBATE

# "The Politics of Meaning" and the Meaning of Work:

## A Conservative's Response

*Marshall J. Breger*

When it comes right down to it, who can argue with the "politics of meaning"? Conservatives such as Bill Bennett have underscored the cultural critique of modern politics, and Irving Kristol put it pithily in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article: "A conservative welfare state should express conservative moral values just as a liberal welfare state tries to impose liberal moral values upon us."

In that sense, it is clear that both left-oriented critics such as Michael Lerner, and neo-cons, including the *Commentary* crowd, believe meaning to be associated with the *polis*, and civic virtue to be vital to a society's long-term well being. But even in our media age, the notion that political debate and political activity is at the core of our existential being remains a matter of some dispute.

I take Michael Lerner as proffering something more serious than the notion that politics should be about caring—a view attributed to him by many, if not most, of the talking heads for whom the phrase "politics of meaning" has become the occasion for jocular caricature. I take him, instead, to suggest that man finds meaning, and indeed, being from the political life. And that's a different kettle of fish altogether.

Why should politics be the source of meaning anyway? One could well argue that meaning should come from family, from religion, from friendship. Baptist tradition in this country (certainly pre-Jerry Falwell) held that politics was an activity you should render solely unto Caesar, and certainly *not* an activity worthy of investing with meaning. Similarly, when E.M. Forster placed friendship over patriotism, he was taking a position on the "meaning" he vested in politics as compared to personal relationships.

There is much to be said for this anti-political posture. To some extent, this was the view at the end of the nineteenth century of American WASPs, who saw politics as the arena in which the lower classes (be they Irish or Jew) raised themselves up. Much of Henry Adams's disgust with late nineteenth-century America was based on the view that the values of civic virtue, so nobly associated in history with his presidential ancestors, were dissipated by the coarseness of the politics of his day. On this model, politics is not for gentlemen and, in many cities (the Philadelphia described by E. Digby Baltzell, for example), the WASP aristocracy retreated from politics as unworthy of meaning.

The notion that man finds his identity in the *polis* is not a new one. Many of the ancient Greeks hewed to this view, as did Rousseau who made use of it in developing his notion of *volonté générale* (general will). Whatever its initial attraction—and there clearly is much appeal in the notion of citizens molding their fate in the public arena—we must be chary of its consequences. For if we look exclusively, or even primarily to politics to find meaning in life, we are likely to gravitate toward the most natural expression of political activity—the state. And the dangers of viewing the state as the source of meaning should be clear to any student of history from the French Revolution onward.

History is replete with thinkers who see man as a political animal and who therefore politicize every aspect of human life. Lerner's twist is to politicize the workplace. He takes the position that the meaning human beings bring to their political life is wrested from their work experience. I have no doubt that his experiences as a psychotherapist at the Institute of Labor and Mental Health gave him intense and undoubtedly painful insight into the extent to which so many working people, and indeed many middle-class people—to borrow from Thoreau—"lead lives of quiet desperation." And as Lerner puts it, they "continue to be in deep pain in their daily lives." This does not, however, explain why the way to calm that desperation and ameliorate that pain is through the workplace.

It is, I think, no mystery why Lerner finds work to be at the core of search for meaning. His is a kind of

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desiccated Marxism redolent of the *1848 Manuscripts*. He can no longer believe in "the dictatorship of the proletariat"; as he examines recent events in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, his own eyes forbid it. Indeed, in a 1991 TIKKUN article, he assures readers that he "has no desire to leave economic decisions in the hands of large bureaucracies." Thus he states, "we have seen the disastrous results of this kind of centralization in the former Soviet bloc, and even in Western European countries." Shaking loose from state socialism and economic determinism, Lerner still remains unable to understand the extent to which it is Marxist categories that focus him on the world of work as his source for meaning.

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*In a rootless society where there is no sense of time and place, it is only by your job that strangers can know who you are and whether you count.*

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In contrast, consider, for example, Judaism. To the traditional Jew, work is *parnassa*—a means of making a living. No more, no less. Although the Gemara states "Great is labor for it honors the worker" (*Nedarim* 49b), and there are some sources that imply that work as the mastery of nature gives man dignity, there is a strong view as well in the sources that labor is the curse of man, resulting from Adam's sin in the Garden of Eden. Thus, while it is considered religiously appropriate to have a trade (and indeed, work serves to defeat one of the rabbis' clear bugaboos, idleness), the traditional Jew would never invest significant meaning in his job. Instead, significant meaning comes from activities completely outside of work: religious study, charitable endeavors, and (perhaps most important) family life. The relevant question about a job was whether it provides enough to support one's family and enables time to study. One was not, therefore, defined by one's job. Indeed, around the table of learning, accountant, manufacturer, tradesman, and tailor were equal seekers after meaning.

Indeed, it is largely among American academics and intellectuals that occupation has become the main, if not sole, determinant of one's status. In a rootless society where there is no sense of time and place, it is only by your job that strangers can know who you are and—most important for an American academic—whether you count.

I have no doubt that for most people work is unfulfilling; so is leisure for some, or family life for others. Why does Lerner believe that the only place to find meaning is through one's work? I recently left government service, where I held a series of extraordinarily responsible and fulfilling jobs. As one friend insightfully pointed out as I conjectured what to do next, now I would have to find other parts of life in which to find meaning—family, friends, religion. To Lerner, such a variety of possibilities for meaning is conceptually impossible.

Lerner's specific prescriptions for applying the "politics of meaning" to the world of work are illuminating. In a recent article in TIKKUN, he sets forth six policy recommendations regarding government and the workplace. Lerner would mandate that every workplace "create a mission statement explaining its function and what conception of the common good it is serving." He would have the Department of Labor (DOL) initiate an annual "Occupational Stress Day" to highlight employee work stress and mandate that "all workplaces offer Occupational Stress Groups (OSG's) in which workers can learn how to recognize stress more fully at the workplace." He recommends that DOL mandate worker-management safety committees and sponsor "Honor Labor" campaigns in the workplace. He would wish government to train (or more precisely pay for the training of) "a corps of union personnel, worker representatives and psychotherapists to assist developing a new spirit of cooperation, mutual caring and dedication to work." Finally, he would ask the state to pay unemployed workers who enter a retraining program, a "training wage," equal to whatever income a worker had while employed or the "median average"income (sic), whichever is less.

All this is tough stuff, and it is hard to know how to respond. Indeed, Lerner himself, in the July/August 1993 issue of TIKKUN, has urged that "the key is not the details." In deference, therefore, I will not analyze the cost considerations of his guaranteed unemployment wage program, or the oddity of government-mandated group therapy. One has to wonder, however, why Lerner looks to the government to solve all the problems of the workplace and not to the workers themselves, let alone their employers.

Certainly, it is fair to fault employers for not making maximum use of their employees' skills and creativity. The Japanese understood the value of (stealing a phrase from Marx) human capital and, in their search for quality, made partners of the workforce, severely undercutting the old view that labor and capital are in ontological conflict. To some extent, Lerner's tub-


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thumping is no more than a critique of the early twentieth-century views of Frederick Taylor on "scientific management." Taylor created "time and motion studies" to break down factory tasks into their least skilled and simplest components. In contrast, employers today understand that you are competitive internationally if you add "value" to your human capital (your workers) by enlarging, not reducing, their work roles. In looking at the employer-employee relations from the perspective of "Taylorism," Lerner is simply decades out of date.

Even Labor Secretary Robert B. Reich appears to understand this in his call for a high-performance workplace where workers are empowered by having the opportunity to upgrade their skills continuously. Drawing upon proposals developed by the Bush administration, Reich recently created an Office of the American Workplace designed to promote new concepts of labor-management relations, improve productivity, and create a more highly skilled work force. Such a workplace, however, would require increased flexibility in the federal labor laws.

One significant impediment to a high-performance workplace is organized labor's continued insistence on inflexible work rules. All too often union work rules are little more than a gussied-up form of featherbedding that impedes workplace productivity. Such rules reduce, and indeed in many cases destroy, any possibility of pride in one's work. Union construction contracts often prevent a carpenter from picking up wood that falls to the ground. All work must stop while an unskilled worker or helper with the proper job description is found to undertake that task. How wasteful this can be is shown in the nation's coal fields, where the United Mine Workers (UMW) are presently on strike to prevent mines from closing down and opening up nonunion subsidiaries. Many of the non-union mines actually match or exceed UMW wage rates. How can they do it? By jettisoning inflexible union work rules.

Federal laws also create workplace inflexibility. The Fair Labor Standards Act, for example, requires overtime for more than forty hours a week. (Its California variant does the same for more than eight hours a day.) Women who wish to work forty-five hours one week and thirty-five the next to adjust to the pressures of work and family are impeded from doing so unless their employer agrees to pay them overtime.

Another example of inflexibility is the artificial strictures placed on worker-management cooperation by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in the Electromation case, which inhibit worker-management councils and "quality circles" from addressing issues related to the terms and conditions of employment. In Electromation, after the company—hit with losses—announced layoffs, the non-union work force sought talks with management to figure out ways of reducing costs without losing workers. The NLRB found such work committees to be illegal if set up by management. The jurisprudence of Electromation, if not changed by statute, would outlaw not only work committees but all sorts of efforts at worker-management cooperation.

But it is through such cooperative worker-management efforts that the workplace can be made more productive, and work itself can become fulfilling and meaningful. Consider some recent examples. General Motors' Saturn plant is a unionized plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee. Independent work teams of five to fifteen workers perform managerial tasks such as hiring. They elect representatives to higher-level teams that work jointly with management on the warp and woof of the car business. At the I/N Tek steel plant in South Bend, Indiana, an employee from the team with a vacancy (along with a manager and a personnel pro) interviews prospective new employees. A job is offered only if all three concur.

If Lerner is concerned with meaning in work, he needs to be concerned with pride in one's product and daily work activity. All too often government and


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union work rules prevent the kind of satisfaction that comes with a job well done. William Morris, the nineteenth-century critic of industrial society, understood this in his efforts to create an aesthetic of craftsmanship. It is a pity that Lerner does not.

Lerner states that for Clinton to succeed, he "must explicitly and consciously confront the ethos of selfishness that has been dominating this country in the 1980s." Now, whether or not the '80s were a decade of selfishness is a debatable question. But it was certainly a decade of less government, and one in which the "chattering classes" had begun—spurred on by Republican victories—to rediscover the notion of accountability for one's actions and responsibility for one's deeds. Accountability as a moral value imparts a kind of meaning to civic activity that has been missing in the left-liberal notions of group rights and entitlement.

Speaking of selfishness, Lerner ignores that it is in management's self-interest to encourage a skilled and creative workforce. He further assumes that workers can only express themselves effectively in some form of collective organization. He forgets that union membership makes up less than 16 percent of the American workforce and around 11 percent of the private-sector work force. Lerner cannot assume that the problems of the work force require collective solutions.

In the 1980s, many conservatives criticized excessive government regulation as an effort to create a "nanny state," one in which the government would reduce citizen and consumer choice for their own best interest. Lerner goes further. His "politics of meaning" posits a "therapeutic" state—one in which government would create structures that would solve an individual's deepest psychological problems.

*If our society is suffering a crisis of meaning, the answer is not to be found in state structures or even in state funding, but in "mediating institutions" such as church, social organizations, and family.*

If our society is suffering a crisis of meaning, the answer is not to be found in state structures or even in state funding, but in "mediating institutions" such as church, social organizations, and family. And indeed, in some respects you might even find such cooperative institutions coalescing around Lerner's seeming shrine: the workplace.

To that extent, Lerner should look with interest at the efforts of conservatives to propose government budgets that "put families first" without energizing the hand of the state. He should seek to devolve responsibilities for community downward, away from state bureaucracies. For it is in these private and voluntary structures that he will find ways of investing life with "meaning."

He should also look with favor on the efforts of Jack Kemp and other conservative activists to "empower" the poor by creating choices for them in as many areas of life as possible. The effort at empowerment speaks directly to Lerner's concern that workers (and I have to believe, by extension, all those in poverty) have "been socialized to powerlessness." However, unlike Lerner, the empowerment proposals of Kemp and other conservative Republicans seek to do so without recourse to an activist state.

In the July/August TIKKUN, Lerner suggests that "a politics of meaning aims to encourage collective action." Contra Lerner, if we wish to institutionalize a paradigm of meaning in our political life, we would do well to infuse notions of personal accountability and personal responsibility into our political and social discourse. Instead, the Left has sought vigorously, through a focus on group rights and entitlements, to subordinate notions of personal accountability to a sociology of victimhood. It has used the metaphor of victimhood to denigrate the development and maintenance of educational and moral standards that are requisite to notions of personal (as opposed to collective) responsibility for one's actions. With every citizen (except perhaps white males) a victim of some kind, only the state can provide recompense or renewal.

Lerner's cry for a politics of meaning tracks, in some curious ways, the recent neo-liberal focus of communitarianism. Writers such as Amitai Etzioni and William Galston (now deputy domestic guru in the Clinton White House), have created a cottage industry—including the necessary journal of opinion, *The Responsive Community*—in which communal, as opposed to individualistic, solutions to social policy are ventilated. Etzioni's focus is on a society of mutual obligations rather than a society of rights. Lerner goes him one better, urging that we seek, not mutual legal obligation, but mutual psychic affirmation. Again, like many who draw from the Marxist tradition, he views man as a social being and the individuality of "private life" (as he puts it) as a misleading, artificial construct. Here, he is both right and wrong. There can be no doubt that man is a social animal, but this does not

mean that we should obviate rights and obligations, claims and (yes even) entitlements, that flow from his individual being. That is, of course, the view of our Founding Fathers. It is the perspective of Judaism which is, after all, based on a belief in the infinite worth of the individual soul before God. (He who saves one life, we are reminded, saves the whole world.) It is even the bias of our labor laws which, as example, require unions to engage in "fair representation" of individual members even where this may cut against collective union goals. Lerner's failure to ground meaning in individuals rather than collectives is perhaps the greatest flaw in his effort to articulate a politics of meaning for our time. □

# Six Days Shalt Thou Work

## A Response to Marshall Breger

*Michael Lerner*

The meaning of individual life can never be found within the individual, despite Breger's claims to the contrary. Meaning is found in relationship. Relationship to the other, to God, to a community, to a historic task that transcends the individual and roots her or him in an ethically and spiritually significant universe.

The conservatives have given us an ideology of individualism that has contributed to the breaking of communal ties and all sense of obligation to the other. They preach individual responsibility, but if the ultimate good is rooted in the individual apart from others, responsibility becomes an afterthought. What conservatives mean by responsibility is really little more than a reframing of an ethos of self-reliance: "Take responsibility" means "get yourself together and take care of yourself and don't hurt others." It is the classic line of the haves to the have-nots. Blissfully ignorant of the ways that past abuses, past uses of force, past exploitation have created a world of inequality and oppression, the conservatives rejoice in their wealth, which they assume to be natural, or a product of their own individual willingness to "take responsibility," and they lecture others on why they ought to do the same. In so doing, they prevent themselves from knowing that they are justifying a social system whose current distribution of wealth and power is based on the stealing of land from the American Indians, the enslavement of Blacks, the degradation of women, and the systematic exploitation of many generations of immigrants. How wonderful it must be to live in a world in which one need not know any of this—a world in which a talented Jew can sell his intellectual talents to the wealthy and provide them with self-justifications for why it is appropriate for them to rule and others to go along.

Yet no Jew would ever use this way of thinking when dealing with the experience of the Jewish people. In our own case, the Jewish conservatives suddenly become impassioned advocates of social awareness. When they justify the inequality inherent in Israel's Law of Return that allows Jews to have rights in Israel that are not granted to non-Jews, they do so in terms of the history of the Jewish people. No longer do they lecture individuals to "take responsibility." Indeed, all of Zionism is a collectivist solution. When addressing Jews in Russia, for example, they forget the language of "personal accountability and personal responsibility" and look for communal solutions. The reason? Because in those cases, where it is people with whom they identify and care about, they allow themselves to see people as embedded in social realities that shape their individual fates. The reason that they are unable to see the web of social reality that, in different but equally coercive ways restricts the possibilities of American Blacks, urban poor, or even many sectors of the American working class, is that they feel no similar caring and identity with them. Conservative politics is full of smart people who have learned how not to care about others and then worked out elaborate justifications.

No wonder, then, that conservatives are particularly uncomfortable with my focus on the world of work—because it is precisely there that it is most apparent that we live in a system in which some people work and the

wealth they create gets appropriated by others who own pieces of paper that tell them they are entitled to take that wealth. Managers understand this problem full well, which is why they must always limit schemes for empowering workers or giving them "participation" in ways that will guarantee that workers don't feel entitled to raise fundamental questions. I've watched managers twist and turn these quality circles and participatory schemes so that they wouldn't "get out of hand," that is, wouldn't allow workers to raise any fundamental questions about the workplace. For that reason, all the upgrading of workers' skills and all the management-dominated plans for worker involvement and enrichment are always deeply restricted and skillfully controlled to ensure that they "stay within bounds," the bounds of not having workers feel so powerful or so smart that they might raise more fundamental questions about the organization of the world of work. And it is there that the outcome of this system is most apparent: in the debilitating psychological and physical consequences of alienated labor.

*We do not look to government to provide meaning. But we may look to government to take steps to prevent our desire for an ethically and spirtitually grounded society from being undermined.*

I discovered this by first exploring the connection between meaningless labor and the breakdown of family life. My special emphasis on work came not from some ideological belief that all meaning comes from work—I don't believe that now, nor did I believe that while I was working as a psychotherapist for American workers. But what I uncovered in my own research convinced me that work has a massive impact on the way we behave in personal life. There's nothing ideological or magical about this connection. It's as simple as this: If you spend all day engaged in activities that make you feel lousy about yourself, prevent you from using your intelligence and creativity, restrict your ethical and spiritual sensibilities, and encourage you to see others as obstacles to your own success, it is very likely that these attitudes and ways of being will carry over into the few waking hours every day that are spent outside the world of work. Similarly, if your success in the economic marketplace depends upon your ability to treat others as objects, to be manipulated into buying your products or your services, then it is likely that the narcissistic personality structures that get rewarded in work will remain intact when you are trying to build family life. In *Surplus Powerlessness* (Humanities Press, 1991) I demonstrate how these connections work. I show that the dynamics of family life, relationships, friendships, and childhood are profoundly affected by the way we spend most of our waking hours (namely, the way we come to feel about ourselves and others in the world of work).

Thus, meaninglessness in work has a disproportionate influence on our lives. But I have never argued that work is the only locus of meaning. On the contrary, it is my view that precisely because there is no way of neatly dividing life into separate categories such as work and family life, because the psychological, ethical, and spiritual dynamics of each realm interpenetrate, that I see the need for human beings to seek meaning in every dimension. In so doing, we do not look to government to provide meaning. But we may look to government to take steps to prevent our desire for an ethically and spiritually grounded society from being undermined by an economic marketplace that tilts toward selfishness and penalizes caring or cooperative behavior. It is not that government imposes meaning, but that we as a community may use government to shape a world more consistent with the meanings that we have chosen or discovered.

Breger believes that "the traditional Jew would never invest significant meaning in his job" and that "significant meaning comes from activities completely outside of work." To the extent that this has been historically true, it reflects the degree of powerlessness and despair that diasporic Judaism embodied—*not* the core values of Judaism. The importance of work is enshrined in the Ten Commandments: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath to God." The command to work is equally important with the command to rest. Work and rest are both potentially infused with holiness. And as Abraham Joshua Heschel pointed out in *The Prophets*, it is precisely what goes on in the marketplace, in the economy, in the seemingly trivial area of buying, selling, and making, that most deeply concerns God. It is in healing the mundane, not in creating a separate area for spiritual or ethical life, wherein lies the central task of *tikkun olam* (the repairing of the world), and it is for that reason that a politics of meaning must always be tested not just by the degree to which it articulates pious thoughts about caring but the degree to which it seeks to instantiate those ideals in the day-to-day operations of work and economic life. □

# Postmodern Fascism?
## Reflections on the Return of the Oppressed

*Martin Jay*

The still-escalating debate over the relation between Martin Heidegger's philosophy and his embrace of Nazism took a new and startling turn with the publication in 1992 of Ernst Nolte's *Martin Heidegger: Politik und Geschichte im Leben und Denken*. Unlike Heidegger's increasingly beleaguered apologists, Nolte willingly concedes that fundamental aspects of Heidegger's thought and important dimensions of Nazi politics were indeed closely related. But he then reaches the extraordinary conclusion that this was not entirely to the philosopher's discredit, for Nazism in the 1930s had a certain historical legitimacy as the only plausible bulwark against communism. As a result, Heidegger was not fully wrong in sympathizing with it.

Such a breathtaking contention did not catch entirely off guard those who had followed Nolte's dubious role in the so-called *Historikerstreit* (Historian's Dispute) of the mid-1980s, when, along with Andreas Hillgruber and Michael Stürmer, he sought to relativize both the Holocaust and the Nazi experience by setting them in the context of other horrors of the twentieth century, and even argued that the Jewish "threat" to Germany was such that the Nazis had a plausible justification for undertaking a war against the Jews. Nor was it surprising to those who knew of Nolte's personal relationship to Heidegger—Nolte had known the philosopher since his student days in Freiburg in 1944—to find him providing so audacious a defense of his hero. Nolte's nuanced sympathy for Nazism and Heidegger's defense of it was not therefore completely unexpected.

For those who remember his role in the 1960s, however, the period when Nolte first came into international prominence as a historian, it is shocking to discover that he could so strongly defend Nazism's historical legitimacy. For in 1963, he published a very different kind of book, titled *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche: Die Action française, Der italienische Fachismus, Der Nationalsozialismus*, which was translated two years later as



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*Three Faces of Fascism.* Although not without its detractors—who distrusted its overly philosophical underpinnings or worried about its emphasis on biographical accounts of the movement's leaders—the work quickly established itself as a classic in the interpretation of fascism in general and Nazism in particular. The dust-cover on the paperback edition boasts an encomium from Fritz Stern, a liberal historian and certainly no friend of the Nazis, comparing it with Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism* as one of the "most thoughtful discussions of the entire fascist phenomenon." George Lichtheim, despite several reservations, could tell the readers of The *New York Review of Books* that "we shall not soon have a better account of the political and spiritual factors that went into the European catastrophe between the wars." Even as late as 1989, Saul Friedländer, who had vigorously denounced Nolte during the *Historikerstreit*, could still call *Three Faces of Fascism* a "monumental study" which placed Nolte squarely in the "intentionalist" rather than "functionalist" camp in explaining the Holocaust. Nolte argues that fascism is a response to the longing for the restoration of community, particularity, rootedness, and the concrete, as opposed to alienation and abstraction.

*Nolte argues that fascism is a response to the longing for the restoration of community, particularity, rootedness, and the concrete, as opposed to alienation and abstraction.*

Its author's appalling recent pronouncements should not, therefore, prevent us from returning to this extraordinarily stimulating work. Indeed, doing so may provide us with useful guidelines in gauging the possibilities of a renewed fascism in the 1990s and beyond, for Nolte's analysis transcended the purely descriptive and posed fundamental questions about the deeper roots of fascism—questions that, alas, now seem necessary to ask once again.

Nolte's complex argument in *Three Faces of Fascism* is directed against several targets. First, it refuted the understanding of fascism as a form of totalitarianism that was so fashionable during the Cold War era, the essential conflation of right- and left-wing extremism into one anti-liberal democratic model by theorists such as Arendt, J.L. Talmon, and Carl Joachim Friedrich. Instead, Nolte claimed fascism was essentially a counter-revolutionary rival to communism, rather than its twin. Or more precisely, to cite one of his major formulations: "Fascism is anti-Marxism which seeks to destroy the enemy by the evolvement of a radically opposed and yet related ideology and by the use of almost identical and yet typically modified methods, always, however, within the unyielding framework of national self-assertion and autonomy."

Second, Nolte placed the Nazi experience within the larger context of fascism rather than totalitarianism, a category in which he included Mussolini's Italy and the Action Française of Charles Maurras, a movement that never came to power but was important in France in the period after the Dreyfus affair. By beginning his analysis with the Action Française, Nolte was able to tie fascism to the earliest counter-revolutionary and counter-Enlightenment traditions. In so doing, it might seem as if he were tacitly anticipating his relativization of the Holocaust, which so dismayed his opponents during the *Historikerstreit*. Nolte's explicit repudiation of what he called "the Jewish interpretation, which is based on the most appalling of all human experiences," an interpretation which stressed the utter uniqueness of Nazism, lends further credence to this conclusion. He did, however, acknowledge that in the centrality of anti-Semitism to their project, the Nazis had no peer; it was just that fascism as a whole could not be reduced to a generalized version of its most virulent exemplar.

It is, however, the third general argument of the book that is most pertinent to our larger theme, because it provided a very ambitious, philosophically informed explanation of fascism, which nonetheless sought to situate it in a specific historical era. According to Nolte, fascism could be understood within its own epoch in terms of three basic dimensions. The first is what he calls the "life-and-death struggle of the sovereign, martial and inwardly antagonistic group," which he sees as latent in virtually all of history, but fully manifest in the fascist movements of the twentieth century. By "sovereign," he means the deliberate exclusion of other people; by "martial," the employment of warlike methods to achieve its goals; and by "inwardly antagonistic," the existence of internal class or status stratifications, which then lead to the projection of conflict by engaging in or threatening foreign wars. Such manifestations of group self-assertion, he concedes, are widespread throughout history, but are especially evident in twentieth-century fascism.

The other two dimensions of fascism are, however,

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more specifically related to the epoch of its efflorescence. One involves the crucial role of Marxism, which Nolte construed as the primary target of the fascist counter-revolutionary impulse. Nolte agreed that fascism learned some of its practical methods from Marxism-Leninism, which gave some weight to the analysis he wanted to undermine. But he argued that fascism could emerge after World War I only in response to a vigorous and expanding radicalism of the Left. George Lichtheim could thus entitle his appreciative review of the book the "European Civil War," because Nolte had correctly highlighted the death struggle between the radical Left and the radical Right at a time when a viable center seemed in danger of almost total disappearance. The implication is that fascism could emerge only in reaction to an aggressive and totalizing Marxism.

The third and most complicated aspect of Nolte's analysis concerns the process he calls transcendence, which has two dimensions, practical and theoretical. At its most fundamental level, fascism emerged only as a response to both kinds of transcendence. Practical transcendence is, roughly speaking, Nolte's term for what is often called modernization, characterized by the bureaucratization of the world, the spread of the commodity and market forms of capitalism, the abstraction of social life, rapid urbanization, the growth of the impersonal state, and the centralization of political power. Fascism, Nolte argues, is a distorted protest against these trends in the name of lost immanence and a longing for the restoration of community, particularity, rootedness, and the concrete, as opposed to alienation and abstraction. It is thus able to attract those people, such as the members of the lower-middle class or peasantry, who feel left behind in the process of practical transcendence.

Fascism also expresses a resistance to theoretical transcendence, by which Nolte means the attempt to grasp the world in intelligible concepts, conceive of it as a totality which can be understood by reason, and make it available for humanist intellectual appropriation. In this respect, fascism can be understood as a response to what might be called the hubris of those who try to make sense of the world, the ambition of certain movements to make sense of the world in universal and abstract categories, which then allow it to be dominated. Charles Maurras anticipated this aspect of the fascist project in his critique of "anti-nature" and suspicion of the originally religious notion of divine transcendence, which began with monotheism (one reason why the Jews could be seen as the prime culprit in the process of theoretical transcendence). But it was Friedrich Nietzsche, according to Nolte, whose "philosophy of life" was "the first to give voice to that spiritual focal point toward which all fascism must gravitate: the assault on practical *and* theoretical transcendence, for the sake of a "more beautiful form of 'life'."

To the extent that the Faustian drive in Western culture—always to transcend—led to a kind of infinite striving that drew humankind further and further away from its roots in the here and now, it engendered an inevitable yearning for the restoration of immanence. On the Left, Marxism represents a similar yearning—Nolte claims the goal of the classless society is meant precisely to replace theoretical transcendence—which is why it is so much a competitor to fascism.

Although Nolte never mentions Heidegger in his discussion of transcendence—in fact, one commentator was led to believe his adoption of a "phenomenological" method meant he was actually a Hegelian—it is not difficult to hear echoes of Heidegger's lament about the humanist forgetting of Being and loss of a "world" in which humans are at home. It is for this reason the book concludes with a nuanced—and at the time somewhat puzzling—expression of "sympathy" for fascism, which in retrospect can be understood as prefiguring Nolte's later advocacy of a more explicit justification of its historical legitimacy: "It is precisely in this broadest of all perspectives that the observer cannot withhold from fascism that 'sympathy' of which we have spoken....For transcendence, when properly understood, is infinitely remote from the harmlessness of safe 'cultural progress;' it is not the couch of the finite human being, but in some mysterious sense his throne and his cross." Whereas Nolte, alas, now seems to express some sympathy for the answers fascism provided to the challenge of practical and theoretical transcendence, *The Three Faces of Fascism* suggests only that the questions it addressed were the right ones for its age.

Are they, however, appropriate for our own? That is to say, does the precise constellation of factors which Nolte adduced to explain the rise of fascism in interwar Europe, the Europe fighting a civil war between radical Right and radical Left, still obtain today? To begin to answer these questions, I turn to a widely discussed recent book, Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Although Jameson never directly speaks to the issue of fascism's return, when taken together with Nolte's claims in *Three Faces of Fascism*, his book has some illuminating insights on its likelihood.

According to Jameson, cultural modernism can be

understood as the aesthetic correlate of a still unfinished modernization process, whereas postmodernism registers the virtual completion of that process and the near universalization of those developments that Nolte identified with practical transcendence, and that the Marxist in Jameson would prefer to call reification: bureaucratization, the expansion of the centralized state, the spread of the market and commodification, etc. Significantly, in an earlier work that focused on the English writer Wyndham Lewis (*Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist*, published in 1979), Jameson argued that both Lewis's fascist politics and his modernist aesthetics could be understood as "a protest against the reified experience of an alienated life." During the transitional period between the modern and the post-modern eras, resistance was still possible in the hope of restoring something lost, variously called "nature" or "tradition," or in an attempt to achieve a future utopian order in which immanence would be restored.

Postmodern culture, in contrast, reflects a period in which the process of modernization is complete, and significant resistance to technology, instrumental rationality, market-commodity relations, and bureaucratization has virtually disappeared. Postmodernism has lost or somehow repressed much of the anxiety produced by the traumas of modernization; the groups left behind by it are no longer sufficiently numerous to present a problem. When postmodernists appeal to history or tradition as an antidote to excessive practical transcendence, they do so only in the form of self-conscious, polyvalent pastiche; when they invoke something called "nature," they do so with the full knowledge that it is an artificial construct, rather than a genuine state of prelapsarian grace to which we might somehow return. Even when they utter the talismanic word "community," they know that the image of a homogeneous, meaningful gathering of benignly cooperative people in face-to-face proximity is little more than an exercise in nostalgia in the age of e-mail and virtual-reality machines. In short, there is far less yearning today for a lost immanence than was the case when what Nolte calls "the protest against practical transcendence was at its height."

As for the threat of theoretical transcendence, postmodern theory—with all its distrust of foundational quests and totalizing projects—may be defined precisely as the acceptance of a kind of perpetual limbo between complete immanence and complete transcendence, a willingness to give up grand, totalizing narratives and all ambitious projects of complete theoretical abstraction, on the one hand, and the contrary yearning to return to a fully meaningful, entirely concrete lifeworld, on the other. Thus today, Nietzsche is no longer read as the defender of immanence and a more beautiful form of life, but rather as the inspiration for post-structuralist critiques of the very possibility of plenitude, presence, and totalized meaning. Even Heidegger tends to be appreciated these days less for his nostalgia for plenitudinous Being than for the stimulus to the questioning of that very goal.

There is an element of exaggeration in Jameson's argument, which may not be as globally applicable as he suggests. Understood in different terms from the ones he invokes, for instance, those of Jürgen Habermas, modernity may still be an uncompleted project, which need not be equated with the maximization of abstraction. But in many respects, it is hard to gainsay Jameson's claim that, however we judge its implications, something new has arrived that means we are beyond the moment when modernization in most of its guises was radically changing the face of Europe. He thus provides the beginning of an answer to the question raised by Nolte's path-breaking work of the 1960s: Are we still broadly speaking in the "epoch of fascism," as recent, troubling events in post-Cold War Europe might suggest? The answer, to put it simply and with full awareness of the dangers of complacency, is that we are not. For if we have moved past the point of maximum anxiety about practical transcendence, if we have abandoned the project of theoretical transcendence, and if we are no longer faced with an aggressive Marxism that can provide the stimulus and model for an equally aggressive fascism, then its resurgence in the 1990s and beyond is not likely to be the genuine thing.

We still have our share of "sovereign, martial, inwardly antagonistic groups," some of which will doubtless find it convenient to recycle the scapegoating appeals of fascism; what, after all, is the agenda of "ethnic cleansing?" But by and large, the postmodernization process is destined to engender new political forms, which will require still unimagined analytical categories and, alas, new strategies of defense. As is often remarked, fascism was utterly absent from the political vocabulary of the nineteenth century, whose most enlightened minds would have been deeply astounded by the course of events in our own century. If we can be confident of anything, it is that the twenty-first century holds some surprises in store for us as well. We ought not to prepare for them by holding on too tightly to the lessons of a past epoch that is, thankfully, no longer our own. □

# Fascism and Postmodernism

## A Reply to Martin Jay

*Elliot Neaman*



Professor Martin Jay lucidly illustrates how fascism was linked to many of the problems of modernity, and why in the postmodern age it is unproductive to try to understand fascism the same way that our modernist predecessors did. Linked to this observation is the corollary that neofascism has much less a chance of having the same kind of impact on postmodern society that fascist movements were able to exert in the midst of the crises of modernization. It is certainly true that postmodern apathy, fragmentation, and lack of concentration are not conducive to the kinds of cultural paroxysms that characterized the rise of fascism. On the other hand, we can hardly be complacent about the paradoxes and contradictions of postmodern culture.

Students of the political situation in unified Germany overwhelmingly agree on one point: The rise of a nationalist brand of conservative, xenophobic, and anti-democratic politics in the mid-1980s was not caused, as in the past, by an ephemeral wave of protest issues or carried by narrow interest groups. A flock of right-wing parties has settled down and made a nest on the right-hand edge of the political spectrum, enjoying considerable support. Certainly no one expects any of these parties to forge a parliamentary majority in the foreseeable future. But one doesn't need a full-blown fascist movement to speak about fascist politics. "Classical" fascism didn't just exploit social disorientation brought on by secularization and industrial capitalism, as Ernst Nolte, whose work was discussed by Jay, postulated. Mussolini, Hitler, and a host of mini-dictators of the fascist era were successful in defining their respective nations as homogeneous entities whose strength depended on ethnic and racial purity. As Carl Schmitt, a prominent political theorist of the Weimar Republic and Nazi fellow traveler wrote, in his *Treatise on the Constitution* (1928), "The political strength of a democracy shows itself in its ability to eliminate and hold off the foreign and unequal elements which threaten its homogeneity." This drive for homogeneity is alive and well in our "postmodern" world, as "ethnic cleansing," the breakdown of large states into numerous ethnic and religious tribes and, in Germany, the recent debates over the asylum laws and a steady stream of attacks on foreigners and ethnically different German citizens since 1991 all indicate.

Before 1989, nationalistic attitudes in Germany tended to be located on the political fringe or expressed privately between drinking buddies at the regulars' table of the local tavern. Today a certain "coming out" can be observed, meaning that politicians, writers, journalists, and the "man on the street" are less afraid of voicing nationalistic sentiments that would have previously been condemned as smacking of the German fascist past. The re-entrenchment of the Right in Germany can be detected in three general areas of German political and cultural life. At the level of party politics, disenchantment with the conventional parties has led to a willingness among a broad range of voters to experiment with right-wing parties. On a more cultural plane, a string of intellectuals—some who consider themselves postmodernists—is openly experimenting with the longstanding tradition in German philosophy and political thought. And at the street level, a youth culture of rebellion and provocation is establishing itself with identifiable rituals and modes of identification which are inspired by the fascist past.

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The preferred music of the steel-tip-booted, swastika-bearing skinheads is a semi-underground mixture of punk and acid rock called "Oi" music, the lyrics of which are inspired by the ideas of gutter-pamphlet revisionism, including the so-called Auschwitz Lie and other anti-Semitic hate propaganda.

It is easy to detect a great similarity between the disgust expressed by American voters in 1992 with "politics as usual" and the German voters' backlash against the established parties that polls have traced in the declining approval ratings of both the ruling centrist Christian Democrats and the barely oppositional Social Democrats. The latest studies of voters who have marked their ballots at one time or another for right-wing parties have disproved the commonly held belief that the right wing possesses a fixed reservoir of national-populist voters. Instead, a constantly changing mix of people from all across the political spectrum, from all ages and types of occupation, have withdrawn their support from the established parties and gone fishing on the right or left wing of the spectrum.

Even inside the established parties, one can find voters who are at odds with the party platform and hold extreme right-wing opinions, such as the widespread view that Germany should rid itself of foreigners. The political scientist Richard Stoess found that among these kinds of voters, only 13 percent favored the largest right-wing party, the Republikaner, while 34 percent would vote for Christian Democrats, 17 percent for the Social Democrats, 8 percent other parties, and 28 percent favored no party at all. The authoritative Infa poll from August 1992 found that 19 percent of all West Germans have already, or could imagine themselves voting for a party to the right of the Christian Democrats. The figure for the new Eastern states was only 12 percent, indicating that, contrary to common belief, the economic troubles of the East have not resulted in a rush of voters throwing themselves into the arms of the right wing.

Since reunification, the right-wing parties have enjoyed steady support for two main reasons. First, the issue of foreigners in Germany has consistently been at the top of the list of "problems the government must solve," according to polls taken by the Emnid Institute, one of Germany's most influential public-opinion research organizations. Second, the right-wing parties have benefited from increasing disgruntlement with the established parties, the feeling that the political, economic, and cultural elites "at the top" don't give a damn about the little people down below. As in the United States, the supposedly left-leaning (Social) Democrats do not take seriously the cries of pain and anger coming from the heart of middle-class society. The Social Democrats recently elected a bland technocrat as leader and tend to stake out political positions based on tracking polls instead of principles. The resulting backlash at the political system gives much room for populist demagoguery, which became very evident in the course of the tortured debates during the last two years over whether or not to change Germany's asylum laws.

The fall of communism created a situation in which thousands of politically persecuted and/or economically desperate people from Eastern Europe were attracted to Germany because of its relatively liberal asylum laws. From the beginning of 1990 to the summer of 1993, the country was inundated with a steady stream of hundreds of refugees crossing the border daily and applying for political asylum. Suddenly cities and towns across the land were overwhelmed by the logistics of housing and feeding refugees. It is now becoming clear, however, that in many instances, the Kohl government willingly allowed the situation to deteriorate in order to let political pressure build on the opposition Social Democrats. Hajo Funke, professor of politics in Berlin, has recently published a study of neo-Nazis in Germany, titled *Brandstifter* (The Arsonists), in which he provides new evidence concerning the events surrounding a fire-attack last summer on a refugee hostel in Rostock. Funke shows that somewhere in the chain of command from the Ministry for the Interior to the local police, orders were given to hold back police protection of the hostel intentionally until the attack was well underway. The case is currently being investigated by a subcommittee of the local state parliament in Mecklenburg-Pomerania.

The support of the Social Democrats in the Bundestag was required to garner the necessary two-thirds vote to amend the constitution and change the asylum laws. This political gambit took into calculation attacks on foreigners that followed as a direct result of communities being overburdened with asylum seekers, of whom many had to sleep and camp outdoors without washing facilities, inciting the ire of residents. The debates on the asylum laws last spring took place against the background of vicious and sometimes deadly attacks against Turks and other foreigners who had long lived in Germany and had nothing to do with the asylum seekers. The Social Democrats finally caved in and allowed the Christian Democrats to change the laws so that a person seeking political asylum may now not enter Germany through any third country, but instead must come directly from the place where he or she is being persecuted. This means, in effect, that only people who have the means and the opportunity to

board a flight directly to Frankfurt can apply for asylum. No wonder then, that since July 1, 1993, the number of asylum applications has dropped precipitously. There can be no doubt that the previous asylum laws were not being used by everyone the way they were intended. But the current "compromise," as the Social Democrats imagined they were making, means that the liberal heart of the German constitution—written in 1949 to make amends for Nazi crimes—has been torn out.

High above the politics of the street, a coming out is also occurring among certain intellectuals in the Federal Republic with respect to anti-democratic extremism of the type that gave important legitimacy to National Socialism in its infancy. It would be a complete overreaction to compare the sophisticated and theoretically acute thinkers of the Weimar period, such as Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, and Martin Heidegger, to the current brand of right-wing intellectuals who consider it chic and avante-garde to attack liberalism and pluralism. The academic establishment as well is very different from that of the Weimar period, when the German Mandarins, as the historian Fritz Stern calls them, overwhelmingly held antidemocratic views. Nevertheless, significant shifts are taking place in the intellectual arena, and one can hardly be complacent about the extent to which right-wing ideas are again becoming fashionable.

A good example of the subtle infiltration of right-wing thought in the realm of so-called high culture is the case of the writer Botho Strauss (born 1944). He was a darling of the avant-garde in the late 1970s and early 1980s, whose plays, written in a dazzling mixture of Berlin idiom and aesthetic construction, reflected the alienation and insecurity of the late West German republic. Last February, Strauss caused a furor among German intellectuals after he published an article in the weekly *Der Spiegel* analyzing the rise of neo-Nazism in Germany and blaming the Left, particularly the generation of 1968, for having created a moral and intellectual vacuum that prepared the social space in which the current younger generation is revolting against a supposedly hypocritical antifascism. Strauss also defended the traditions of the intellectual Right in Germany and lashed out against the culture of West Germany because of its supposed debasement through television and commercialism. Most disturbingly, Strauss wrote that racism and xenophobia can be thought of as cult rituals which "originally had sacred, order-creating meaning." He implied that hatred of foreigners could have a cathartic, positive effect on society by unloading aggression on a single victim.

Strauss's article was immediately attacked by a wide range of voices among the liberal and Left intelligentsia in Germany. Peter Glotz, for example, called it a new program for the right wing. But many of the reactions were emotional and exaggerated. Strauss's polemics sound like the old elitist, reactionary mumbo-jumbo of traditional cultural pessimism.

The extent to which the cultural pessimists of the Weimar period are being used to inform current political debates is surprising. It is now becoming clear that the hostility of the old Conservative Revolution to liberal democracy and modernity cannot be explained away as simply a reaction to the fatal contradictions of the Weimar Republic. In the Federal Republic today, figures such as Ernst Jünger along with Carl Schmitt and Martin Heidegger are increasingly being read as a source of inspiration for new voices on the Right. A renaissance of revisionism, both in terms of relativizing the atrocities of the Third Reich and valorizing German cultural particularism, is very much part of the current intellectual scene.

*The particular German experience of fascism continues to determine the political style and content of the German Right.*

Across a broad spectrum, intellectuals who once belonged to the critical Left have suddenly found their love for the German nation. One can read nationalist-particularist essays by Rudolf Augstein, Martin Walser, or Botho Strauss in *Der Spiegel*. Heiner Müller, the former East German communist writer, now turned cultural chameleon, recently directed a Wagner opera at Bayreuth. Brigette Seebacher-Brandt, widow of the late Willy Brandt, who had been chancellor of West Germany, toured the country this summer lecturing on the virtues of a revived German nationalism.

Thirty-thousand readers across the land now regularly buy the well-funded *Junge Freiheit* (Young Freedom), a newspaper dedicated to carrying on the Conservative Revolution in Germany. This paper originated in nationalist-conservative student circles in Freiburg but has announced it will go weekly beginning in 1994. The contributors to *JF* cannot match the brilliance of the right-wing intelligentsia of the Weimar republic, but the left-wing *Tageszeitung* (Daily Newspaper), the morning favorite of Germany's Left, might soon find itself with a similarly styled and marketed competitor on the Right.

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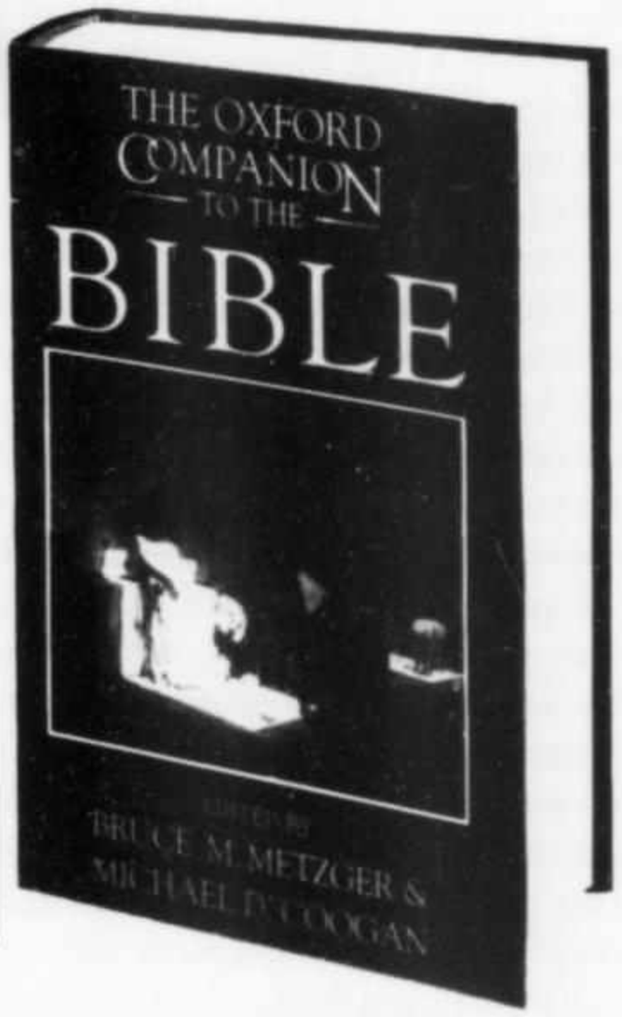
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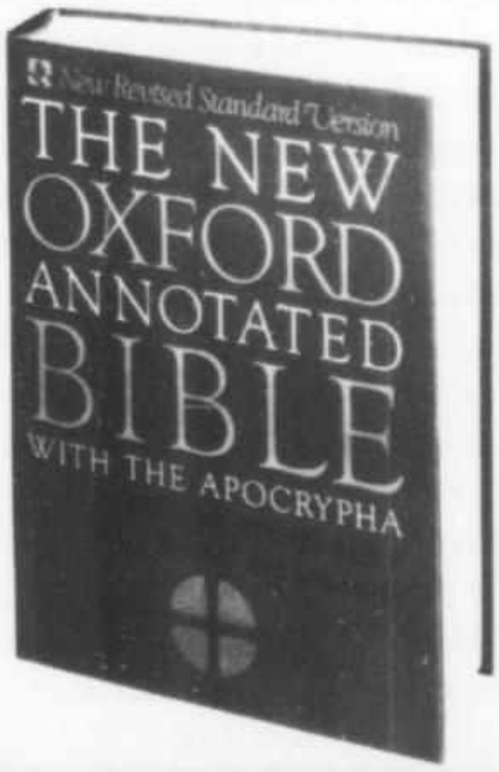
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In East Berlin, a two-million-dollar campaign to rebuild the Hohenzollern palace in the center of east Berlin, organized by the right-wing publisher H. Jobst Siedler, is currently underway. The communists had torn down the only partially damaged building in 1951 and built their parliament there. Artists were funded this summer to recreate the facade of the Imperial Residence using huge canvas sheets mounted on scaffolding around the building. Meant as a tribute to reunited Germany, the Right apprehended it as a symbol of the glory of the imperial Germany of old. The German past has thus been literally repackaged and Berliners are invited to gaze on old imperial glory. Across the street, the German National Cathedral, built by Kaiser Wilhelm II, was re-opened in June. Chancellor Helmut Kohl gave a long speech to mark the occasion, in which he appealed for the nation to come together under the umbrella of Christian values.

At present, a new controversy has emerged over Kohl's proposed successor to President Wiezsäcker, who must step down after serving two consecutive five-year terms. Wiezsäcker has enjoyed wide popularity in his largely ceremonial role and has proven to be a very intelligent and sensitive moral guide, particularly in respect to facing up to German history. Kohl's new choice is a relatively little-known East German politician, Steffan Heitmann, who has consistently aired distinctly reactionary views in regard to the role of women, foreigners in Germany, and the epoch of Nazism in German history. He has declared that "taboos must be broken," and that Germans must not be "placed in a special position for the rest of time." These statements have brought a torrent of criticism from the Left and cheers from the Right, whose agenda is all about breaking taboos. Even the head of the Central Organization of German Jews, Ignatz Bubis, who is usually circumspect about openly criticizing the political establishment, has said that Heitmann would "make anti-Semitism respectable in Germany again."

Meanwhile, in Italy, the ninety-eight-year-old Ernst Jünger was presiding over the festivities at the prestigious *Biennale*, the bi-annual Italian Art Festival. In his speech, Jünger predicted that the twenty-first century would see a return of mythology, in particular the primordial battles between the gods and the titans as the Western world would be inundated by Barbarians. Jünger pleaded for an "absolute art," understood only by an elite cult of the initiated. The speech convinced the eminent French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to sign, along with a host of other luminaries including Umberto Eco and Jacques Derrida, an open "Appeal of Vigilance," warning Europeans of the growing danger of the Right. Stating his reasons for dropping a usual reluctance to sign such documents, Bourdieu was quoted in *Die Zeit* stating: "When Jünger opens the Biennale with this kind of fascist text, and the whole world finds it normal, then I'd be an idiot not to sign such an appeal."

Another alarming development in cultural politics is the move by the historian Rainer Zitelman to the Ullstein publishing house, which is bringing out a full line of revisionist writings in the fall of 1993. In his book, *Adolf Hitler*, Zitelman, a student of Ernst Nolte, self-consciously treats the Führer in a moral-free realm in order to "historicize" (read: decriminalize) Hitler and see the Third Reich from a "proper historical distance" (as if any historian of the Third Reich can claim to be "disinterested" or "objective"). Among the more interesting historical treatises being brought out under Zitelman's direction is Karlheinz Weismann's *Rückruf in die Geschichte* (Being Called by History), which is a plea for Germany to throw off the chains of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* ("Mastering the Past") and return to normal power politics of the nineteenth century. Another book by Gregor Schöllgen, *Angst vor der Macht*, calls for a "New-German sovereignty" both in terms of domestic and foreign policy, as well as "in connection with memory, judgments and ideas."

These phenomena suggest that the rise of a permanent politics of pressure from the Right, as well as an intellectual backlash against liberalism and socialism of the post-1945 era, are portents of a significant and disturbing sea-change in German political and cultural life. Jay is right to argue that we shouldn't use outdated categories and theories to describe this change. It is important to stress, however, that the particular German experience of fascism continues to determine the political style and content of the German Right. Today, political scientists, journalists, psychologists, and a host of other "experts" explain away the violence perpetrated against foreigners as a consequence of Germany's current social and economic problems. This is the "post-modern" understanding that Jay recommends. But the appropriation of Nazi insignia by enraged right-wing youth, the immersion of intellectuals in the esoteric philosophy of the fascist era, and the signs of widespread yearning for the greatness of the German past are not simply arbitrary expressions of a confused age. Even though a political and temporal gulf separates us, thankfully, from the fascist epoch, we should be wary of the remnants that have survived, for every vestige of the past that is not recognized as one of our concerns threatens to take root in the present. □

# Anti-Semites Against Anti-Semitism

*Susannah Heschel*

Anti-Semitism is illegal in Germany. Tell an Auschwitz joke in a bar and you may find yourself in court. But the laws aren't really necessary—everyone in Germany is absolutely opposed to anti-Semitism (except a few crazy skinheads). They'll tell you so quite forthrightly. Indeed, hundreds of thousands of earnest Germans took to the streets last winter in candlelight processions to condemn racism and defend democracy. Their pictures were flashed across the world, a counter-image to the thousands in the city of Rostock who clapped and cheered when firebombs were thrown at an apartment building housing Vietnamese workers. That scene lasted a long time—the police failed to intervene for several days, while the terrorized Vietnamese families in the building were desperate: afraid of being burned to death if they stayed inside, afraid of being beaten to death if they fled outside. So the candlelight demonstrations came as a relief, a sign of another kind of German, the good German. So successful were the demonstrations that a competition for the best one evolved. The organizers of the Munich march were actually awarded the "Bambi" prize from the German television studios for best demonstration of the year.

Perhaps it's unfair to be sarcastic. After all, shouldn't we be glad that Germans are finally in the streets, protesting racist violence? Isn't that what they should have been doing during the 1920s and '30s? Isn't it a sign of a new Germany, a land of democratic values, that people protest racially motivated violence? If the actions of the neo-Nazi skinheads lend credence to the impression that nothing's changed, the demonstrators should give a countervailing signal—that there are also "new" Germans. Or maybe, nearly fifty years since the end of Nazism and the establishment of democracy, we should stop interpreting altogether. Why should we constantly scrutinize contemporary Germany through the lens of the Third Reich? Why saddle Germans of the 1990s with the sins of previous generations?

What we see in present-day Germany when we wrest our focus from the mesmerizing images of neo-Nazis is that even those condemning anti-Semitism often repeat anti-Semitic stereotypes that they have inherited from German intellectual and political culture. Anti-Semitism has been ubiquitous in German culture for so many centuries, reaching a peak during the Third Reich, that it cannot be overcome simply by being rejected as abhorrent. But making anti-Semitism illegal also makes it a taboo. As often happens with taboos, anti-Semitism becomes appealing to skinheads rebelling against social conventions, and leaves everyone else nervous about discussing it.

Condemnation is the easy part, both emotionally and morally satisfying. Start talking about anti-Semitism with Germans, however, and their cultural conundrum emerges. For example, the most flagrantly anti-Semitic texts—*Mein Kampf* or *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*—are available only with great difficulty at some libraries. Libraries keep those books under lock and key in what's called a "poison closet." But the task of rooting out the distortions and canards about Jews and Judaism from German culture is far more systemic: The work of nearly every great German Christian thinker contains anti-Semitic views and characterizations. Should Fichte's treatise on the French revolution be relegated to the poison closet because he remarks that the only way to get rid of Jewish ideas is to cut off Jews' heads? What about noted Christian scholars of Judaism, such as Gerhard Kittel or Adolf Schlatter, who conclude from their technical studies of rabbinic literature that Judaism is a degenerate, violent religion? Are their conclusions anti-Jewish, or the learned interpretations of thoughtful scholars? If every German book containing anti-Jewish remarks were banished, the libraries would shrink dramatically.

Given this heritage, it is not surprising to find

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widespread distorted, negative images of Judaism among contemporary Germans. Furthermore, few Germans realize that these images are negative; even among intellectuals, they are perceived as accurate. So in contemporary Germany, when a bunch of skinheads and crazies deface Jewish cemeteries and memorials throughout the country, throw a pig's head (with an attached note, "Death to the Swine") at the tiny synagogue in Erfurt, leave threatening messages on the telephone answering machines of Jews, and set fire to the Jewish barracks at Sachsenhausen, they're denounced by "good" Germans as the radical fringe, not representative of German society. But too many of the educated, liberal Germans who condemn the violence, who march in candlelight demonstrations against anti-Semitism and racism still don't have the sensibilities or the cultural context from which to recognize an anti-Semitic stereotype. The results are dangerous.

*Studying Jewish history, learning Hebrew, or reading rabbinic texts does not necessarily impart the ability to recognize the subtleties of anti-Semitic myths and images.*

Today, because of German society's acknowledgement of the atrocities of the Holocaust, Jews hold a semi-protected status. Attention to Jewish history and culture is tremendous, in the form of museum exhibits, lectures, concerts, films, theatre performances, and newspaper articles. There is a far greater chance of catching a Yiddish film on German TV than on American channels. Programs in Jewish Studies flourish at all the major universities, and an excellent Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism offers seminars each semester at the Technical University in Berlin, although the enrollment is tiny. Books and dissertations on all aspects of Jewish life and history abound, from the histories of Jewish communities in small towns to studies of ancient *hechalot* (mystical) texts. Thorough knowledge of German is once again crucial for scholars in Judaic studies, just to keep up with the contemporary scholarship underway in Germany. German tourists flock to Israel; students spend a year at a kibbutz or an Israeli university, becoming fluent in Hebrew. Candidates for the ministry sometimes spend a year in Jerusalem, to engage in Jewish-Christian dialogue. German Christians of all ages volunteer for a few months or a year to serve with Action Reconciliation, a service organization that undertakes social-service missions around the world as a token of compensation for German crimes.

But Judaism and anti-Semitism are two separate phenomena. Studying Jewish history, learning Hebrew, or reading rabbinic texts does not necessarily impart the ability to recognize the subtleties of anti-Semitic myths and images. Nor is simply being "against" anti-Semitism adequate sensitization to the persistent distortions; the stereotypes are so deeply interwoven in German thought that they can't begin to be overcome until they are recognized and confronted directly. Knowing about Jewish thought and history is not the same as knowing about anti-Semitism.

During the 1992-93 academic year I held the Martin Buber visiting professorship in Jewish religious philosophy at the University of Frankfurt, a chair financed by the Protestant church to foster better Christian-Jewish understanding in Germany. The University itself is relatively new, founded at the beginning of this century by Frankfurt residents, many of whom were Jewish. Before 1933 some of its most distinguished professors were Jews, including Buber. Today, its faculty includes pioneers working to overcome Christian anti-Judaism, including two of my colleagues there, Willy Schottroff, a Hebrew Bible scholar, and Dieter Georgi, whose field is Christian Origins. Georgi, who worked hard to create the Buber chair, has formulated new interpretations of the rise of Christianity within the context of Judaism, not as a rejection of it.

It was a tense year. I arrived in Germany a few days before a Turkish family was murdered by skinheads in Mölln, stayed through the months of debate over changing Germany's asylum laws, and left just after the regional elections in Hesse, in which the neo-Nazi parties shocked everyone by capturing 10 percent of the vote. A popular explanation for these phenomena blames the rise of neo-Nazism on the economic recession. I, however, view economic difficulties not as the *cause* of neo-Nazism in general and anti-Semitism in particular, but as the *pretext* for its open expression.

At the university, I taught a seminar on the history of German anti-Semitism, and a lecture course on women in rabbinic and medieval Jewish texts. What I discovered while teaching at the University is that although all eighty of my students were strongly opposed to anti-Semitism and had dedicated a large portion of their university years to studying Judaism, they were often oblivious to their own espousal of blatantly anti-Semitic ideas.

"The God of the Jews is a murderous God who

# CHANUKAH

**TIKKUN's guide to celebrating the world's first recorded national liberation struggle.**

## • *The Ritual* •

Each night of Chanukah we light candles, starting with the *shamas* (used to light the others) and one candle, and then adding one additional candle each night for a total of eight nights. The tradition is to sing, dance, and rejoice in our liberation and our freedom.

*The traditional blessings over the candles:*

**All nights:**

1. *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, asher kidshanu bemitzvotav, vetzivanu, lehadleek ner, shel chanukah.*

(Blessed are you, the force that rules all of existence, who sanctifies us by giving us a way of life directed by holy commandments, and commanded us to light the lights of Chanukah.)

2. *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, she'asah nisim la'avoteynu, bayamim hahem, bazman hazeh.*

(Blessed are you, the force that rules the universe, who made possible miracles for our ancestors, in those days, and also makes the same possible for us in our own times.)

**Add on the first night:**

*Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha'olam, shehechiyanu, Vekee-imanu, veheeg-iyanu, lazman hazeh.*

(Blessed are you, the force that rules the universe, who has kept us in life, made us flourish, and made it possible for us to reach this happy occasion.)

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*Next, tell the story and do the "Making It Real" exercise described below.*

## • *The Story* •

*(The non-mythologized version you may never have heard)*

**When King Cyrus of Persia allowed the remnants of the ancient tribes of Judah and Benjamin to return from the exile imposed upon them by Babylonian conquerors in the seventh century before the common era (B.C.E.), they formed the kingdom of Judea. As part of the Persian Empire, and later as part of the empire of Alexander the Great, Judea had relative autonomy to shape its own internal religious life.**

**When Alexander died at the end of the fourth century B.C.E., his empire split into three rival factions, and Judea was caught between two of them: the Seleucids, centered in Syria, and the Ptolemies, centered in Egypt. For the next hundred and fifty years these two kingdoms warred, and each sought to incorporate Judea as part of its empire.**

Although the battle was largely military, there was an important ideological dimension. Alexander had introduced the Jews to Hellenistic Greek culture—its philosophy, its literature, and its impressive technology and power. Forcibly dragged into the larger Mediterranean world, many Jews could see that "the real world" was dominated by wealth and power. Some Jews, primarily those who lived in and around the larger cities, saw an opportunity to join this larger world by becoming merchants and traders, or by establishing political and economic relationships with others in the Hellenistic empire. It was apparent to these Jews that their tribal religion would have little meaning to those who had conquered the world. The religion of their fathers seemed irrelevant in a world reshaped by the "modern" realities of science; they were drawn by the allure of a society that worshipped the body and saw reality in terms of what could be tasted, touched, and directly experienced by the senses.

These Jewish Hellenizers saw no point in resisting Greek rule. Their goal was to live in peace with the powers that ran the world. They could benefit from the connection to the expanding trade of the Hellenistic world. On the other hand, the vast majority of the Jewish people were small, independent farmers, who lived on the land and brought its produce to Jerusalem three times each year to celebrate their hard won freedom from slavery, bore the brunt of the oppressive taxes imposed first by the Greeks, and then alternately, by Seleucids and Ptolemies. These Jews resented foreign rule and detested the city-dwelling elites who seemed to be culling favor with the Hellenistic conquerors, imitating their ways, abandoning the religion of the past, and becoming worshipers at the shrine of political and cultural "reality."

Judea's plight worsened considerably in the early part of the second century with the ascendence to the throne of the Seleucid Antiochus IV. Claiming that he wanted to "protect" Judea from the Ptolemies, Antiochus invaded Judea and marched toward Egypt, where his armies were defeated. He turned back to Judea, and attempted to impose Hellenistic culture by force. He ordered the Temple in Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Greek gods and forbade the practice of circumcision, kashrut, and observance of the Sabbath.

To the already assimilated elites of the city, the new rules were insensitive, but did not constitute a major crisis. Perhaps Antiochus was a boor, but the culture he represented was "happening," while the Jewish religion he forbade was a remnant of the past.

Yet many of the people in the countryside, burdened by Seleucid taxes that expropriated more of their wealth, found the Hellenists' narcissistic fascination with their own power repugnant. The essence of their now-banned religion was its insistence that there was a single God governing the universe who made possible freedom from oppression. It was in the name of that God that they joined a rebellion against the Seleucids under the leadership of a country priest named Mattathais and his five sons (of whom Judah became the most famous, known as "the hammer" or Maccabee).

These Maccabees, as they came to be known, rejected the notion, shared by their contemporary Jewish establishment, that it would be pointless to fight, that one would do best by appeasing the ruling class, learning their language and ways, and accepting their system of oppression. The Maccabees understood Judaism as teaching that "the spirit of the people was greater than the man's technology," or, in traditional Jewish terms, "not by power, and not by might, but by My spirit, says the Lord of Hosts."

To fight against superior military force was totally illogical and unrealistic from the Hellenizers' standpoint. But the Maccabees rejected assessments of "realism" that derived from the framework imposed by the imperialists, and drew instead upon the Jewish religion and the stubborn spirit of a people who had come to believe that every human being was created in the divine image, hence had a right to be treated with respect and decency. These

were people who could not submit to the rule of the imperialist, and whose religion taught them that they need not, because the central power of the universe was a power that rejected the reality of oppression. Their Torah told the tale of their origins in a slave rebellion against another imperialist power thought to be invincible—Egypt of the Pharaohs.

Armed with these stories, the Maccabees and their followers used guerrilla tactics to win the first national liberation struggle in recorded history. In 165 B.C.E. they retook Jerusalem, purified and rededicated the Temple (Chanukah means dedication), and rekindled the eternal light that was to glow therein. The fighting continued many years more, but eventually the Maccabees and their descendants (called Hashmona'im) set up an independent Jewish state.

Unfortunately, that state degenerated as the Hashmona'im tried to become a nation like all other nations, adopting the same perversions of state power that other nations adopted, and becoming "realistic" and hence spiritually and morally corrupt. (Some right-wing Zionists made Chanukah their central observance precisely because they thought Jews could only be secure if they became as ruthless and immoral as everyone else. They did not realize that the whole point is that the victory was made possible because the Jews would *not* accept the logic of everyone else, otherwise they could just assimilate into the Hellenistic would, as so many other peoples did.)

**The Rabbis who shaped Rabbinic Judaism, themselves depressed at the defeat of Jewish rebellions against Rome and, aware of the moral degeneration of the Hashmona'im, tried, by focusing on a story about a miracle of a pot of oil that kept the Chanukah lights burning for eight nights, to downplay Chanukah's importance and reframe it into a minor "religious" event. But the Jewish people intuitively recognized that something miraculous had happened. The miracle was this: A critical mass of people had come to recognize that there was a force in the world that made possible the transformation of what is to what ought to be (the force that we call God). This is what Torah is about and this is why the Jews have been witnesses to God's potential presence in the world. That recognition, when it takes hold of large numbers of people, becomes a manifestation of God's presence, and in that presence "the power of the people" suffused with divine energy becomes greater than all the technology and manipulations of the most sophisticated forms of oppression.**

## • *Making It Real* •

In the contemporary world, Jews have turned Chanukah into a Christmas clone, trying to give their children and each other gifts to approximate the gift-giving frenzy that has been particularly promoted by the capitalist market. While there's nothing wrong with gift giving (the kids in the TIKKUN community made the point that they also like this focus), it can become a substitute for confronting the holiday's rich spiritual message: *what is* does not define *what can be*. So don't get discouraged if the craziness and evil in the world seems overwhelming at times, because it can be changed through our activity as partners with God.

What follows is a spiritual exercise that you can try with your family as a way to give this message more immediacy in our lives.

Each evening, pick a theme (like one of those suggested below) in which you allow yourself to imagine how things could be if they were the way they ought to be. Then, tell in detail what would have to happen in order for your vision to actually be made real, and how you might participate in some way in its actualization. Everyone in the family, chavurah, TIKKUN discussion group or salon, circle of friends, or any other group observing the ritual will share his or her answer to the question for the evening.

*The First Night:* Imagine your life free of the need to accommodate to people with more power than you. How would your life be different?

*The Second Night:* Imagine your life if in the world of work (for children: the world of school) you could fully use your talents and creativity, your desire to cooperate with others, your sense of humor, and your playfulness.

*The Third Night:* Imagine your relationship to your parents if it could be the way that you really would want it to be.

*The Fourth Night:* Imagine the kind of Jewish community you'd like to have, if the Jews were to pray together, do acts of charity and struggle for social justice together, and if in every other way the community supported your highest spiritual, ethical aesthetic ideals, and did so in a way that was fun and emotionally nourishing.

*The Fifth Night:* Imagine what your neighborhood would be like if people really connected with each other as caring neighbors. Now imagine what you'd have to do to get others in your neighborhood to talk about what they'd want, and how they'd go about getting it, so that everyone would live in a friendlier and less-alienated neighborhood.

*The Sixth Night:* Imagine the kind of social-change movement you'd like to be part of.

*The Seventh Night:* Imagine the kind of America you'd like to live in. Now imagine that there was a new president whose agenda was still evolving. Imagine what you could do, together with others, to help influence the direction being taken, and to strengthen the voice of those who seemed to be pushing in the same direction and sharing parts of your vision.

*The Eighth Night:* Imagine what the world might look like if it were to embody the principles that you'd like to see actualized in the world.

*Each night:* Share your vision with others and listen (without criticizing) to theirs. Then rejoice and sing songs of celebration and of struggle.

*Try these exercises and you will see how Chanukah can have a different focus than a mere fixation on who has received the best presents.*

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Please reproduce this and encourage friends to use it as a guide for constructing their own meaningful Chanukah observance. And urge them to subscribe to TIKKUN magazine, so that we get the support we need to continue to develop ideas for how to deepen Jewish observance. To subscribe: send $31 to TIKKUN, 255 West 100th St., Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10025. Written by Michael Lerner, editor of TIKKUN, in memory of his beloved mother, Beatrice I. Hirschman Lerner.

commands Jews to murder everyone who isn't Jewish." So began the text that I distributed one day to my students. It was written by a contemporary German Christian who, like everyone else, condemns anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. I assumed that my students, with their strong backgrounds in Jewish history, would share my reactions of horror and outrage. At least a dozen of them had an impressive knowledge of rabbinic Jewish texts and medieval Jewish philosophy, able to distinguish between a *baraita* and a *tosefta*, and clearly conversant with the major issues at stake in the writings of Sa'adia and Maimonides. But despite their erudition, many of them were confused. What, they wanted to know, was anti-Semitic about that text? Wasn't it simply an accurate depiction of Judaism? Is not the God of the Jews a gruesome, murderous God? Don't Jews strive for the annihilation of non-Jews? Isn't that the message of the Old Testament?



The text I distributed continued by arguing that the God of the Old Testament threatened rape as a punishment of Israelite women. Such a gruesome theology, the author contended, legitimated rape and should be seen as the root cause of contemporary rape and sexual abuse of children in Germany. Quite a few of my students found this line of argumentation plausible. They are used to viewing the Old Testament as the fulminating source of contemporary injustice. For instance, at a student-faculty seminar on racism, students condemned as racist church regulations that pastors must marry Protestants (racism being naively defined as "exclusion"). In explaining the origin of those rules, several students read aloud passages from the Book of Nehemiah which instruct the Jews who returned to ancient Israel from Babylonian exile to marry other Jews. This the students viewed as a racist exclusion of other peoples. If the church today is racist, the students sadly concluded, its source is the Old Testament. In this analysis, history went out the window, as the students ignored the vastly different historical and social circumstances prevailing in 500 B.C.E. and the twentieth century. Defining racism simply as "exclusion," without considering issues of power and political structure, reflected the students' naivete. Considering the question of who excludes whom and to what political purpose might have helped them imagine motives of destruction or self-preservation operative in different circumstances of exclusion. Living in the homogeneous environment of white, Christian German universities (where there are tiny quotas for "foreign" students), they cannot imagine a minority group forming its own exclusive associations not as an expression of racism, but of self-preservation.

Of all the disturbing manifestations of contemporary Germans' insensitivity to their perpetuation of anti-Semitic views I encountered during my year in Frankfurt, the most horrifying is the frequent comparison I encountered in German writings between Judaism and the Holocaust, a comparison that follows logically from the notion that Judaism is violent and dangerous. If the Old Testament condones genocide, in the Books of Joshua, Judges, and Esther, the Nazi genocide might have its roots in the Old Testament. And if appeal to the Old Testament is insufficient, a best-seller published a few years ago by the prominent German journalist Franz Alt claims that Nazism and Judaism are actually analogous: The Nazis automatically obeyed the commands of Hitler, just as Jews automatically obey the commandments of God; both Nazism and Judaism are authoritarian moralities of obedience to orders.

Obviously, not everyone in Germany finds such ideas plausible; many reject them instantly. But what is extraordinary to me is the large number who simply don't see the problem. I can understand someone writing an anti-Semitic book, but I can't understand how so many people opposed to anti-Semitism are incapable of recognizing an anti-Semitic idea when they encounter one. At my public lectures and in private conversations, people couldn't imagine why a comparison of Judaism and Nazism might be objectionable. Instead, they thought the comparison an objective, interesting intellectual exercise free of any anti-Jewish undertones or efforts to absolve German Christians of responsibility. A left-wing Catholic intellectual journal, *Publik-Forum*, recently printed a long diatribe by the popular Christian feminist theologian Christa Mulack comparing the

threatened stoning by some Pharisees of an adulterous woman described in the Gospel of John with the Nazi murderers of Jews: "The comparison is the readiness of both to murder, based on orders, without feeling guilty or taking responsibility." When I asked the editor of the journal why he had printed the article, given the efflorescence of anti-Semitism in Germany (which he deplored), he couldn't grasp why Mulack's comparison of the Pharisees with the Nazi murderers of Jews was offensive. "As a Jew, you are biased," he told me.

I received similar responses from other liberals. An SPD delegate to the Bundestag, who had introduced herself to me after my lecture at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as a German offering friendship to a Jew, saw no anti-Semitism in the comparison of Nazism and Judaism. Anti-Semitism is on the rise in Germany today, she claimed, because of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians, not because it flows unabated from Germany's past. Moreover, she argued, Germany should not pass any laws to protect Jews or Judaism because Germany is a Christian country.

*One elderly German religion teacher suggested that Judaism was responsible for bringing anti-Semitism into the world.*

At a discussion about anti-Semitism which I led in Berlin, each of the fifty church leaders present vigorously denounced Nazism and racism and claimed a personal abhorrence for anti-Semitism. Yet when one elderly religion teacher suggested that Judaism was responsible for bringing anti-Semitism into the world, the other attendees listened impassively. The teacher herself said she was deeply sympathetic to Judaism, having many Jewish friends and making frequent trips to visit the State of Israel. She then went on to argue that before there were Jews, there was no anti-Semitism; Judaism brought anti-Semitism into the world. Why? Judaism is an elitist religion, she said. When I told her at that point that if she didn't stop talking, I would leave, no one in the group could understand my outrage, ascribing my reaction instead to rudeness.

There are two elements that contribute to Germans' perplexing blindness to anti-Semitism. First, most liberals in Germany condemn Nazism as a phenomenon of right-wing authoritarianism; blind obedience to authority resulted in the mass murder of Jews and so many others. Much of the 1968 student revolt and its impact on German education was directed toward ending authoritarianism. On the Left, Nazism was interpreted in psychological, sociological, political categories—but anti-Semitism was virtually ignored.

Second, the blindness results from the almost seamless persistence of anti-Semitic ideas in German culture over the course of the last several centuries, reaching a peak during the Third Reich. They continue to flourish because few people recognize them for what they are. For example, during World War II, German propaganda insisted that Germany was fighting a defensive war against an aggressive Jewish conspiracy. Judaism was labeled a violent, morally degenerate force that sought world domination and Germany's destruction. Today in Germany similar stereotypes of Judaism are used to make Judaism and Nazism analogous. The Nazis did not commit a crime against Jews, but acted in a Jewish manner by murdering Jews. In other words, the Jews fell victim to their own religion. This serves the double goal of condemning Nazism and blaming Jews for their own destruction—all the while absolving German Christians of direct responsibility.

Blaming Judaism for Nazism has taken on a certain cachet in some Left circles, with the suggestion that it represents a more sophisticated, progressive approach to the Holocaust. Mulack, for instance, claims she is applying Theodor Adorno's hermeneutical methods in seeking analogies between Judaism and Nazism. Each of the three times I have criticized her argument in a German journal, Mulack has received several prominent pages in the next issue, allowing her the last word. At best, I am offered the chance to write a letter to the editor, printed in small type. Meanwhile, Mulack's popularity as a writer and lecturer only grows stronger.

A recently published short story by a prominent leader of the German women's movement, Helke Sander, captures the mood of resentment I found among many left-wing Germans. The story describes a telephone conversation in which a feminist researcher is asked by a friend if she would help an Orthodox Jew to obtain a grant. She refuses, explaining, "The will to destruction which we receive in the five books of Moses has already poisoned and perverted enough people in the last few thousand years. The literally murderous patriarchy of the Old Testament, the intolerance, contempt for women, the prohibition against thinking and the authoritarianism and ideology of extermination are filled with the same spirit as the ideology of those who killed the Jews." She goes on to

condemn Germans' concern with the Holocaust because it blinds them from seeing other atrocities, such as nuclear arms, the killing in Iran and Cambodia, the genocide during the colonization of America. Yet her plea is not simply for attention to other problems, but a plea to cease making the Holocaust a primary concern: "I got sick and tired of your Jewish issues long ago," the narrator thinks. Her greatest resentment is that women's issues are treated as marginal in comparison to the Holocaust: "But why get all worked up about Bitburg when the Pope can travel the world without there being a public outcry at the crimes of his institution?"

Sander's story is remarkable for its authentic rendering of a predominant attitude among many Germans, especially within the feminist and peace movements. It's a mentality unable to make distinctions, and one which demands attention to other, legitimate issues only by denigrating the Holocaust. The narrator asks, "When would it be permissible to talk about 'Jewish pet issues' with the same impunity as it seems already possible to talk about 'women's pet issues?'"

Opposition to such ideas certainly exists. Several of the strongest critics of anti-Semitism are Germans, and the most radical work on Christian anti-Judaism is being formulated today by some German theologians. But they are outnumbered and overwhelmed in the context of a country in which prominent intellectuals and professors can condemn anti-Semitism and repeat anti-Semitic motifs in the same breath. For example, Jürgen Moltmann, perhaps the most internationally respected Protestant theologian alive today, recently condemned anti-Judaism but went on to defend arguments formulated by Christian theologians that Jesus "liberated" Christians from the "ghetto" of Judaism's coercions, legalism, unfreedom, blood taboos, and sexism. Such descriptions of Judaism apparently do not constitute anti-Judaism! Moltmann suggested that Jews who write about anti-Judaism do so because they lack a Jewish identity (so is that my problem?!); that such a critique is "anti-Christian" (are Jews once again being called the Antichrist?); and that criticizing someone's work for anti-Judaism was "deathly." (When's the last time a Christian died from a critique of anti-Judaism?) Apparently the critique has become the real danger, not the anti-Judaism.

Like the figure in Sander's story, many Germans are sick and tired of hearing about the Holocaust and resent the suggestion that there is a "German problem" of anti-Semitism. After fifty years, they will tell you, it's enough. Now it's time to move on. After all, most will add, look at the crimes committed by the State of Israel. Trying to cope with the roots of the problem, some have called for removing the sense of taboo that surrounds anti-Semitism, the Holocaust, and the Hitler years. "Dealing with the German past" used to mean constructive confrontation with the crimes of Nazism. Now it means overcoming the past forty-five years of shame over the Third Reich and trying to develop a positive sense of German pride in its history and accomplishments. Yes, Jews suffered, but so did Germans, they argue; the director of an archive told me that what the Americans did to the Germans was even worse than what the Germans did to the Jews. What was that, I asked. "You wanted to drop the atom bomb on Berlin," he answered. "But we didn't do it," I replied. "Just the thought," he said, "indicates the evil, threatening morality of America." And guess who controls America?

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*At the University of Göttingen last spring thirteen distinguished professors of theology issued a call for renewed efforts at converting Jews to Christianity. In their view, permitting Jews to become Christians is the sign they have renounced anti-Semitism.*

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This same archivist saw no anti-Semitism in the propaganda, written by Protestant theologians during the Third Reich, that I had found at his archive which reads, in part: "The German *Volk* stands above all else in a struggle against the satanic powers of world Judaism for the order and life of this world.... If someone is upset about Germany's attitude toward Judaism, Germany has the historical justification and historical authorization for the fight against Judaism on its side!" When I visited the archive in August, this same archivist threatened to deny me further access to the materials I am researching if I publish something that "defames the church." "How can I defame the church?" I asked him. "What these theologians *did* was the defamation, not writing about it." He did not agree.

Along with the anti-Semitism, anti-American feeling in Germany grows ever stronger. What is striking is that the qualities attributed to the United States are so similar to anti-Semitic stereotypes. America mixes itself into other people's business. America gets rich by squeezing other countries poor. America is responsible

for the moral degeneration of Germany. American criminality has infected Germany, introducing violent crime in Germany *for the first time*, I heard repeatedly. Apparently, the violent crimes committed by Germans against Jews, Poles, Africans, and Russians prior to 1945 don't count. Frequently the Gulf War (which massive numbers of Germans loudly condemned) is attributed to powerful Jewish interests that control the U.S. Congress. Strikingly, the war in the former Yugoslavia is almost never a topic of discussion, let alone of mass demonstrations.

Yes, nearly fifty years have passed since the end of Nazism. But they have not been fifty years of German struggle to *overcome* anti-Semitism, just to condemn it. The patterns we see today in Germany began in the immediate post-war years. In the first Protestant response to the Holocaust, in 1948, lay members of the Lutheran Church issued a declaration stating that the Jews were put to death during the Second World War as the result of their original and continuing crucifixion of Christ. Only in 1980 was one regional Protestant church, in the liberal Rhineland, able to declare the continued religious legitimacy of Judaism and renounce missions to the Jews. But elsewhere in Germany official attitudes have remained stagnant. At the University of Göttingen last spring thirteen distinguished professors of theology issued a call for renewed efforts at converting Jews to Christianity. In their view, permitting Jews to become Christians is the sign they have renounced anti-Semitism.

Christian theological attitudes toward Judaism are extremely important in feeding images held by even the secular imagination. Unfortunately, too many people, including academics, distinguish between Nazi anti-Semitism and Christian anti-Judaism. Nazi anti-Semitism, they claim, was the act of murder, preceded by discrimination against Jews simply for being Jewish. Murder and discrimination they reject absolutely. But the stereotypes of Judaism perpetuated in Christian theological texts not only continue, they are believed innocent of any complicity with "secular" Nazi anti-Semitism. One problem is that the word "Judentum" can mean both Judaism (the religion) and Jewry (the people). Some people try to distinguish between hatred of Jews (anti-Semitism), which everyone condemns, and a milder critique of Judaism as a religion (anti-Judaism), which is considered a legitimate exercise of objective analysis. But if "Judentum" refers to both the religion and the people, the distinction between the terms is lost, because condemnations of the religion will simultaneously be condemnations of the people.

In recent years, individual voices of protest have emerged, especially within the Christian theological community in Germany. While the Jewish-Christian dialogue groups around the country are frequented mostly by elderly Christians whose favorite speakers are Jews who proclaim that "Jesus is my brother," scholarship to expose anti-Judaism in Christian texts is growing. When I finished my semester of teaching in Frankfurt, I thought that trying to rid Germany of anti-Semitism was about as likely as using a shovel to empty the ocean of water. But this past summer in Berlin I joined a dozen professors from Israel, Europe, and the U.S. in an intensive program in Jewish-Christian dialogue organized every two years by Peter von der Osten-Sacken, professor of New Testament at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Nearly two hundred German students from all over the country took part, participating in daily seminars and lectures from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Nowhere in the United States does such a sophisticated and radical analysis of Christian anti-Judaism take place. These students and faculty, mostly Protestant theologians, possess a level of understanding that doesn't exist at Christian theological seminaries in America, and a rare willingness to take on some of the most famous Christian theologians (including Jürgen Moltmann) for their anti-Jewish biases. What I found was a community of people just as deeply disturbed as I, but filled with the conviction and optimism that German anti-Semitism really can be overcome. I wish Germany could have a Martin Luther King, Jr., to soften its hearts, but perhaps this group of theologians will one day succeed in bringing about a change of spirit. Miracles can happen.

Reactions from colleagues, friends, and family to my experiences in Germany have ranged from "What difference does it make—there are practically no more Jews in Germany anyway" to "What did you expect?" Yes, there are almost no Jews left in Germany, but we all know that anti-Semitism really has nothing to do with Jews; it can flourish even in places where no Jews live. What we may not all realize, as we focus our outrage on the skinheads and our gratitude on the anti-racism demonstrations, is that anti-Semitism can be kept alive even by those condemning it.

What has emerged in recent years is a new level in the country's cultural response to Nazi anti-Semitism. The reaction of the non-Jewish populace to the Kristallnacht pogrom in November 1938 was primarily disapproval over the violence in the streets and the litter of broken glass from the Jewish shopkeepers' smashed store windows. During the spring and summer of 1943, as Germans learned of the mass murder of the Jews, many believed that their own cities

were being bombed as a kind of divine retribution for the persecution. But with the end of the war, denial took over. "We didn't know" became Germans' post-war motto. Perhaps because they knew they were lying, there was widespread avoidance of the subject of the Holocaust. That silence was broken in the 1980s after German television aired the American mini-series, "Holocaust." For the first time, widespread sympathetic popular discussion began about Jews, Judaism, and the Holocaust.

Soon, however, the old anti-Semitism once again dominated public discourse about Jews and Judaism. The outcry over President Reagan's 1985 visit to Bitburg cemetery, the burial site for many Nazi soldiers, sparked an upsurge in anti-Semitism in West Germany as various German media proclaimed "the power of the Jews" behind the protests. Within the intellectual community, the Historians' Controversy, which intensified in the late 1980s, grew out of certain historians' portrayal of Hitler not as an aggressor but as the defender of Western Europe against the threat of Bolshevism. With support from Chancellor Helmut Kohl, several leading German historians have argued that the Holocaust was only one of numerous instances of suffering during the course of World War II, including the dislocation of German refugees in Eastern Europe and Stalin's murder of millions of Soviet citizens. They rejected the notions that Hitler's crimes were unparalleled, and the sufferings of the Jews unique. Thus, contemporary Germany should be viewed not as a potential threat, but as Western Europe's democratic heroic bulwark against the Eastern menace. Since the Berlin Wall came down (on November 9, 1989, the anniversary of Kristallnacht), a mood has arisen in Germany that the post-war era is finally over, making those of us who persist in discussing the Holocaust seem backward-looking and passé.

Clearly, no one apart from the radical fringe is openly advocating anti-Semitic measures such as expulsion of the Jews. But a shift to the Right is palpable throughout German society. For example, liberals who have insisted on Germany's obligation to provide asylum to victims of persecution increasingly support limitations on asylum-seekers, on the grounds that these outsiders threaten Germany's economy. Similarly, while anti-Semitism remains an outlaw ideology, blaming Judaism for giving rise to anti-Semitism is acceptable in intellectual discourse.

Thus we find among Germans a bifurcated prescription: Anti-Semitism is forbidden, while anti-Judaism is considered intellectual probity. No one should hate Jews as individual people, but it is acceptable to analyze hatred of "others" as an outgrowth of the dysfunctional morality of Judaism.

Obviously, insisting that you're opposed to anti-Semitism while you blame Western civilization's intolerance and racism on Judaism is an absurd and dangerous fiction. For us, as outside observers, it is easy to condemn the neo-Nazi skinheads, since their agenda is brutally obvious. The more intractable problem is the subtle perpetuation of anti-Semitism among those who condemn it, the latest variant in the long history of German anti-Semitism.

What did I expect? Growing up in New York among Jewish refugees and survivors, I was fascinated by German intellectual and cultural life and haunted by nightmares of Nazi murderers. My one comfort was the certainty that surely, after murdering six million Jews, no German could ever again be anti-Semitic. That chapter, at least, was definitely over. From the other side of myself, my academic work on the history of German anti-Semitism doesn't leave me naive enough to think that anti-Semitism would simply disappear with the collapse of the Third Reich.

So if I didn't expect to feel at home in Germany, I did anticipate understanding, contrition, and pain—at least as much pain as we Jews have experienced. To some extent, I found open hearts and minds among my students and colleagues. In my classes I didn't only talk about Judaism, but also about anti-Semitism, taking a cue from the way women's studies and African-American studies incorporate analyses of sexism and racism. My students were eager not only to study but to get to know me, to hear a voice unusual in German universities. When I expressed my rage at an anti-Semitic text, some understood immediately, while others were quiet, wanting to understand but not quite sure they did. The most poignant moment came when a graduate student approached me after class in tears. She doesn't want to be anti-Semitic, she told me; it's abhorrent to her. But she doesn't know what to do, how to get rid of the barrage of stereotypes concerning Judaism that have left her unsure of what's false and what's true. I was touched by her despair and see it as a hopeful sign: Only when the defensiveness and resentment are lifted can Germans begin to recognize the extraordinary depth of anti-Semitism in their culture and realize that their entire culture is complicit in one of the great crimes of Western civilization.

At that moment, too, it can be possible to transform the relationship we as Jews have to Germans from lofty, scolding moralizers to compassionate colleagues in the search to end the culture of anti-Semitism and create a new, democratic German ethos. Certainly we have inherited a vision of a noble Germany from those who loved that country perhaps more than any others: the German Jews. □

# MUTUAL RECOGNITION
## THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ACCORD



*In* TIKKUN *magazine's founding editorial statement (Vol.1, No.1, May 1986) we proclaimed that it is impossible to stay true to the Jewish tradition without working to heal, repair, and transform the situation of Palestinians. That transformation "must entail giving to the Palestinians the same rights of national self-determination that Jews rightly claim for themselves."*

*It would have been easy to position ourselves as a more moderate liberal magazine—gently questioning but avoiding the unhappy task of publicly challenging Israeli policy in the past seven years. We would be more popular with the Jewish establishment and probably wouldn't have to turn to our readers and ask them for financial help. Instead, we insisted that the occupation was both immoral, a violation of the highest values of the Jewish people, as well as being stupidly self-destructive.*

*Our continued calls for Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation were dismissed by many as "unrealistic." What we've learned is that what is realistic in politics depends primarily on people's beliefs about what is realistic. Those beliefs can change, and we are proud to have played a role in that process.*

*In their coverage of the accords between Israel and the Palestinians, the media have focused on the short-term meaning—i.e., their immediate prospects for leading to a cessation of hostilities. We, on the other hand, want to look at the accords from the broader perspective of Jewish history, Jewish destiny, the meaning of Zionism, and the meaning of Judaism. Does the mutual recognition between Palestinians and Israelis have any deeper or lasting significance? Does it in any way matter to the future of the Jewish people, our self-understanding, our Judaism? Is this accord a transformative event, or a redemptive event? Does it have any deep personal significance? Could this be* reyshit tzmichat ge'ulateynu, *the beginning of the flourishing of a redemptive tendency within Judaism or Jewish history in which we repair the pain of the past?*

*In this and the next issue we will print a series of responses to this question, along with analytic pieces about concrete political options facing Israel.*

EDITORIAL

# Down With Cautious Optimism

*Michael Lerner*

Israel was born in fire, and hence in anger and hardness. Today, Israel is being reborn in kindness and in hope. We are at the beginning of what may be seen in future generations as a religious miracle—a cause for celebration and for recognition of God's power working in the world.

Jews did not go to Palestine to grab land or oppress Arabs. We were jumping out of the burning buildings of Europe, and we unintentionally landed on the backs of Palestinians, often hurting them. We didn't intend to hurt anyone, and the accumulated pain of two thousand years made it very hard for us to notice that we *had* hurt someone in the process.

First, their pain seemed so much less to us than *our* pain. How could they complain about having to lose their homes, when we had lost our entire families? We had crawled out of the gas chambers and crematoria—how could anyone dare raise moral questions to us? Second, Jews had been oppressed in Arab lands, and Palestinians had resisted our search for refuge and our pleas when it was *we* who were the homeless refugees—so why should we be more caring toward them then they had been toward us? Finally, they had passively supported and sometimes actively participated in armed struggle against the State of Israel when it was first created—so why should we not see them as enemies?

Moreover, the early Zionists sought to repudiate traditional Jewish values of caring and compassion. These, they said, were the values of the oppressed, the values of the Diaspora Jew seeking to be pleasing to non-Jewish majorities who might otherwise turn on us. The Zionists would show that they were tough and not to be trifled with.

Many resonated to the slogan "*am kechol ha'amim*," that Israel should be a nation like all other nations, rather than attempting to embody any higher or special Jewish values.

They succeeded with a vengeance. Israel became tough and morally insensitive. Never as oppressive as its Arab neighbors or much of the communist world, never as materialistic as the United States, never as chauvinistic as the French or the Germans, never as racist as South Africa or Japan, never as antidemocratic as the Chinese. But nevertheless, a society that repressed the knowledge that it was living in the houses and on the land that had recently belonged to others until they were expelled by the Israeli army, a society that valorized might above all. Significant sectors of religious Zionism followed suit, seeing God's will manifest in the conquests of the Israeli army, certain that Israel ruled over the territories by divine authority.

The pain of our oppression distorted our vision. Arafat became Hitler. Israel, possessor of one of the most powerful military forces in the world, felt itself endangered by a ragtag army of Palestinians, and, when that had been crushed in a few days of the war in Lebanon in 1982, then felt itself threatened by rock-throwing teenagers in the West Bank. Underneath the paranoia was the gnawing knowledge that it had wronged another, and that it must not let itself know that it had done so.

So Israel's toughness was in the service of denial. We don't need anyone, Israelis proudly proclaimed, although this never kept them from pleading for billions of dollars of U.S. assistance each year. The thunder of its insistence that it be treated like every other society, judged by the same standards, was only matched by the shrillness of its outrage when some in the West *did* use the same standards and began to complain about Israeli human rights violations. "Who are you to judge us when you don't live here and share our risks?" proclaimed many Israelis and their right-wing Zionist allies in the United States. This was a criterion for moral judgment that had never been required when Jews or others complained about anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union or Germany, or for that matter when any of us critiqued human rights abuses in Cuba, Haiti, South Africa, China, India, Argentina, Chile, or Eastern Europe.

## *The Saving Remnant in Israel and the Diaspora*

There was always a saving remnant, a group of Jews who stayed true to Jewish values and insisted that Israel should be a Jewish state by embodying Jewish values of love, compassion, and social justice.

Even before the state was founded, people such as Ahad Ha'am, Martin Buber, and Judah Magnes insisted that Israel must recognize the rights and needs of the Palestinians. That consciousness was in remission for the first several decades of Israel's existence, particularly after the military victory of the Six Day War brought euphoric chauvinism to the fore. But it reemerged in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, and gained ground with the founding of Peace Now in response to the excesses of the Lebanon War. Groups such as Yesh Gvul (there is a border or boundary) and organizations such as B'Tselem (human rights in the territories), political parties such Ratz, Shinui, and Mapam (eventually merged into Meretz), segments of the Labor party, and groups inside the kibbutz movement all began to speak out against the occupation, not only because of what it was doing to Palestinians but also because of what it was doing to destroy the soul of Israel.



Israel had a political structure that honored and gave voice to minorities. It was harder for dissenters to be heard in the United States. The American Jewish community is dominated by the fund-raisers and wealthy donors and has no commitment to allowing dissenters a public voice. Jewish newspapers, largely functioning as adjuncts to the local federations and their fund-raising aims, either ignored or excoriated those who questioned Israeli policy. Perhaps feeling guilty at their own failure to adequately protest U.S. inaction during the Holocaust, perhaps feeling guilty that they would not match their Zionist conviction with a willingness to actually live in Israel, many Jews in the organized Jewish community viciously repressed all dissent, often labeling as "traitors" or "self-hating Jews" those who dared raise moral issues about Israeli policy.

Most younger Jews responded by voting with their feet. They stopped identifying with the organized Jewish community. If this was Jewishness, they felt, then they wanted no part of it. The repression of dissent played a major role in driving young Jews away, guaranteeing a crisis of Jewish continuity for future generations.

Yet there were hundreds of thousands of Jews who would not be driven away. At Seder tables, or when visiting their families, they would engage in vigorous debate, insisting that Israel was *not* living up to Jewish values, that the repression and denial of the existence of Palestinians was not mandated by Torah or by Jewish history. There were hundreds of thousands of acts of individual courage as many people fought for their intuitive sense of what God and Torah really required, even in the face of abusive language that dismissed them as "self-hating" or as having internalized anti-Semitic norms.

And there were those who took even greater risks—by working to organize publicly as Jews against Israeli policy in the Territories. Breira, in the seventies, New Jewish Agenda in the eighties, Americans for Peace Now, the Jewish Peace Lobby, the Jewish Peace Fellowship, Friends of Yesh Gvul, and dozens of other efforts emerged as younger Jews in the United States refused to cede their heritage to the neoconservatives who were increasingly dominating the institutions of Jewish life. And then TIKKUN emerged as the most visible unifying voice of these dissenters, a place where their ideas could be presented, the inner dialogue of the Israeli peace movement could be shared, and the public could be shown that these voices represented a majoritarian sentiment of American Jews (though most had long since abandoned the institutions of American Jewish life). The extra costs to make a slick and beautiful cover, to print in perfect binding and on quality paper, were all part of a political strategy to show that the peace forces could not be dismissed as marginal. In 1989, when Yitzhak Shamir came to the United States orchestrating a public relations campaign designed to convince Israelis that there would be no serious opposition to his continuation of the occupation despite the Intifada, while the Young Leadership of the Jewish Community Federations held

# Making Peace with Our Neighbors and Ourselves

*Shimon Peres*

The signing of the Israel-PLO accord is more than a political milestone; it is a transformative event which touches every Jewish family—physically, emotionally, spiritually. On the one hand, this historic step allows the Jewish people to fulfill the Zionist mission: to be a chosen people—a people who overcomes physical limitations and creates great hope. On the other hand, it empowers Israel to fulfill its destiny to become not just a territorial homeland, but also to represent a permanent moral commitment — a "light unto all nations."

Taking a leading role in building a new future for the next generation of Arabs and Israelis, Christians, Moslems, and Jews enables the Jewish people once again to assume its classic role as a humanistic people. The essence of our history since the times of Abraham and the commandments of Moses has been an uncompromising opposition to any form of occupation, domination, or discrimination. We have always believed that democracy is not only the right to be equal but also the right to be different, and that despite all the changes and the differences, every man is created in God's image. He did not empower any one of us to say who is superior and who is inferior, or give us permission to put ourselves above others.

Unfortunately, in modern times, as we engaged in conflict with the Palestinians and the Arabs, we became in conflict with ourselves and our own values. We are adamant that we must adhere to our enduring moral commitment. By doing so, we are becoming at peace with our neighbors, and, most important, ourselves.

In addition, for two thousand years while the Jewish people were in exile, we carried a message, yet we were bereft of a home. Now, we are blessed to have been reunited with our ancient land, and we are committed to never allow Israel to become a land barren of a message. We have embarked on a course which will allow Israel to have both a message and a land, bringing to life the biblical expression of "a land flowing with milk and honey."

We are working for a different future for the Palestinians as well. The agreement signed with the Palestinians is meant to assuage old wounds, solve past conflicts, and furnish future solutions for areas, borders, demilitarization, and autonomy. Israel will make every effort to ensure the agreement becomes not just a political document but a successful reality—politically, economically, and socially. Economic growth, political identity, and social justice are interfused. This will be only the beginning of the road, however, and much work remains to be done. Before us is the main task—the shaping of a new Middle East.

We now possess the opportunity to breathe a spirit of hope into our region, which has been laden with much distress and despair. Equally Israelis and Arabs can give birth to a new age, in which every nation will have its own flag, every faith with its own prayerbook, and all states can cooperate to build the future of the entire region.

The future may appear as a dream. Nonetheless, with the signing of the Israel-PLO accord, we have taken the first step toward the realization of our mission—as a nation and as a people. □

*Shimon Peres is Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs.*

a banquet to honor him and stood on the top of tables cheering as he promised never to return any land, it was TIKKUN that organized a full-page advertisement in The *New York Times* titled "No Mr. Shamir" signed by hundreds of prominent American Jews openly asserting that the American Jewish majority would not support continued Israeli occupation—and this generated front-page news stories throughout the world (including Israeli dailies). Throughout the country, we organized public gatherings of progressive Jews who came together to affirm their commitment to Judaism and the Jewish people while simultaneously demanding that Israel change its policies.

The costs were high. Young rabbis and Jewish professionals who joined Breira in the 1970s, or New Jewish Agenda in the 1980s found that their careers were hurt or sometimes ruined as right-wingers prevented their hiring or promotion. Hundreds of Jewish educators and journalists had to leave the Jewish world because they could not teach or write what they believed. Tens of thousands of people faced ruptures in their relationships with their families when they stood up for their beliefs. TIKKUN was turned down for all support by every Jewish community federation and every other mainstream Jewish organization. And every month, for over five years, I received vicious death threats from Jewish right-

wingers.

There are tens of thousands of activists who worked for New Jewish Agenda, Breira, Americans for Peace Now, TIKKUN, and hosts of other organizations who deserve to be honored today for what they did to make peace possible.

## *How The Diaspora Helped the Israeli Peace Movement*

At the White House signing of the peace accord, many Israelis approached me and asked me to thank the TIKKUN community and, through TIKKUN, the millions of American Jews who supported the Israeli peace movement. It's somewhat unusual to hear Israelis acknowledging any help from the Diaspora, so I asked them specifically what they meant—in what way did American Jewish support make a difference?

They pointed out that ten months before the 1992 election in Israel, years into the Intifada, polls indicated that Shamir would win easily—if he could solve the economic problem caused by Soviet Jewry. Shamir's solution: loan guarantees from the United States for billions more in aid to stimulate the economy. It was President Bush's insistence that loan guarantees be linked to a settlement freeze that changed everything.



That linkage, Israeli peace activists argue, would have been impossible for a president seeking re-election had the majority of American Jews been willing to back the attempt of American Jewish establishment spokespeople who labeled Bush's action "anti-Semitism." For years, American Jewish peaceniks had been educating the public to the idea that one could oppose specific policies of the State of Israel without identifying with those who sought Israel's destruction. When TIKKUN and others spoke out publicly in support of linkage between a freeze on settlements on the West Bank and the loan guarantees, we created the political space that made it safe for Bush to do what he did.

The impact in Israel was decisive. Many Russian Jews who had previously sided with Shamir realized that their future was dependent on ending Shamir's policies. Many Israeli centrists began to realize that faced with the choice between economic prosperity or endless war in the territories they preferred the former. These were important elements in the electoral defeat of Shamir and the Right at the polls in 1992. And American Jews played an important role.

## *A Politics of Meaning Triumph*

The triumph of hopefulness over paranoia is a triumph for what TIKKUN calls a politics of meaning. The received wisdom is that people only act from a narrow conception of self-interest, that they must assume that the other party is out for themselves without regard to your needs, and that it is a dog-eat-dog world in which others will take advantage of you if you don't take advantage of them first.

In TIKKUN, we've argued that human beings have a different set of needs—to be part of loving communities of meaning and purpose that allow people to transcend the dynamics of self-interest and root them in a moral and spiritual framework.

At every moment each of us is torn between the part of us that thinks we had better act out of narrow self-interest, and the part of us that wants to have a morally and spiritually meaningful life that involves love, caring, and trust of others. In every interaction we are assessing how much we should go with either of these parts of our self, and our judgment is influenced by our perception of the totality—namely, what we imagine to be the principles governing the choices that all other people are making at this moment. Particularly in Israel there has been a strong societal injunction to not be seen as a fool by trusting others when they are really out to take advantage of you. None of us wants to be seen as a sucker—and this concern makes us cynical about the intentions of others.

What made the spirit of the sixties possible was that at a particular moment in history there emerged a critical mass of people who were willing to act out of principles rather than on their self-interest, and that willingness was infectious, spreading like wildfire throughout the society, liberating the pent-up idealism of millions. Conversely, Reagan and Bush legitimated a dominant selfishness by reenforcing the parts of us that are sure that we are likely to be sacrificing ourselves if we don't pull away from public life and resolutely pursue our own individual self-interest.

For years there have been small dialogue groups in Israel aimed at creating this sense of trust between people. Out of these groups emerged a growing sense that the "other," the "enemy," could be trusted. During the Shamir years Peace Now demonstrations would often draw a maximum of 100-200 people, and everyone would leave discouraged that there had not been thousands. But in thousands of little acts of dialogue, Israelis and

Palestinians were beginning to make peace on the ground. It was these individual acts of reaching out, acts of courage, that created the precedent for the Oslo meetings. And what was critical in the Oslo process was the creation of an atmosphere of trust and communication—precisely what was absent from the formal negotiations in Washington that were rapidly leading nowhere.

What ultimately makes it possible for one human being to trust another? The facts don't change—there are still rational reasons for mutual distrust between Israelis and Palestinians. What makes it possible for one group to recognize the other as deserving of respect and caring, not just as "evil Other"? It's a shift of focus, of course. But what makes that possible? When we have been abused and hurt, and our tendency is to act out on others the pain that was acted out on us, what makes it possible to break this repetition compulsion?

I call the force in the universe that makes possible the breaking of the repetition compulsion and thus the ability to achieve this kind of mutual recognition God. So it was God that made it possible for Abraham to look into the eyes of Isaac and see a human being, made in the image of God, who deserves to be treated with respect and caring. God was the voice that called to Abraham and told him not to sacrifice his son. And it is God that makes possible the reconciliation of the children of Isaac and the children of Ishmael.

In that very important sense, what we are witnessing is a religious event, a moment in history in which the possibility of recognizing the other is triumphing over the accumulated legacy of pain and fear that normally make it impossible for us to hear anything but our own pain and our own fears.

## Israeli-Palestinian Timetable for Peace

**September 13, 1993 through April 13, 1994**

- Redeployment of Israeli forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (outside Palestinian population centers)
- Israel retains responsibility for external security, internal security, general order & security for Israeli settlements; Israeli forces & civilians continue to have free access to roads in Jericho and Gaza Strip

**September 13, 1993**

PLO-Israeli peace agreement signed in Washington

**October 13, 1993**

Agreement goes into effect

**December 13, 1993**

Signing of agreement for Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho

**April 13, 1994**

Israeli forces complete withdrawal; interim phase begins

### Five-year interim phase:

**April 13, 1994 to April 13, 1997**

Negotiations for final settlement begin as soon as possible after the interim phase goes into effect, and at a date no later than the third year after the interim phase. These negotiations lead to the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 & 338. The following issues will be discussed: final status of Jerusalem; refugees; Israeli settlements; security arrangements; borders; cooperation and communication with neighboring countries; other issues of mutual concern.

**July 13, 1994**

- General elections for Palestinian council
- Establishment of Palestinian police force
- Dissolution of Israeli Civil Administration & withdrawal of military government; transfer of authority from Israeli military government and its civil administration to authorized Palestinian bodies; new authorities to be responsible for education, culture, social affairs, direct taxation, and tourism.

**April 13, 1999**

- End of five-year interim phase
- Final settlement goes into effect

## *Guarded Optimism is Destructive*

It was quite amazing to be at the White House during the signing of the mutual recognition accord. I was alternately shouting for joy, applauding, and crying, shouting, and crying more. It felt like a moment in which God-energy was being made manifest in the world, and so I entered Rosh HaShana more eager to say those prayers ("*U'vhen ten pachdecha*" or "*Aleynu*") that envision the possibility of God's energy actually triumphing in human history.

But what I noticed at the White House was that most of the invitees were people who had spent the past years doing everything they possibly could to make sure that what was actually happening would *not* happen and ridiculing anyone who thought that it could. Since they are not democratically elected, the Jewish establishment leaders have always used their supposed ties to Israel as a source of legitimation, and now they would have to find their way onto the bandwagon. Their way was suddenly to be "for" the peace process while insisting that we not be too celebratory, that we remember the risks, that we be cautious.

Yet caution is the opposite of what we need. Where were these people with their words of caution, their public expressions of fears, their prayers for Israel's safety, when Israel took over the West Bank? Why was it so easy to celebrate when a military

occupation had begun, so hard when peace might be at hand? Why were they not expressing their fears when Israel decided to continue the occupation?

Caution will destroy the momentum of optimism. What is needed today is a celebratory public embrace of the possibilities for peace that have opened up.

More. We need to turn to the Palestinians with our most optimistic and hopeful selves, letting go of our fears and our paranoia, letting go of the parts of our past that make it difficult for us to see the possibilities of the present.

What happens in Israel will be a direct product of the degree to which optimism and hopefulness triumph over cynicism, pessimism, and the repetition compulsion. The Right understands this, as do the Islamic fundamentalists. Both are determined to undermine the prospects of peace. Both will engage in provocative actions that provide "evidence" for those Israelis and Palestinians who are waiting to be shown that nothing can really work. You can be sure that the media will dramatize those provocative actions.

But those who love peace and care about the safety of the Jewish people must counter this tendency toward fear and pessimism with an infectious optimism, with an overpowering spirit of love and caring. Let every American Jew who ever went on a "mission" to Israel to help it defend itself now return as an agent of hopefulness and trust. Let them flow into the West Bank and Gaza, bearing gifts of good will and caring. Perhaps we need a peace corps of Jews and others from around the world who will work to build joint Israeli-Palestinian projects aimed at sharing and reconciliation. At least we need to be unequivocally identifying with the peace forces, rejoicing in their victory, and scolding those who are can only see danger when we talk about peace.

The danger comes equally from the Left. When *The Nation* responded to the peace accord by printing a denunciation by Edward Said, one could only shake one's head in disbelief. Yes, we know that lasting peace will require full self-determination for the Palestinians. But why can't these leftists understand that Rabin and Peres have opened up a process that could go in that direction, if in the meantime enough mutual confidence is built on both sides. The Israeli public is not prepared to go much further than Rabin went as a first step—they quite understandably want to see if the Palestinians can take power without threatening Israeli security. I wish Rabin had gone further, but I rejoice in how far he went. When Rabin issued orders to "break the bones" of Intifada demonstrators, we at TIKKUN labeled him "the Pharaoh of Gaza." In Washington, I congratulated him on his courage. The Left has to stop snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Possibility is not inevitability—it's always possible that the process will be derailed. But whether it will or won't partially depends on how *we* act in the meantime, and the degree to which we can build a climate of hopefulness and mutual trust.

Every act of caring, every moment of sensitivity, will be repaid. But every provocative act will undermine. Every moment that we allow ourselves to be primarily hopeful rather than primarily discouraged will make a difference, will make it more likely that others will act from their most hopeful and idealistic place.

One key is to fight against the racist assumptions that somehow Palestinians are not really human beings, have a different psychology, don't really share our mentality. The truth is the opposite. Palestinians are as likely as we are to want peace and security, to hunger for the same recognition that has been denied us these many centuries, to share our fears and to share our hopes. If we approach the Palestinian people with this understanding, if we fight against every tendency within ourselves to discount them, if we understand their momentary retreats as similar to our momentary retreats, the resort to violence on the part of some of their extremists as not fundamentally dissimilar to the resort to violence on the part of Jewish extremists, we have a real chance of turning the possibility of peace into a lasting reality. We should rejoice in *their* victory: these are the people who are going to be our neighbors, so let's let them know that we hope for their well-being.

## *The Beginning of the Flourishing of Our Redemption*

The official prayer for the State of Israel calls it "the beginning of the flourishing of our redemption." I believe that the current rebirth of Israel offers us this possibility, the opening of a period of several hundred or several thousands of years in which the possibility of the redemption of Jewish history gets put on the historical agenda—the beginning, not the full actualization.

Part of what will make this possibility actualizable is the degree to which we believe in it, and the degree to which we act that way and get others to do so, particularly in the subtle details of how they treat the Palestinians. Every subtle denial of respect, every move based on paranoia, will make it less likely that the Palestinians respond in a trustworthy way. And conversely, every time they approach us in ways that assume our continuing role as enemy, they will be

# In the Middle of the Journey

*Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi*

What usually characterizes this country in October is a collective thirst. The dry, dusty, drought-cracked soil yearns for the first rain that comes only after much pleading, praying, and petitioning.

This year the land has experienced a climatic change more quenching than the rains of October, more resounding than the first thunder. The binary structures that separated our lives into rigid measures of dry and wet, light and dark, ours and theirs, have yielded suddenly to a new way of seeing. Even the stones have given up something of their stoniness.

*Reysheet tzmichat ge'ulateynu?* Perhaps it is perennial thirst that generates hallucinations and hyperbole in this part of the world... We have, in any event, grown so weary over the past few decades of the rhetoric of redemption, of its exclusivist utopias and its false messiahs. The language of Jewish piety will have to be reclaimed from the camp of the zealots, and that will take some time and attentiveness to the bruised moral sensibility of liberal Jews and Arabs alike. One of the sources of viability of Jewish culture in Exile was its invention of the endlessly deferred end which allowed one to concentrate on the middle—without overvaluing it. Judaism was once, and can be again, a language of pragmatic ethics, of middles without end, of journeys with remote destinations. In the middle of this journey of our lives we have perceived ourselves to be in a dark wood and have, quite simply, changed course...

The present tense in Hebrew, which still just barely exists between past and future, is the "*beinoni*," the middle, the in-between, not the heroical-tragical voice of paradises lost or regained but just the squeak of the here and now. One of the most desperate idioms of a people who lived for so long in a deferred present was the cynical *"yihiyeh tov"* (things will be all right) in response to any form of greeting. No one seems to be saying it these days. The *"tov"* is here, like the first rain of the season; we can taste it and smell it and touch it. It is the simple "joy and happiness that we all feel at the possibility of making Israel more secure." More just. More real. It may be as close to redemption as any earthly society needs to be. It removes the veil from our eyes so that we can begin to repair the damage of decades of stumbling in the dark.

The repair work will begin in the workplace, in the schools, in the streets. It will be tedious and often thankless and less than dramatic. Living in the *beinoni* may be more boring than living at the threshold of redemption, and talking economics more pedestrian than talking of the Hosts of the Lord or Manifest Destiny, but a little boredom is precisely what is needed to mend the shattered nerves and broken hearts of the people in this region.

The Holy Land has always been a place where radical changes in the very topography take place through a slight shift in the lens of the viewer. Every pilgrimage redefines the sacred center and the sacred mission. My son is still in the army. The only thing that has changed is that he is serving his country not in the name of colonialist aspirations or messianic visions, but in the name of something we call peace, something we recognize as surely as we recognize the rain in the first haphazard drops that fall.

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making it less likely that we can stay on the path to peace.

But this is a very special moment.

Imagine an Israel in which people no longer felt the need always to be tough and aggressive and defensive, in which they didn't need to prove that they were better than everyone else, in which they weren't focused on winning or losing. Imagine an Israel in which people could open themselves up to the ethical and spiritual message of Judaism, free of the chauvinists who now dominate the scene. Imagine an Israel in which the Jewish capacities for love, for social justice, for sensitivity to others, for intellectual development, for spiritual aliveness, for imagination, for humor, for playfulness were all suddenly liberated and encouraged. Imagine an Israel in which the best of the Diaspora experience could be validated and incorporated into an emerging Jewish culture.

Such an Israel is now a real possibility, something that we might see emerging in the next fifty to one hundred years. It will take lots of work to heal and repair all the pains of the past. But it can be accomplished, and it will be accomplished. Not immediately, and not without more setbacks, and not without more struggle. But something is changing, something too dramatic to permanently reverse. People are beginning to taste the joys of anticipation of peace, and even if they retreat from it, for a moment or a year or a decade, they will return, because hope and love and peace are too good to give up forever. So this is a moment in Jewish history that is a new beginning, though only a beginning. To have lived to be able to say that with confidence is part of the reason that I can thank God joyfully for keeping me in life to experience this happy moment. □

# Dimensions of Dialogue

*Wendy Orange*

*Your knots are in my soul.*

-Old rabbinic saying

Although people on both sides of the great ethnic divide here in Israel and in the territories have for years discouraged socializing, dialogue, or working relations between Palestinians and Jews, the "other" culture is always a defining presence.

Ironically, the dialogue process from which the current peace accord emerged suggests a new ethic: It shows that Israelis and Palestinians, getting to know each other informally and in depth—an activity scorned for years by many (including some hard-nosed peace activists) as marginal, irrelevant, and a waste of time—can now become the spirit of the land.

Reading about the clandestine meetings between Palestinians and Israelis in Oslo, it's obvious that the "safe space" in which these discussions could take place (created by the Norwegian foreign minister and his wife) mirrored the informality and honesty of dialogue groups of ordinary Jews and Palestinians ongoing in Beit Sahur, Nablus, and Jerusalem during the last several years. High-level Palestinians and Israelis could hear each other, identify with each other's situations, and participate in emotionally charged mutual recognitions.

Strategies, maps, and arguments over the narrative of Mideast history, past and future, combined with walks in the gardens, playing with dogs and children, laughing, crying, and midnight meals to yield the necessary emotional thaw that led to the breakthrough. Contrast the atmosphere that generated the current ingenious political strategy, this so unexpected recognition between Israel and the PLO, with the posturing and hair-splitting that characterized the formal Washington "rounds," those snail-paced sessions that only created tension, lability, and increased frustration on the ground.

What happened in Norway was not a brilliant coup for political strategists, but a triumph of the human need to be seen and recognized, to brave an identification with the "enemy," to cross the magnetic divide so powerful and intransigent in the Middle East. What's clear from studying this confluence of the personal and the political is that the "merely political" is not, and will never be, a deep enough connection to build a real peace out of this particular conflict. Real peace will be created by small acts of mutual recognition between Jews and Palestinians, moments of reaching out to one another and hearing each other.

Of course, every act of reaching out also risks moments of tension and misunderstanding, moments in which we feel misrecognized, angry, or confused. I well know how difficult this can be. For the past year I've been going to Gaza and the West Bank, talking to people many Israelis felt could not be talked to, listening to their anger and pain, participating in their hopes and fears—even though at times that left me emotionally drenched, as an internalized Palestinian began forming within me, disturbing my pride in, though never my loyalty to, my powerful Jewish identity.

Just after the Oslo breakthrough, I joined a group of Israelis who have been meeting with Palestinians in the town of Beit Sahur for a dialogue group. At one such meeting, a Palestinian man asked a German Israeli woman who works as a guide at Yad Vashem whether she thinks the Palestinians should erect their own memorial and information center for their people's sufferings. After a long pause, he answered his own question: "I don't think so, not now, and not for a long time to come. You built your Israeli state on remembering, and *you've* never been at peace. I hope we'll build our state on good relations among ourselves and with you, our neighbors."

"But you haven't suffered anything comparable to our Holocaust," an Israeli man, perhaps an aging Holocaust survivor, says angrily. The room remains quiet. No one rises to the bait of this charged topic;

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obviously they've covered this territory many times in their six years of meeting. A look of bemused patience passes around the faces of the other Israelis in the room. Everyone hears the unspoken words circling the room: We don't need to compare or compete over suffering; we need to create a world in which there is less of it. The group seems to know that the important work now is crafting a *modus vivendi* for co-existence, not airing grievances.

*Peace work here and in our respective diasporas will now need to evolve new forms as we brave those inner and outer obstacles to get to know our former "enemies," those we purport to know already but do not.*

The next day I sat for hours in Jericho with a local grocer, Itzaq Shawa, as his customers came and went, many of them unable to buy food or toiletries because their resources had been wiped out by the long closure of the territories. Nevertheless, their jubilant energy is palpable. "They eat politics for breakfast, lunch, and dinner," says Shawa.

He tells me about the three Israelis who visited his home for lunch the day before. At first they pretended to be Americans, but then, in the warmth of the occasion, revealed themselves. Their deception troubles Shawa because he feels it so unnecessary. "We want to get to know Israelis and Jews," he insists. "Once we realized our guests were our neighbors, whom we had never met directly, the whole atmosphere in my home became emotionally giddy. We couldn't stop laughing. Our children couldn't believe these were actually Israelis. In one hour of laughing and talking, five years of the Intifada disappeared," he said proudly.

Like most Palestinians, Shawa is no fool. He knows that many of his people have been jailed, beaten, shot, tortured, or killed. Their anger will not disappear just because there has been an accord. He has many doubts about the official Israeli intentions, many concerns about what lies ahead, a few years hence, when the issue of Jerusalem becomes central. But his desire to know ordinary Israelis and Jews is touchingly sincere; typical of most Palestinians in the territories I have met.

Yes, many Palestinians have fixed, crazy ideas about the Jewish religion; they often assume a world conspiracy among Jews to betray and diminish them. But Palestinians have fierce grievances against the Arab nations as well. And whatever their ideas, in their interactions with Jews, Palestinians are keenly alert to any signs of goodness and hope they might offer. Palestinians are willing to scan the atmosphere for these signs, to de-demonize the Jews in order to create a space in which hope for their future can grow.

The "cautious optimism" and "wary hope" I hear on the streets of Israel, and on a recent trip to the United States, strikes me as far too passive. For Israelis and American Jews need to become active in fostering the coming peace. We need to drop some of our collective intransigence and show some curiosity about who these Palestinians so close to us really are. Peace work here and in our respective diasporas will now need to evolve new forms as we brave those inner and outer obstacles to get to know our former "enemies," those we purport to know already but do not.

For there is no meaning as charged as being accurately reflected in the psyche of another. Especially sweet, even if at times wrenching, is being seen clearly by a demonized enemy, who himself turns out to be so different than the images we have been taught to hold of him. Inside the smallest mutual recognition lies a kind of redemption I don't see how either side can achieve alone.

• • •

After writing these thoughts, I had a flash of fear that some group of Jewish American tourists, wanting to do good, or some man or woman in the midst of an existential crisis of meaning, would read what I've written, get on a plane to Israel, and proceed to Gaza, where they might be killed, or to the West Bank where they might have a hair-raising experience. But driving around the territories these past few weeks assured me that despite the headlines that underscore occasional dangers, we who are peace-loving and open-minded are safe; Palestinians have a sixth sense for the inner stance any Jew assumes.

Judith Green, an immensely respected organizer of dialogue groups, bolsters my instinct to trust, telling me that she recently went door-to-door in Nablus (a town where 40 percent of the population opposed the peace accord) distributing flyers advocating the peace accords, written in Hebrew, Arabic, and English. She was greeted warmly as she sought signatures for a petition for "two states side by side." No stones, no

hostility. My impression at this time is that the Middle East is becoming, more acutely than ever, a morality play in which the forces of trust and mistrust, of optimism and pessimism are as much at war—maybe more so—as are the Palestinians and Israelis.

On October 4, thirty Israelis were hurt, though none seriously, in a car-bombing of a busload of soldiers in the territories. The next day, Ariel Sharon declared: "There is not even one day of peace but a worsening of terrorism": a blatantly false statement.

The bombs and the rhetoric have their own momentum. The continuing violence of the Israeli army in Gaza while searching for "wanted" Palestinians, in tandem with occasional acts of violence by Palestinians, triggers that mindset of doubt in each of us that wonders whether this arrangement can really work.

The forces of hope have much less publicity than the forces of hate. In the news media, bad news usually makes news. So when thirty Israelis are endangered, the world hears about it instantly, but when there are events that foreshadow ideal communities in the Middle East—positive fantasies in action—you have to be here to know about it.

• • •

In the territories in mid-October, the dominant Palestinian concerns are shifting away from occupation to fearful fantasies of intra-Palestinian power struggles as the world watches to see if the Palestinians can create a non-violent democracy—a tall order. The mood toward Jews in general and Israelis in specific seems far more relaxed than it was before the peace accord.

Talking to high-ranking Palestinians involved in the formation of their new political "entity," I've heard many say—in East Jerusalem, in Hebron, Nablus, and Jericho—that their main concern is not the extremist group Hamas, but rather PLO leader Yasir Arafat and his troops from Tunis. "Hamas is a minor issue," says Hakam Fahoun, a Palestinian journalist. "World opinion enlarges both the size and dangers of Hamas."

Will the PLO leader and his entourage encourage a democracy to flourish, or will they bring with them to

## Joy and Mourning

*Michael Rosenak*

The Land of Israel is a pillar of Judaism, "the Lord's inheritance," in which Israel is to live a holy life. It is thus not only a place but an envisioned ideal and norm. Zionism is a modern movement, a proposed solution to the dual problems of the Jews and of Judaism. Hence the present journalistic fashion to consider as wild-eyed fundamentalists all who are attached to a "mythic entity which they call Eretz Yisrael" is false and deceitful. It makes fundamentalists of all believing Jews.

Those choked by frustration and anger who denounce present developments see only Eretz Yisrael. Claiming to be the only true Zionists, they have allowed their genuine and pious love of Zion to blind them to what Zionism has become; a liberation of the Jews that is maintained on the inevitably cruel rule of others. The paradox of their Zionism is that Zionism is intended to solve Jewish problems and they refuse to see the problem. Having confused it with their Judaism, their national ideology has itself become a rigid faith nourished by a harsh theology.

Conversely, those who are in a state of euphoria have divorced the problem of the Jews from Judaism and its land. They have no need for "the Lord's inheritance." Allegedly secular nationalists, they lack what every patriot everywhere takes for granted, attachment to one's country. At the prospect of losing parts of the tiny land which alone Jews can call their own, they profess nothing but relief and even joy. This is not only undignified and diplomatically inane, but it testifies to a cosmopolitan estrangement where there should be, at least, a sense of bereavement.

The future of the agreement is uncertain but it offers a hope of peace, perhaps even security, that has long eluded us. What is happening shows that change, radical, unexpected, and promising, is possible. And a change in the direction of peace and the chance of greater decency is surely never devoid of redemptive qualities. We may be on the way to becoming a rich and crass ghetto, but perhaps we are entering an age of great Zionist achievement and Jewish renaissance. In praying for the latter, we realize that it will cost us parts of our beloved land and even Jewish houses and fields, but we hope that it will restore much of our potential for a holy life in what remains to us. Therefore, I suggest that on the day we relinquish parts of Eretz Yisrael, we recite the *Shehechiyanu* blessing in joy, and at the same time make a tear in our garments as mourners.

*Michael Rosenak is professor of Jewish education at the Hebrew University.*

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the territories autocratic corruption, fancy Mercedes, and secret bank accounts? Palestinian leaders in the territories fear that Arafat's return may mark the introduction of authoritarian methods and new, sinister human rights abuses in an effort to shift the power away from those who have been living here and organizing Palestinian life all through the Intifada.

• • •

Sitting with friends over dinner in Beit Zayit, a suburb of Jerusalem, as Shabbat comes to a close on October 9, we hear on the radio that two Israelis have just been hacked to death this afternoon in Wadi Kelt, a popular hiking spot near Jericho. The mood in the room shifts suddenly, leaving everyone feeling fragile and upset.

The geography of Israel has its own lexicon, unclear to those from abroad. The suicide bomb two weeks ago in the territories happened in a place frequented mainly by settlers or soldiers. Although the action was claimed by Hamas, suicide bombers are generally thought to be isolated "crazies." In contrast, Wadi Kelt is a popular hiking spot, only five miles from Jericho. That those killed were young Israelis enjoying a beautiful October day speaks to the collective fear about personal security near Jericho and Gaza, as the bus incident did not. Every Israeli I've spoken with has had the same, immediate response: remembering when last they were there, recalling the beauty of the area, knowing it could have been them.

Yet driving from Jerusalem to Jericho the next day, a young Palestinian civil engineer and I are so engaged in what Herb Kelman, a father of dialogue groups, calls "joint thinking," that we forget to look out at the fields of Wadi Kelt. What Adnan and I find ourselves saying has little to do with our egos, our trepidations, or the worst of our cultural conditioning. It has nothing to do with flirtation: He is half my age. It has curiously little even to do with us personally, although we are well-matched because I've had varieties of this experience with other Palestinians, he with other Jews. What is happening as Jewish consciousness joins for a time with Palestinian "otherness" (or as Palestinian consciousness meets the Jewish mindstream) is an intimate, if archetypally impersonal, adventure which may not directly stop the killings and abuses on the ground, but which certainly brings a cease-fire to the killing field that is the mind at war.

Driving all over the West Bank, talking to each other and to Palestinians from every class in many towns and villages, we enter a conversation that resembles jazz; we're riffing together, our discourse has more in common with music than rhetoric. This harmony between us owes much to the time we have each lodged in prior talks with people from the "other" side. For the effects of dialogue are cumulative. Resistances and stereotypes that give way, ever so gradually, with one person or in one dialogue meeting benefit the next encounter.

Talking to businessmen in Jericho who are enthusiastic about the coming economic boom, we see that the economy, although it is the driving force behind the peace accord, is also symbolic of the psychological riches that await us in this region. Even the utopian fantasies of "breakfast in Damascus, lunch in Jerusalem, and dinner in Amman" that many of us inhabit when imagining life after peace stress the geographical, but leave out the cultural and psychological benefits that will accompany the material ones.

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*I have felt an extra pulse,*
*a unique chemistry of latent hope*
*and covert recognition in*
*interchanges between Jews and*
*Palestinians in "safe" situations.*
*A pleasurable excitement*
*accompanies the breaking through*
*of caricature into*
*authentic conversation.*

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Thinking together with Adnan, I realize that the way journalists run from one source to another, interviewing officials, gathering "scoops," getting glimpses of what Palestinians are thinking and feeling, analyzing Israeli positions and predictions, taking notes on talks with "ordinary" citizens on both sides, can never compare to the "information-gathering" that occurs when we shift from individual speculations into collaborative thinking.

On the way to Ramallah, Adnan says that pragmatism must now replace ideology. "The truth is, both peoples are highly skeptical. The tremendous pressures on Palestinians are not appreciated by Israelis; they miss the immense duress from which terrorist acts emerge." Listening to him, I feel I am re-entering a conversation we all live here, thinking our way toward each other, sharing perceptions, in this land where the political is utterly personal, rather than the other way around. "And," he continues, "Palestinians don't appreciate why Jews are afraid,




don't understand the immense pain of Jewish history; why with all their military security, the Israelis don't feel secure."

Adnan's father was once a revered pediatrician in Hebron. He was thrown in jail for three months twenty years ago, although he was never charged with a crime. "When he got out of jail, there were 2,000 people filling the streets and milling in and out of our house to celebrate. He didn't work at a profession, he worked for the people, he worked for love."

When Adnan was eight, his family was suddenly deported to Amman, Jordan—an ordeal from which his father never recovered. "All my life in Amman, my Dad was depressed, missed home, missed the simpler life. In Jordan, the accent on Western achievement, professionalism, and materialism didn't speak to him. He lost access to people's love; he was just another doctor. He did well enough professionally, but he was in exile; he never recovered his spirit."

Now we are eating lunch in Jericho, surrounded by Palestinian and Israeli flags side by side, with people handing out free T-shirts bearing slogans in praise of co-existence. What's demanded by co-existence, we realize, is not the end of grief, for that will not end for either side for a long time, but rather adapting to changing circumstances. To the extremists on both sides, we can only say: The other side will not go away. But with the nonextremists, we don't have to bluff. We can begin building upon the vision that what we have to gain by co-existence, aside from the obvious, is a meeting of West and East: mixing together the order, technological skill, industriousness, and individual freedoms of the West with the warmth, emotional connectedness, extended family, and loyalty to clan of the East. Israelis and Palestinians have elements of both worlds, though Israelis are more Western, Palestinians more Eastern.

We agree that despite huge differences in our societies, it is uncanny how many qualities our people have in common. Both cultures value family, "like the Italians," Adnan says, "where you know there are bastards in the family but your commitment is to love them, not analyze them or distance from them." This is a solid ground in the Mideast we don't find in the United States or in the rest of the Western world.

Each culture, Palestinian and Jewish, has been

## Healing Light

*Anne Roiphe*

Here we are in a post-Cold War period of increasing tribal warfares, of despair over nationalisms that vie and bite and engage in death duels as each generation whispers its hate-filled lullaby into the cradle of the next. Everywhere we look, borders are newly contested and the bitter lines of religion, race, and nation seem to be inflamed, raw, and terrible. And this is the moment, swimming against the current of history, that the Israelis and the Palestinians appear to have called it off, to have come to the beginning of an end to their long and brutal quarrel. Perhaps this is one of the meanings of Jewish history, Jewish purpose. Perhaps we were meant after all to show the world that healing is possible, tribes can coexist. Our light shines so the rest can follow us into that hard-won place where each can imagine the humanity of the other.

And now Israel at peace perhaps with its neighbors can consider the course of its history with calm, without forgetting or obliterating the injustice or the cruelty, but with time to let the healing sink in. The fulfillment of the promise of Canaan to the descendants of Abraham grants us the opportunity to create wonderful stories, great structures, museums, schools, parks, preserve the land in all its biblical resonances and let the heavens see us making our society open, kind, and inventive.

But we can't forget that history is a roller coaster and each up is followed by a down. I worry about the next curve. What's out there? Do we have the strength for another disaster? Is it my *galut* head that anticipates calamity, or is it my reality sense? Certainly, time isn't ending and so the plot will boil again, and grief is the only seasoning of which we can be sure.

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forced to evolve complicated forms for survival and adaptation to life under immense duress. This shows up in subtleties of thought and humor, in an unexpected ease of communication between our two cultures, if given the chance. With the peace accord, this area could—haltingly and partially at first—become an arena of I-Thou relations that would become contagious, replace the I-It attitudes of the last decades, where Palestinians saw Israelis as occupying bullies, Israelis viewed Palestinians as dangerous terrorists or cheap labor. As I-Thou relations become contagious, there will be a higher level of awareness; we'll gradually become less susceptible to the old demons of fear and pessimism.

There's something familiar in the pleasure I feel talking to Adnan in depth. From my very first week in Israel in 1991 at TIKKUN's peace conference, and during dialogue groups in Nablus and Beit Sahur ever since, I have felt an extra pulse, a unique chemistry of latent hope and covert recognition in interchanges between Jews and Palestinians in "safe" situations. A pleasurable excitement accompanies the breaking through of caricature into authentic conversation.

Conversations like Adnan's and mine, I intuit, will begin happening with great rapidity all over this region in the coming months and years. Between Israeli soldiers and Jordanian soldiers and Palestinian police, for example, drinking coffee on the Allenby Bridge; between engineers and water specialists; between doctors and mental health workers, educators and ecologists; businessmen and economists, maybe even more easily than among politicians. Conversations that, despite all we have endured at war with each other, will become as warm and pleasurable as ours is.

But I still can't quite pinpoint why there is this particular pleasure, why it happens so regularly. So later in the week, after a particularly riveting dialogue meeting in Nablus, I ask Samir, a Palestinian poet and professor of literature, about the pleasure.

"Look" he says, "I know my own people. There are maybe fifty or sixty varieties of Palestinians, right? When I talk to anyone, they begin to fit into one category or another; I feel I know them already. Like even the greatest love affair, it becomes a bit dull, you get to know your own people almost too well. But when I meet Jews informally, I'm curious, there's so much I don't know and that curiosity is a pleasure."

I tell Samir how often, as a therapist, I used to say to clients in the midst of their personal animosities, "If you

could shift from furious to curious, what might you see?"

Samir has studied the psychology of the situation in a uniquely poetic way. Although he was imprisoned for years for "resistance" to occupation, his anger at Israelis is mixed with hope and fascination about what's to come. "We are a very emotional people," he says. "We tend to be sentimental, there's a tragic dimension to our souls. Our great poet, Mahmoud Darwish, is profoundly sad. The Israelis and Jews have a genius for rationality, for mental brilliance; we have more emotional depth, more sadness. Culturally this will be an interesting mix of sensibilities."

Yes, I think, we've been splitting the archetype of emotion and rationality. Mixed together we could move toward something new: a sensibility neither side has achieved alone. Our music, our literature, our arts will inevitably intermingle in the coming decades. Politically we could be the only two democracies in the area. Culturally and spiritually we might begin affecting each other in fertile ways.

"Contrary to what you read in the press," Samir goes on, "on the emotional level, this peace accord brought no feelings of joy to our people. Whether intellectuals or ordinary people, shall I tell you what we were all feeling watching Rabin and Arafat at the White House, crowding around our television sets?"

"It was like watching *Hamlet* and finding at the end Hamlet suddenly jumps into a clown suit, turning the play into a mockery, a bad comedy. Hamlet turning into a clown. The Palestinian cause no longer resembled a play that had tragic coherence; it felt like theater that had no coherence at all; you wanted your money back, you cursed the playwright; the director. Instead of the tragedy we've been living, we felt we were in the Twilight Zone. Everyone felt this, whether or not they'd express it this way: the surreal sense that this is how it ends: Hamlet turning to a clown. Whatever euphoria showed up in the days after, the disappointment was far more powerful, that all our struggles led to only this. But even though we feel we've given so much and gotten so little, we are no strangers to hard work and we will work hard."

Sami Yaish, a biology professor, adds: "There will be total chaos at first. We have no experience in running our own state. But that will only last a few months."

In the car ride back from Nablus, Adnan agrees. "The Western mind is used to gradations, is comfortable with gradual development. The Eastern mind, and we embody it, is mythic: We're attracted to sweeping grandeurs, joyous or tragic, and this is not what's in store for us."

Despite this disappointment and emotional letdown I've heard about, most Palestinians I've spoken with recently say that after September 13, they know they have not only Israel's but the whole world's recognition; they are now known as a people with a right to a part of this land. Whatever their feelings, they are gearing up for the hard work ahead. "Mutual recognition is irreversible. Soon we will all be practicing peace," Adnan says.

Many Palestinians liken themselves to the Jews living in oppressive ghettos before the State of Israel was formed; they echo early Zionist slogans by talking of the "New Palestinian." In Jericho, a Palestinian businessman tells me, "We adapt very like you Jews did. I watched a woman who couldn't sell her produce in Israel because of the closure. She spent four long days at the civil administration office, very wearying. But she hung on, obtained a "*laisser passer*" to the airport, a document very difficult to obtain. With that paper she could get into Israel and sell her goods, continue making money. This is the Palestinian mind, this is why we survived under Occupation as you Jews survived through centuries before you had a state."

Another theme I hear is that the Palestinian people will "choose life." As a friend said in East Jerusalem, "The overwhelming majority of our people have a strong will to live." He reminded me of the much publicized Palestinian father who buried two teenaged sons in one day of Intifada activity last year in Jerusalem. His boys died under suspicious circumstances, dragged for miles by Israeli tanks. On the day of this tragedy, he was treated horribly by the Israeli authorities. Yet in his wild grief he did not go out and kill any Jew he could get his hands on, "which you could understand if you were in his shoes," my friend says. "No, he went back to work, worked harder, building an addition to his shop so his remaining son could have his wedding. We can ignore our feelings in order to take care of business. We'll all be doing that soon: Israelis and Palestinians; doing business together and forgetting history. There's no point in arguing history. About doing business we'll get along; about history, never."

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Talking with Adnan, Samir, Itzhaq Shawa, and other Palestinians, I realize that these cross-cultural meetings are not only good for peace or useful in relation to a larger political goal. They are pivotal and necessary in themselves for our psychological well-being. Because we are two peoples in one land, this extension into another culture is immensely pleasur-

able, not merely useful. Pleasure, as we knew in the sixties, is a political/ethical demand of the soul, a signal that we're on the right track. Not just to tolerate, but to participate with joy in getting to know each other is the heart of Jewish and Palestinian redemption.

Since there is a war between optimism and pessimism, we can tip the scales toward optimism by encouraging and participating in such direct encounters. For there's a poverty in the soul that only such human communion can erase.

Sitting at the biweekly dialogue meeting in Beit Sahur last Thursday night, I saw again the immense benefits of direct sharing over political posturing or abstract arguments. There's no paranoia between Israelis and Palestinians here at all. Strong disagreements and arguments, yes, but these happen in what feels like an ideal family context. Each member is a unique character; yet each shows willingness to listen patiently. They have achieved such unusual mutual trust that for me the two hours flew by without a boring moment. Whatever difficulties may arise now—and there are no shortage of macabre or paranoid fantasies on either side—these Palestinians and Israelis know they can count on each other to show up for meetings, to think together, to help each other with their own constituencies. There's no false euphoria in dialogue groups; however beautiful joint thinking, working, and caring may be, this is not Woodstock.

Toward the end of the meeting, Veronika Cohen, a professional musician, observant Jew, and only child of Holocaust survivors, tells us in her soulful voice-of-reason a true story about a nine-year-old Jewish boy named Addy whose family had invited Palestinians from Nablus to their home in Jerusalem for a meal recently. Addy told his mother forcefully that if an Arab was coming to his house, he was going to run away from home. He would leave "forever" if she didn't call those Arabs right now and tell them not to come. When the Palestinian family arrived, Addy hid behind a large chair.

Slowly, as everyone ignored him and began having a wonderful time, he peered around the chair, staring at Jamal, a boy of his age from Nablus, who was playing happily with a deck of cards. Then Addy inched toward this "Arab" child, gazing at him from across the room. Right before the Palestinians left, Addy sheepishly passed a candy to his father, whispering to him to give it to Jamal. The next week when the families met at a peace picnic in Nablus, Addy ran with Jamal and the other Nablus kids with such abandon his parents could hardly tear him away. Now, Veronika says, when his family drives through Jericho, Addy insists they stop every time he sees a group of Palestinian kids playing. His global fear turned to global attraction.

We laughed as we realized this Jewish boy, Addy, was so like each of us. Those of us in the phase of global attraction will, as we are so often reminded here, need to become increasingly differentiated about Palestinians. But the majority who inhabit global fear and mistrust need, even more urgently, to come out from behind that chair.

We are all so labile here in the Middle East. Trust and mistrust can rise or dissipate, becoming foreground or background in a matter of seconds in any conversation. The face we turn toward our "enemy" very much affects the face that looks back at us.

Often I meet Palestinian, Israeli, and Jewish journalists from all over the world at the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem. We sit in the courtyard café drinking Turkish coffee, surrounded by bountiful flowers, Arab tapestries, lemon and orange and palm trees, talking about everything in every possible way, to paraphrase Salmon Rushdie. I've become accustomed to the friendly atmosphere, the funny talks, the cross-cultural sophistication that emanates from the working relationships, many of which have existed for years. Ethnic origin is hardly noticed here; people slip in and out of Hebrew, Arabic, English, and French often in one conversation. Occasionally, forgetting the larger hostile context that is still dominant around us, I bring an Israeli friend with me when I go to pick up a photograph, make plans for the next day, or drop off a promised book for a friend.

Today, having gone for a swim with my friend Yehuda, a bohemian Israeli artist, I asked him to come along with me as I'm late for a meeting. He is relatively sympathetic to the Palestinian cause; he talks often about one of his friends, a Palestinian. Yet he has also been on the battlefield with Arabs as his enemy—he fought in the '67 and '73 wars. I didn't think of how difficult it might be for him to come to East Jerusalem, which he, like most Israelis, has avoided since the Intifada. As we drove through East Jerusalem toward the hotel, he started recounting, in minute detail, the particulars of the battle he fought in this very place.

What for me is a place of creative conversation and working relations is for him a site of deathly flashbacks and reminders. Entering the garden café, Yehuda seemed to be testing every Palestinian who came to join us. (As luck would have it, there wasn't an Israeli or Jew in sight.) He criticized the hummus, the grapefruit juice, the way the waiter cleaned our table, brought our change. He reverted to talk about the '67 war and his job as a paratrooper as soon as any

Palestinian joined us. Then, as the Palestinians gladly left us to ourselves, he pointed out to me the conniving manipulations that had just occurred in each small interaction. The Palestinian journalists and waiters all around us, who know me well and are generally friendly and easy going, picked up Yehuda's attitude instantly. By the time we left, Yehuda was no longer just imagining the hostility I watched him actively, if unconsciously, create.

It can go either way: The face we turn to our recent enemies, as I saw clearly today, affects the face they turn to us. The atmosphere at the American Colony Hotel, usually a haven of kinetic attractions between all ethnic groups, went from tonic to toxic in a matter of minutes.

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I end with these anecdotes because I believe we are all varieties of that nine-year-old boy, Addy—fiercely afraid, and then, if our fears collide with positive direct experience, prone to bouts of euphoria as we break into our common humanity. In the seesaw between optimism and pessimism, whatever constitutes "realism" is not yet scripted. The first order of business is to meet one another free from the dominant mood of mistrust Yehuda automatically created. Only in time will we know what we truly have to fear and truly have to benefit inside this cross-cultural adventure that is now upon us. Until we have the wisdom of hindsight, let's get out from behind that chair with a childlike spirit of curiosity, rather than poisoning the atmosphere with an ambiance of mistrust that is increasingly appropriate to the times.

Trust or mistrust are subliminally contagious, and yet it's at those critical choice points in attitude when we are least aware, when it's almost impossible, as it was for Yehuda, to see how we create self-fulfilling prophecies toward optimism or pessimism; toward trust or mistrust. It is critical, especially now, not to allow the voices of doom to get the upper hand, to keep listening for and hearing what Michael Lerner calls "the possibility for possibility." □

## The Significance of the Israeli-Palestinian Accords

*David Biale*

Ever since the prophet Balaam declared Israel a "people that dwells alone and is not accounted among the nations" (Numbers 23:9), the Jewish people have almost axiomatically defined themselves against the Other. Without the non-Jew, the *goy*, Jew did not exist. This dichotomy was, to be sure, part of the host of traditional distinctions: the Land of Israel versus the rest of the world, the Sabbath versus the rest of the days of the week, *kosher* versus *traif*, pure versus impure, men versus women.

Secular Zionism, building on the rise of Jewish secularism in general, sought to overcome these polarities and turn the Jews into a nation like all other nations. This vision of the "normalization of the Jewish people" is perhaps out of fashion these days, but it remains, for me, Zionism's greatest legacy. Yet, as a result of the conflict with the Arabs, a normal relation between Jews and non-Jews became increasingly problematic. What might have been essentially a political conflict took on metaphysical proportions, the Palestinians fulfilling the historical and theological role of the *goy* whose rejection of Jewish legitimacy was almost divinely decreed.

The peace agreement with the Palestinians is therefore more than just a brilliant political watershed; it is also a historical and theological divide. If the vision articulated in the preamble to the agreement can indeed be fulfilled, then the Jewish people will finally be allowed to become a truly normal people, a people who are no longer either colonized or colonizers. As the peace movement has argued for years, the liberation of the Jews of Israel will never be complete without the liberation of the Palestinians.

For the Jews of the Diaspora, this is a great divide as well. Instead of a symbol of Jewish defiance, a Massada state standing alone, Israel will become a model of normalization for our own relations to the world. To be sure, anti-Semitism will not magically disappear once the Israeli-Palestinian problem is solved, but at least one of its rationales will be removed. Freed from the fixation of an Israel standing for all the persecutions of Jewish history, we can address ourselves fully to the task of creating a vital and normal Jewish people wherever they live.

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# Keeping the Gates Open

*Marshall Berman*

"Does the mutual recognition between Palestinians have any deeper or lasting significance?" Maybe it can help to fulfill one of my favorite fantasies of what Jews can be. This fantasy can be found most graphically in Isaiah 60, near the end of Second Isaiah. It contains some lovely lyrical visions of the future that somehow don't get quoted very much. "Arise and shine," the chapter begins, "for your light has come." The words my father used so many years ago, back in the Bronx, to wake me up on cold mornings to go to school. When I went to college, I learned to read the light:

> Then you will see and be radiant,
> your heart will thrill and rejoice,
> because the abundance of the sea will be turned to you,
> the wealth of nations will come to you.
> A multitude of camels will cover you....
> Foreigners will build up your walls....
> Your gates will be open continually:
> day and night they shall not shut,
> that men may bring to you the wealth of nations,
> with their kings led in procession. [60:5-11]

My favorite image here is the city that never sleeps: The gates of Jerusalem will be open all night, so the wealth of nations can come in. It's a hope for abundance through openness to the whole world. We are accustomed to utopian images of Israel as a light unto the nations. But this utopian hope is a little different: Israel as a trading partner with all the nations. And peace is so wonderful ("I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness/ Violence shall no more be heard in your land/no devastation or destruction within your borders" [60:18]), because it can make it possible for Israel to relax and open up all its gates, even in the middle of the night, and enjoy intercourse with the whole world.

As an image of happiness, this is sexually charged, distinctively feminine—open, permeated—and promiscuous, open to all. It goes against the grain of many Jewish traditions, both ancient and modern, that denounce any contact with the *goyim,* and fear that intercourse with them will pollute and eventually Destroy the Jewish people. Within the Bible, the figure most sympathetic to an "open society" is King Solomon (1 Kings). Solomon builds both the first Temple and the first Palace just across the street. As he builds up centralized institutions in church and state, he creates a Jewish identity strong enough that it can thrive on intercourse with the *goyim,* even on hundreds of pagan temples in the middle of Jerusalem. The author of Second Isaiah, writing from within Exile, dreams a Solomonic dream,

> You will suck the milk of nations,
> you will suck the breast of kings.

When Israel blew its enemies away in 1967, I felt maybe King Solomon's wisdom could reign again. It didn't happen, because the pressures of the Cold War kept the whole Middle East close to the boiling point, but also because the victors of 1967, so good at war, could not really imagine peace. Instead of opening out to the whole world, Israel slammed its gates shut; even as it expanded territorially, its spirit became more cramped, turned in on itself, obsessed with security in the narrowest military way, than its founders ever dreamed it could be. Peace Now and its supporters fought against this self-mutilation for years. Maybe, all those years, it had to be. But it looks like a critical mass of Israelis and other Jews learned something, and a critical mass of Palestinians learned, too, and it doesn't have to be anymore. Now we can reinvent Solomon's and Second Isaiah's dream, the dream of a people who can get richer and stronger and happier by reaching out and bringing the other into us, by keeping our gates open all through the night. □

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# Two Foreverers and a Maybe

*Letty Cottin Pogrebin*

It's time to start thinking about Jerusalem. Not to mollify the Palestinians or pressure Israel to return to her 1967 borders, but to confront an issue that is so emotionally charged, religiously sensitive, and politically explosive that it cannot be swept under the rug. Regardless of the progress made on other fronts, Jerusalem will be there—like the proverbial elephant in the parlor, or the pea under the peacemakers' mattress—demanding attention.

Oddly enough, despite its centrality to Jews and Judaism, the Jerusalem question is virtually taboo in the American Jewish community. Rational discourse has been drowned out by what I call the "Three Forevers"—*Jerusalem shall be forever united; forever the capital of the Jewish State; and forever under Israeli sovereignty.* This litany wins roars of approval from a Jewish audience although it is cruelly misleading. Anyone familiar with the Palestinian side of the equation knows that the first two Forevers are realistic goals while the idea that Palestinians would agree to live under Israeli rule in the city they consider their political, cultural, religious, and symbolic capital is the product of magical thinking.

Which is not to say the notion of Jewish sovereignty is historically ill-founded. Since 1000 B.C.E. (except for eighty-eight years under the Crusaders), Jerusalem has never been anyone else's capital. The City of Peace has assumed a special meaning for Christians and Muslims but the Jewish bond, in Jewish eyes, surpasses all others. As Foreign Minister Shimon Peres put it, Jerusalem is not just a place, it's a prayer. The city is mentioned 656 times in the Torah—yet not even once in the Koran. (Islam ranks it third among Holy Cities.) Devout Muslims direct themselves to Mecca; Jews face Jerusalem. Christians feel hallowed by the streets where Jesus walked; their Book of Lamentations describes Jerusalem as "the perfection of beauty, the joy of the earth." But for Jews, Jerusalem is as close as one can get to God in the temporal world.

Ideologically, spiritually, metaphorically; through destruction and dislocation, Jerusalem has always been synonymous with Zion, the touchstone of Jewish theology, identity, and peoplehood. In the Diaspora, we proclaim "Next year in Jerusalem" and often mean it. And when we visit the City of Gold, we fall in love, for who can resist the pink stone and luminous light in this birthplace of our glory and our tears.

Here I will confess that I am a Jerusalem "junkie." As a child I recited Psalm 137 every day: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand wither." Lately, I've been spending time there every year. While Americans for Peace Now, the organization I chair, supports an undivided city that is the capital of the Jewish State, we have taken no position on final sovereignty arrangements. I too have dreamt of keeping it all for the Jewish people, forever. Still, I can't help but notice a number of concrete realities obstructing the path of my dreams—namely the aspirations of another people, the facts on the ground in East Jerusalem, the border of fear that segregates Arabs and Jews and divides the city despite Mayor Teddy Kolleck and the rhetoric of unification, the stalwart refusal by most nations (including the United States) to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital under current circumstances, and finally, the text of the September 13 accords to which Israel affixed her signature.

Article IV of the pact lists Jerusalem as one of the "issues that will be negotiated in the permanent status negotiations." Nonetheless, in his stirring speech at the signing ceremony, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made reference to "Jerusalem, the ancient and eternal capital of the Jewish people." PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat avoided the subject altogether. During the secret talks in Norway, Arafat had agreed to exempt East Jerusalem from the autonomy period and postpone its fate to final status

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negotiations, a major concession (and one his West Bank negotiators were never empowered to make at the Washington meetings), but not one he was about to draw attention to on the White House lawn. While Arafat agreed to *postpone*, he did not agree to surrender, and no one should imagine the road to peace taking a permanent detour around East Jerusalem. Since the signing, Arafat has used every opportunity to reassure his audiences that the pact is a "first step" and East Jerusalem will, in the end, be the sovereign capital of Palestine.

Meanwhile, when Rabin presented the accords to the Knesset for ratification, he seemed to forget Article IV altogether as he proclaimed, "Jerusalem is not negotiable and will remain under Israeli sovereignty forever."

*Most moderate Palestinians are ready to accept a physically undivided Jerusalem; most also have come to accept that Jerusalem will be the Jewish capital. But they draw the line at the issue of sovereignty.*

So, which is it—forever or maybe? Negotiable or non-negotiable? Does the Prime Minister intend to come to the table with a flat no, or will Israel try to negotiate a compromise as the pact and national honor dictate?

It was Shimon Peres who, in his speech on the White House lawn, acknowledged the final status negotiations and their purpose: "We will then settle the remaining fundamental issues, especially those of Jerusalem, the refugees and the settlements. At that time, we will be laying the last brick in the edifice of peace whose foundation has been established today." Soon after, during the raucous Knesset session, Peres assured opposition critics that the city would remain united. "We will not make Jerusalem into Berlin. Jerusalem will not be the capital of autonomy."

The careful listener heard in those remarks something less than the Three Forevers. Jerusalem would remain Israel's physically undivided capital. Also, it will not be the Palestinian capital *during the interim period*. Missing altogether was the third Forever: sovereignty. Was the Foreign Minister leaving open the possibility of a Palestinian capital in Arab Jerusalem *after* autonomy? Is Peres sending Jews a subliminal message about his government's intention to negotiate when the time comes? Is he sending Palestinians a glimmer of hope?

Most moderate Palestinians—meaning those committed to building and cementing the negotiated peace—are ready to accept a physically undivided Jerusalem; most also have come to accept that Jerusalem will be the Jewish capital. But they draw the line at the issue of sovereignty. Here, they counter with their own Three Nevers: they will never sign a peace treaty giving Israel sovereignty over the 150,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem; they will never give up their capital; they will never sever its connection to the West Bank. To understand the intensity of their feelings, you have only to think of the intensity of ours. Like us, they consider Jerusalem their passion, symbol of their national dignity and religious belief, focal point of their future state—in other words, a deal-breaker issue. Like us, they back up their demands with historical and ancestral claims—Faisal Husseini, who heads the Palestinian negotiating team, traces his family back to Saladin in the twelfth century—and the willingness to fight to the death for what they perceive as their rightful stake. Ziad abu Ziad, editor of the Hebrew-language Palestinian weekly, *Gesher*, puts it bluntly: "Anyone who thinks that Jerusalem can remain under exclusive Israeli sovereignty, and that at the same time a durable peace can be achieved between Jews and Arabs, is fooling himself."

So the question boils down to this: Is total hegemony over a few square miles of East Jerusalem worth the destruction of this fragile peace whose moment may never come again? Or can smart, caring Jews open their minds to fresh possibilities and, together with the Palestinians, tackle the sovereignty issue head on? Rather than demand absolute geographical and political control, can both sides try to deconstruct and reassemble the elements of power in ways that craft a totally new concept of sovereignty and a structure inventive enough to address the particularities of this situation and the needs and anxieties of both peoples? Can Jews of all political stripes accept the urgency of compromise on Jerusalem: because the peace won't hold without it; and without a productive peace process that yields clear economic and social benefits, the alternative is Holy War with Hamas, Hizbollah, and other militant fundamentalists who have zero interest in negotiating with Jews. Finally, and most important from a moral viewpoint, Israel must be ready to compromise

because she has given her word to negotiate in good faith.

According to the pact, the following requirements must be met: agreement on troop withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho must be reached by December 13 of this year. Withdrawal must be completed by next April 13, when the administration of the West Bank and Gaza must be transferred from the Israeli military government to "authorized" Palestinians, and the five-year clock on permanent status begins ticking. By July 13, with Arabs from East Jerusalem participating in the vote, a Palestinian Council must be elected to take control of the territories. No later than April 13, 1997—assuming both sides police their extremists—negotiations on permanent status will begin and like it or not, the issue of Jerusalem will land on the bargaining table. Delaying tactics will be pointless; the pact requires that final status agreements be *concluded* no later than April 13, 1999.

For some, the idea of a new millennium without the old maximalist control of Jerusalem is painful even to contemplate. Infinitely more unbearable, however, is the thought of the blood that will be spilled if Israel turns a deaf ear to the Palestinians' yearnings and continues to insist upon "full" sovereignty.

The alternative to this dead-end is to reach an arrangement for shared control that Jews and Palestinians can live with rather than die for. While it will be up to the negotiators to design the permanent solution, some reasonable proposals have been put forth by thinkers who long ago accepted the need for compromise. For instance:

• Dr. Meir Pa'il, a military historian and former Member of Knesset, posits two separate municipalities under an umbrella city government headed by a bi-national, parity-based municipal council whose presidency alternates yearly or bi-yearly between an Israeli and Palestinian mayor of Jerusalem, and whose special bi-national police force operates in both parts of the city.

• The Roundtable Forum, headed by Moshe Amirav, a member of the Jerusalem City Council, and Hanna Siniora, a member of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, in a 1992 pamphlet envisions sovereignty divided by function, not geography, so that problems can be solved at the local level where they are best understood.[1] (If the Temple Mount is now administered by the Muslim Waq'f authority, other functions in Arab Jerusalem could be similarly administered.) Some have suggested that Jewish and Arab neighborhood councils administer services such as school curricula and local licensing, while supercouncils control joint municipal enterprises such as transportation, water, and sewage.

• Rather than reach consensus, five teams of practical-minded Israelis, Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians, and Syrians, working on a project called "Imagining The Peace," have made available all their scenarios on Jerusalem's final status in order to stimulate further thinking and discussion.[2]

• TIKKUN's Michael Lerner, among others, has proposed that West Jerusalem contain Israel's capital, East Jerusalem be the capital of the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza, while the Old City functions as an Israeli protectorate under international auspices.

• In a recent op-ed piece, Milton Viorst, a writer who specializes in the Middle East, proposed a unified government of Arab and Jewish boroughs (with mapped but not fenced borders) that operate like the boroughs of New York City.[3]

• Faisal Husseini imagines "one city with two capitals. Two municipalities and one roof-municipality." Similar ideas have been promoted by Gush Hashalom, a coalition of Israeli peace groups founded last summer.

• Even a right-wing rabbi has a plan: "Let the Palestinians buy a few square blocks of East Jerusalem from the Israeli government," he says. "That would acknowledge Jewish ownership. Then they can put up their flag and call it whatever they want." Whether inspired by capitalism or pragmatism, his suggestion has an obvious historical precedent. The early Zionists purchased land from the Arabs and proceeded as if sovereignty follows real estate. There's a symmetry to the Palestinians buying some land back.

Dozens more compromise proposals are afloat. My intent is not to list every plan or judge which is best, but to normalize and accelerate the quest. Once the five-year clock starts ticking next April, the countdown will be swift. The issue must be engaged with all seriousness as soon as possible, or the elephant in the parlor will bring down the house upon all those who, with their Nevers and Forevers, choose to love Jerusalem not wisely, but too well. □

1. For copies of their draft send a tax-deductible contribution to Friends of IPCRI (Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information), P.O. Box 1120, Long Beach, NY 11561 or contact IPCRI at P.O. Box 51358, Jerusalem. Tel: 02-285210. Fax: 02-289094.

2. Imagining the Peace, 1041 N. Formosa, Santa Monica Bldg #104, L.A., CA 90046.

3. *New York Times,* August 19, 1993.

# Israel Chooses the Other Road

*Yaron Ezrahi*

One would have expected that when a country as small as Israel decides to follow a course that would inevitably lead to relinquishing to its neighbors significant parts of the territories under its control, its citizens would feel rather claustrophobic. Paradoxically, the mood in Israel in the last few weeks is, if anything, that of liberation from a state of siege. While the process has just begun, there is an increasing sense of relief at watching the walls of the largest Jewish ghetto in modern times collapse. In the last few weeks, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres have been visiting several capitals, like Peking and Rabat, which were off-limits to Israeli officials, and a large number of countries are rushing to open diplomatic relations with Israel ending decades of hostility and excommunication. The Israeli media have disclosed plans to build highways which could eventually connect Haifa to Beirut, Damascus, Istanbul, and Europe, link Jerusalem to Amman in Jordan, and revive the old Tel Aviv-Cairo railway.

Imagining a future based on peace which would end Israel's diplomatic, geographic, and economic isolation in this part of the world is of course a rather premature exercise. The implementation of the signed agreements will be accompanied by many anticipated and unanticipated difficulties. It will take a long time, hard work, and much patience to realize the possibilities opened by the recent developments. Nevertheless, enough has happened during the last few weeks to render such a future thinkable and to enhance enormously the popularity of leaders who pursue it courageously and pragmatically.

At this stage, much of the change takes the form of reframing the old problems between Israel and its adversaries. Most instructive is the current public debate in Israel on how to handle the tricky issue of scarce water resources. If until now the problem was discussed in terms of who controls the regional sources of water and how, given the asymmetry of power, a regime of allocation could still be made responsive to the vital needs of adversarial claimants, recent reports have recast the problem in terms of ensuring a free water market which would turn former adversaries into willing sellers and buyers. When people and water flow freely across borders, when land and water are converted from strategic into economic assets, and secured access replaces the high stakes in exclusive control, interests can replace passions in controlling policy. This is why the logic of the emerging settlement depends less on the extent to which former enemies can come to trust each other than on a careful interpretation and balancing of their interests.

Many observers are still puzzled by the question of how this monumental shift of attitudes was brought about in the first place. It is important to answer this question in order to understand the significance and durability of the changes which are occurring with such speed. While the absence of a historical perspective necessarily limits one's ability to explain what happened, I would like to suggest that more than anything else the shift in Israeli attitudes is the consequence of a series of traumatic experiences which convinced an increasing number of Israelis that even spectacular military victories could not deliver to Israel the security and stability it sought.

The first trauma was the Yom Kippur War some twenty years ago. The initially successful surprise attack by the Egyptian military brought to a sudden and painful end the post-'67 period during which the victorious Israeli army was worshipped as invincible. But even more gravely, inquiries into the way the government of Golda Meir and her cabinet—including, Moshe Dayan the revered Minister of Defense—operated before and during the war disclosed shocking incompetence and errors of judgment, all of which generated a healthy erosion in the credulity of the Israeli public and its trust in the government. Then, in 1982, came the futile and tragic Israeli invasion of Lebanon under the leadership of Menachem Begin and Sharon. A costly military campaign ensued which proved to be Israel's most domestically controversial war and ultimately led to the retirement of Begin and politically disabled

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General Sharon. Massive public protests against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon sent an unambiguous warning to all future Israeli governments that the use of Israel's massive military power must be justifiable by the strictest definitions of vital Israeli security needs.

When the Intifada erupted at the end of 1987 it followed years of Likud support for the spread of Jewish settlement over the occupied territories in order to render those territories non-negotiable. As a show of Palestinian collective will and readiness for sacrifice, the Intifada changed Israeli perceptions of the Palestinians. What the majority of the Israeli public saw for years as the "refugee problem" was suddenly transformed into the Palestinian national problem. Likud leaders—especially Shamir, Sharon, and Benjamin Netanyahu—followed the policy of Golda Meir and continued to deny Palestinian nationhood and to refer to the other side as terrorists. But a massive majority of the Israelis began to appreciate the fact that the transfer of population implicit in the term "refugees" is inconceivable once the refugees are seen as nationals. It became clear to most of us that we have to reckon with a very vital, assertive, and self-conscious nation no matter how divided its leadership, how violent its ranks, or how recent its sense of nationhood.

Finally, the Gulf War had a profound impact on the Israeli psyche. The fact that Israel did not incur many casualties during the Gulf War has led many observers to underestimate its repercussions. Prior to this war, Shamir's and Sharon's uncompromising territorial aspirations regarding the land occupied since the Six Day War implied a willingness to accept the risks of war with major Arab countries such as Iraq, Syria, and possibly Egypt, whose peace agreement with Israel was subject to increasing strain. Likud politics also took the risk of an enormously costly political confrontation with Israel's most important and reliable ally, the United States. Likud maximalist policies implied the existence of abundant Israeli military, human, economic, and diplomatic resources to stand alone against all odds. Enter the Gulf War and a rain of long-range missiles on Tel Aviv and the Israeli public

## Reflections on the Israeli-PLO Accord

*Gerald Serotta*

For those who fought long and hard for a vision of Zionism which required Palestinian self-determination along with Jewish self-determination, recent events bring both elation and a poignant reminder of the loss of possibility simultaneously. The elation is very deep, not only temporal and political, but also touching us to the depths of our souls. Many have pointed out truthfully that the reversal of recent Arab-Jewish hatred contains the seeds for reversing post-Holocaust trauma which warps and brutalizes Jewish life, reinforcing paranoia and ethnocentrism, and preventing our reemergence into history as a proud nation bearing unique and important truths for all humankind. Moreover, for Jews who read repeatedly in the Book of Genesis of fratricide, hatred, and conniving, this reversal potentially gives us the opportunity for the deepest level of *teshuvah* and reconciliation stretching back to our mythical origins as a people. Peace with the descendants of Ishmael (and Esau) without the deaths of further Abrahams (or Ibrahims) is a blessing of untold spiritual consequences, for us, for the Arab peoples, and both, by example and inspiration, for other warring human families as well.

For those who trace their Zionism back to Ahad Ha'am and Martin Buber, or who joined the political struggle for mutual recognition of Israeli and Palestinian nationalism together with courageous Israelis such as Lova Eliav in the wake of the Six Day War, there is also a deep sense of loss. First, of course, is the preventible loss of thousands of lives if stubborn politicians like Golda Meir ("there are no Palestinians") and her American Jewish friends hadn't willfully tried to destroy the possibility of rapprochement with a people even Menachem Begin would acknowledge as existing. They also strengthened their mirror image rejectionists in the Palestinian camp. Even more basically, the loss of the possibility of binationalism, fatally destroyed by the dynamic of the Holocaust, still haunts the State of Israel and its Arab minority today. Among the ironies at the White House ceremony was the absence of flags. While we're thinking messianically, perhaps we can envision forms of self-determination which do not require "pure" and chauvinistic nationalisms in the future.

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# Questions for the Unredeemed

*Michael Berenbaum*

Redemption is not at hand. The Messiah has not yet come.

The easiest affirmation that I made as a believing Jew is that "this is a world which is yet redeemed."

We should know by now the dangers of Jewish messianism, especially nonsecularized messianism when taken seriously and even metaphorically. Gush Emunim believed that the Messiah is at hand so some of the truly devout and the most worthy sought to blow up the Mosque while others still study laws for rebuilding the Temple, aimed at reinstituting sacrificial worship. Lubavitcher Hasidim announce, "prepare for the Messiah" and commit millions of dollars to defeating the agreement between Israel and the PLO.

What then is at hand?

If—and only if—the agreement works, then we have ended a major era in Jewish history. Political Zionism is a crowning success. The Jewish people have been rebuilt in their own land, in an independent state, and Jews in Israel and in the largest diaspora community—North America—are safe and secure. Jews in Israel and in the United States face few significant enemies, external enemies. And the chapter begun in 1901, when Jewish life was a struggle for survival over tyrants and oppressors bent on our annihilation, has blessedly come to an end.

Can Jews in the United States survive as Jews without anti-Semitism and without the content of Jewish identity being the battle for physical survival? Can we define ourselves by positives, not negatives? What is to be the content of Jewish faith, of Jewish commitment?

In the absence of external enemies, will the pent up *kulturkampf* in Israel explode, pitting Right against Left, secular against religious, apocalyptic messianism against secular statism?

If the survival of the Jewish state is not imperiled, the survival of American Jewry not endangered by anti-Semitism, and the endangered Jewish communities of perennial concern—Soviet and Ethiopian Jewry among them—relatively safe, what is to be the focus of Jewish institutional concern?

We may now have the opportunity to move beyond survivalism, and hence beyond political Zionism whose achievement, secure Jewish people in an independent Jewish state, is truly monumental. Cultural Zionism was discarded in the battle for survival. It must now be reinvented to address the quality of Israel and American Jewish society, Jewish achievements in culture, art, literature, religion, scholarship, and science.

Jewish learning and Jewish intellectual life, scholarship, and study will have to play a larger role in the life of those who chose to remain Jews. The links to Israel will have to move beyond mere survivalism toward culture, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions. We may become less interested in politicans and more in artists, musicians, writers, and thinkers. "Out of Zion, will come the Torah," not political or military messages alone. Are we receptive to such "Torah?" Can the Israelis inspire themselves? Us?

One wonders how a peaceful Israel will impact on American Jews: Will the tide of assimilation be accelerated as the battle for Israel's survival takes on less urgency? Will the ties between American Jewry and Israel be attenuated and achieve a level of ordinariness?

Is there enough positive and substantive to cause free Jews to opt for the Jewish people and for Judaism in the United States? in Israel?

The Messiah has not yet come. We must still become redeemers.

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discovers that much of the rhetoric is empty. No Israeli government could have protected its civilian population against long-range missile attack. Israel may have deterred Saddam from using his chemical warheads but it could not use whatever ultimate weapons it might have had against conventional long-range missiles. Suddenly we were again urgently dependent on American help, and the American "Patriot" was dramatically deployed as an answer to Saddam's Scuds. But the American missiles that helped boost public morale during the war prove humiliatingly ineffective in retrospect. The idea that if we seal our windows with Scotch tape and wear mostly old and defective gas masks we are somehow protected was quite short-lived. Looking back, most Israelis felt cheated. Shamir flexing his muscles during the Gulf War was the Israeli equivalent of the story of the "Emperor's New Clothes." Likud maximalist, confrontational political rhetoric never recovered from that moment. One must appreciate that brief yet

chilling Israeli visit to future wars to understand why the prophecies of doom sounded by the current Likud leader Bibi Netanyahu about the fatal consequences of an agreement with the Palestinians have fallen mostly on deaf ears. Now that we all know how advanced Saddam's nuclear plans really were and how loaded his arsenals were with biological and chemical weapons, can anybody believe that the dangers we faced under Likud governments were any smaller than the ones we should anticipate in the context of an agreement?

Four violent conflicts over the last twenty years have given Israelis a harsh yet compelling lesson in the limits of military power as a means to advance urgent national goals. To understand the limits of power is of course more than to recognize when military power is too weak to risk war. Perhaps more relevant to the recent Israeli experience is the recognition of the moment when power is too great to be effective. We have faced such a situation twice in recent years. First during the Intifada, as Palestinian civilians confronted Israeli soldiers. The Palestinian achievement during the Intifada was to expose the very weakness of the Israeli strength. That is why the Intifada was so important for the eventual shift to diplomacy. The Palestinians discovered that stones are more eloquent than bullets. Then the Israelis try to coat their bullets with rubber. If during the Intifada Israel discovered the limits of conventional military resources against rebellious civilians, the Gulf War demonstrated the inadequacy of Israel's presumed unconventional weapons as a response against conventional missiles. Again, then, even great power proved inadequate to the task.

Given these sobering lessons, which have triggered in Israel a profound assessment of the place of power in our relations with our Arab neighbors, I find it amazing that certain Jewish critics of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement would attribute the recent Israeli shift from military to diplomatic and economic measures and our willingness to compromise with the Palestinians as a failure of nerve or a weakening of the national will. Ruth Wisse, for one, believes our agreement with the Palestinians is a sign of Israeli weakness, of our being "worn out" by our casualties and Arab enmity. Yes, we are worn out by these harsh experiences but not enough to weaken our resolve to fight when necessity dictates. Mounting support in Israel for the agreements is not a failure of our collective will nor the result of war fatigue. It is largely the consequence of sobering and hard-won lessons in the application of military means to solve our problems. Most Israelis have looked long and hard down the road proposed to us by the leaders of the Israeli Right and decided, at first hesitantly but then increasingly with confidence, to take the other road.

Our agreement with the Palestinians is based on painful concessions to the Arab side. But the pains and dangers of leaving the status quo untouched appeared increasingly ominous. As an agreement crafted by Rabin and Peres, the most experienced and respected Israeli soldier and diplomat respectively, as an agreement made from a position of power, this compromise is more eloquent than even Israel's most spectacular military victory in the Six Day War. It certainly radiates more self-confidence, more disciplined self-reliance and more statesmanship than the Shamir-Netanyahu brand of thoroughgoing pessimism.

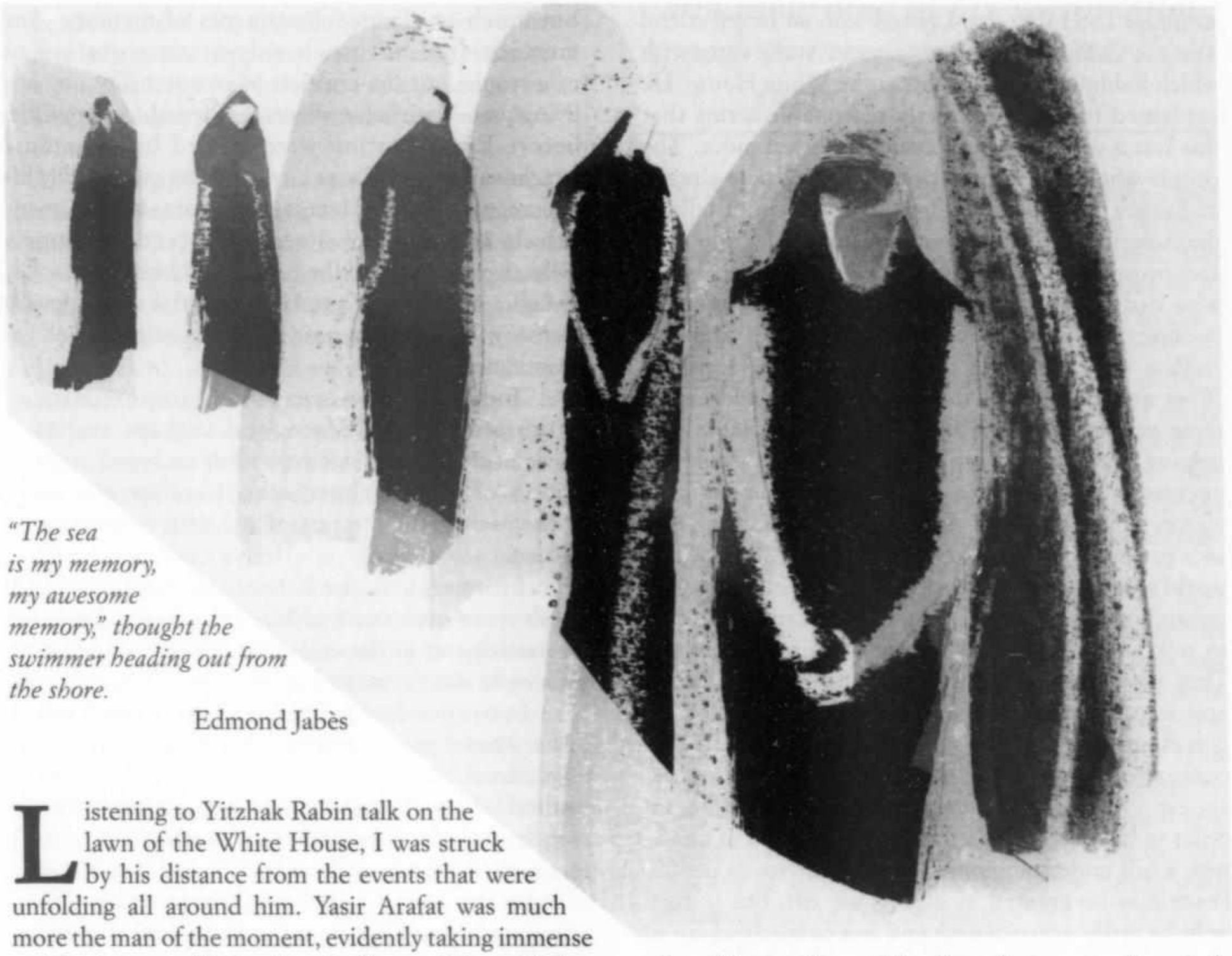
Powerlessness and defenselessness in the face of schemes of extermination have made almost all of us Jews innately suspicious of optimists and distrustful of good news. But for the armed Jews of Israel, self-paralyzing pessimism is just as dangerous as naive optimism or credulity. Rabin and Peres are neither. They are instrumental optimists who appreciate the deep relations between action and responsible cautious faith in the possibilities of change. Their leadership demonstrates that in an increasingly intolerable situation freezing Israel's diplomatic aim is a potentially more dangerous gamble than well-conceived initiative. While Likud leaders have been insisting that Islamic fundamentalists and the PLO are the "same Arabs," Rabin and Peres have been asking what can be done to disengage Palestinian moderates from Palestinian extremists. Under what circumstances are terrorists likely to lay down their weapons and become diplomats? Rabin and Peres discovered that the real issue is not whether the Arabs are trustworthy but whether we can trust ourselves to drop political messianism and embark upon a responsible open-ended experimental political approach to the inherently messy and unruly realities of the relations between nations. They have taken a bold, risky but promising step that has helped so many of us Israelis walk taller and look across the fallen ghetto walls towards the adventures, the opportunities as well as the inevitable risks in the world beyond.

While grave dangers existed before our agreement with the Palestinians and no doubt will continue to exist after, we are in the middle of changing our collective way of coping with risk. The use of military capability to empower rather than substitute for the measures of diplomacy vastly expands our freedom and range of action. It also opens the possibility of diminishing aggressive intents by the development of economic and political ties.

Even if only some of our hopes will be fulfilled Israel will not only become a much better place to live but also a worthier expression of the noblest values and traditions of the Jewish people. □

# Politics, Piety, and Transformation

*Michael S. Roth*



*"The sea*
*is my memory,*
*my awesome*
*memory," thought the*
*swimmer heading out from*
*the shore.*

Edmond Jabès

Listening to Yitzhak Rabin talk on the lawn of the White House, I was struck by his distance from the events that were unfolding all around him. Yasir Arafat was much more the man of the moment, evidently taking immense satisfaction out of being there in that sunlight, with that audience. He basked in the recognition so long denied the head of the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People"—to be beamed to all those around the world who claimed that he could never make it happen. The other architects of the peace treaty were looking out from the White House lawn into the future, talking of the achievement of this agreement as something to be built upon, something that would lead to a future that would contain not only justice and peace, but also economic development, political cooperation, in short, normal prosperity for a region that had been steeped in suffering. Where was Rabin? The photos show him up there with others, but even as he grimly shook hands with the ebullient Arafat, the Israeli leader was somewhere else.

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At a time of peacemaking, at a time of mutual recognition, Rabin began with memory and solidarity:

> It is certainly not easy for the families of the victims of the wars, violence, terror whose pain will never heal; for the many thousands who defended our lives with their own and have even sacrificed their lives for our own. For them, this ceremony has come too late.

No wonder a PLO official was quoted as saying: "Yasir Arafat talked about the future. Rabin talked about the past. That's why Rabin sounded like the wrong guest at the right party." And, continuing the contrast and in an effort to sound more American than his hosts, the official went on: "Yasir Arafat is

rolling up his sleeves and getting to work on implementing this agreement."

Why did Rabin choose to invoke the dead, their families, "the wounds that will never heal?" Why was he not at the same party as the other speakers? Was not this ceremony precisely about healing old wounds? Later that day, I talked with an Israeli friend living in California about my wonder at the force with which Rabin invoked the past at the White House. He explained to me in perfectly reasonable terms that this was a very savvy and cynical political move. The people who really wanted peace in Israel were already in Rabin's pocket, he explained. Peres could talk to the American audience about economic development and prosperity. Rabin would talk to those in Israel who did not (yet) believe in the peace process because they had already suffered too deeply from the endless war. What was the sense of their sacrifice? What was the point of their suffering? By addressing these people, by giving them recognition, Rabin was helping to forge the "Jewish majority" that would be necessary to legitimate the peace agreement as a victory of the historical development of Zionism, not as a pragmatic attempt to have a bigger slice of the world's economic pie. People steeped in suffering, remaining bound to their past, do not respond so well to talk about the bright future opening before us. They have already lost the possibility of this future and want their loss recognized. There is much to commend this reading of Rabin's remarks. In the context of Israeli politics, it was essential that he appear a man of war, a man who knows suffering, in order to be accepted as a man who had come to peace with a full understanding of the alternatives to peace. Peace may be granted as a precious gift, but it may only be fully appreciated and acknowledged by a person who has lived without this gift. This is not only (although it may be partly) due to the macho desire of some to accept only warriors as authentic peace-makers. It is also due to the recognition that only someone who knows suffering can participate in authentic healing. For Jews, an acknowledgement of suffering has deep roots as part of a duty to remember. But it is only a part of this duty, for the past we are commanded to remember is punctuated by our efforts to transform the world. The duty to remember links Jews together by allowing us to participate in a common past that enables us effectively to create a meaningful future.

Thus, although important aspects of Rabin's speech may indeed have been prompted by domestic political concerns, his distance from the ceremony has other dimensions as well. In *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi recalls to us that the Hebrew Bible uses the verb for "remember" at least 169 times. Israel and God are beings of memory; it goes, if I may put it like this, with the territory. Post-biblical Jewish society and culture until the nineteenth century relied little on written histories but much on diverse enactments of memory. And memory does not mean only a concentration on catastrophe but the creation of commonality out of a living past. Yerushalmi shows that Jewish communities before Emancipation were guided by an intense attachment to the past as a crucial part of everyday life and regular ritual. Memory was contained in many vessels and at many sites, and served to connect collective identity and the hope for redemption.

Rabin made the White House lawn a site of Jewish memory, connecting past suffering with hopes for meaningful change:

> Today, on the eve of an opportunity, opportunity for peace, and perhaps end of violence and wars, we remember each and every one of them [those who have sacrificed themselves for the rest of us] with everlasting love.

In his speech at the Knesset on September 21, Rabin spent even more of his time making clear that he participates in the collective memory of Judaism, even as he transforms its history:

> In one hundred years of settlement, this Land has known great suffering—and blood. We, who returned home after 2,000 years of exile—after the Holocaust that sent the best of the Jewish people to the ovens; we who searched for calm after the storm, a place to rest our heads, we extended a hand to our neighbors—and it was rejected time after time. And our soul did not tire of seeking peace.

Rabin continued at length in this vein, not only about the sufferings of the Jews but also about the PLO, "an organization that dispatched the murderers of children against us." This is *after* he had shaken hands with Arafat. The opportunity for peace seems to have brought the necessity of recollection, at least of a certain kind of recollection. The names are not forgotten, and:

> Some must be recited to stand for all the others: The hands of this organization have spilled the blood of hundreds who are dear to us, the blood of the family members of Smadar Haran in Nbariya; the blood of Ofra and Tal, family members to Abie Moses from Aldei-Menashe; the blood of innocent [people] whose only crime was that they were Jews.

In *Zakhor*, Yerushalmi discussed the Rabbi Yom Tob Lipmann Heller, who wrote in the aftermath of the pogroms of 1648 that the prayers commemorating earlier persecutions could be recited in recognition of the most recent catastrophes:

> What has occurred now is similar to the persecutions of old, and all that happened to the forefathers has happened to their descendants. Upon the former already the earlier generations composed *selihot* and narrated the events. *It is all one.*

All that happened to the forefathers happened to the descendants. This is the myth, the collective memory, that Rabin participated in even as he invoked the possibility of a new year, a new season. *Zakhor!* Remember! Of course, there is a shallow, narrow aspect of this appeal to the past that has become a reflex of Jewish and Israeli politics. In the politics of victimization (which we can see all around us here in the United States—you don't have to be Jewish to like to be a victim), to show one's fidelity to the memory of those who suffered has become for many Jews a key (even *the* key) to their identity.

Amos Oz has recently written about how the Holocaust has functioned as a traumatic memory that has been deliberately mobilized for militarist politics in Israel. Rabin can be seen as mining this same vein, although with a different political agenda; manipulating those Israeli voters always ready to see themselves as victims—no matter what their positions. But there is, I think, another dimension of what Rabin was doing at the White House and in the Knesset. Piety and memory have gone together for Jews not only within religious traditions but also within Zionism, within the Diaspora, and even through processes of secularization. The banalization of memory into a politics of victimization and an obsessive reduction of history into a single collective trauma has had negative effects on postwar Jewish culture. But this use of memory is not the only one available to us. Our piety in regard to memory has always been a profound resource for inspiring action and giving meaning to history. At crucial historical junctures, collective memory can reinvigorate political choices and make projects for the future part of a living culture. Collective memory can enable a community to recognize that the present is not the only possibility: Things don't have to be this way and we can change them. Memory provides indications of the possibilities for transformation, even of revolutionary change.

For Jews, the memory of liberation from Slavery, not just of its horrors, is a memory to inspire future transformation. Rabin's speeches did not directly draw on memories of transformation but were confined to recollections of suffering. They evinced a partial politics of piety as they responded to the duty to remember.

*Perhaps Rabin tried to use memory and mourning in his Washington speech to bring skeptical Israelis to support these accords.*

To close his speech at this ceremony marking a new beginning for Israelis and Palestinians, Rabin recited a part of a prayer familiar to Jews around the world: *May He who makes peace in His heavens bring peace to all Israel.* Of course, it was perfectly appropriate to cite a prayer of peace in the context of these accords, but what is so extraordinary about this citation is that it is from the prayer of mourning. These last lines of the Kaddish as they are recited by those whose wounds are (re)opened are always part of a commemoration, even as they reach for the future, reach for peace and healing. In other words, in this prayer commemoration and transformation are linked together.

Memory, even the most painful, has never been antithetical to hope in Jewish culture, and indeed we are commanded to remember the ways that Jews have remade the world in the past. As Walter Benjamin noted near the end of his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, the fact that Jews are prohibited from investigating the future and commanded to remember does not deprive us of an openness to meaningful radical change. Memory can be a wellspring of hope, that out of which people create a new future while remaining tied to their community.

Where was Rabin during the signing ceremony? In giving his own version of *selihot*, he was not trying to spoil the party that brought the PLO to Washington, but he was not (yet) rolling up his sleeves. Perhaps he was trying to use memory and mourning to bring those skeptical and scarred Israelis—those parents at funerals, as he said, into whose eyes one cannot look—to support these accords. But, whether he knew it or not, Rabin was also participating in and helping to form collective Jewish memory. To be worthy of the precious gift of peace, we must recall how long we had waited for it, and also what we had lost along the way. To be worthy of the gift of peace, we should also recall the powerful transformations in our past which indicate how we might reshape the future. The time for peace is also a time for remembering and for change. □

# A Revolutionary and a Scholar:
## E.P. Thompson, 1924 - 1993

*Paul Buhle*

The death of Edward Thompson, master historian and major peacenik, leaves a gap that cannot possibly be filled. Thompson uniquely connected the visionary idealism and hard thought that have guided dissenters through the peaks and valleys of the last forty years. Only a tiny fraction of the Britons who, in a poll of the middle 1980s, considered him their third most popular personality (just after the Queen Mother and Margaret Thatcher), had read or probably even heard of his classic scholarly volumes, of which the most famous is *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). Few of the historians on this side of the ocean whose work has been shaped by this epochal volume of working-class resistance to capitalism closely followed Thompson's second career as tireless leader of anti-nuclear campaigns and agitator of dialogues between the dissident intellectuals of Eastern and Western Europe. The handful who heard him lecture anywhere on poet William Blake may, however, have sensed Thompson's inspirations and guessed at his true identity: the romantic and utopian at large.

Thompson's story is almost too large for telling briefly. The son of Methodist missionaries in India who were intimate with leaders of anti-colonial movements there, he led a tank battalion in the Second World War and followed his adored brother Frank (who was killed inside Axis lines) into the British Communist Party. After the war, he taught for the Workers Educational Association and wrote a detailed biography of that nineteenth century savant, William Morris, who had been at once England's Poet Laureate, leader in historic preservation, and foremost utopian socialist. In 1956, Thompson and a close circle of intellectuals broke with communism to found a New Left (the first Anglo-Americans to use that term). Their journal, *The New Reasoner*, appealed for a new political beginning, East and West. Thompson spoke eloquently for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), known popularly as the "Ban the Bomb Movement." These multiple tasks set him for life.

Just as important, he early on set the *tone* of his personal contribution, a unique and often idiosyncratic appeal to democratic and romantic traditions distant from anything resembling either "scientific socialism," liberalism, or conservatism. Part of it was pure English, an imbibing of literary and political traditions high and low, and a sneaking sense of humor which ripped apart pomposities of all kinds. He occasionally called himself a "bustard," a peculiarly British bird that does not fly, presumably contenting itself with squawking and pedestrian motion. This was, of course, a laconic exaggeration, but one with a point that many of his Jewish devotees understood immediately: One does not have to fly away from kith and kin, but to look around harder to find the resources required. He did not ever claim that his tradition was superior, only that it was *his*.

Within that unshakable sense of self-identity, Thompson constructed his own system of art and politics. Morris's genius had been to deploy through utopian fiction "alternative values sketched in an alternative way of life," and to do so with the "detachment of the imagination from the demands of conceptual precision," as Thompson wrote later. By putting aside so-called common sense, the reader could "enter into Utopia's proper and new-found space: *the education of desire*." Here, in age-old dreams of freedom and love rather than the details of economic growth that communists and Social Democrats (also Democrats and Republicans) glorified, he claimed to find an antidote to the melancholy of the nuclear age and the manifold disillusionments of the century.

And it was precisely this spirit that animated Thompson's notion of a New Left. As he wrote in 1959:

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*Paul Buhle is currently compiling a* Pictorial History of American Radicalism *and invites* TIKKUN *readers to send photos or other visual artifacts to him at the American Civilization Department, Brown University, Box 1892, Providence RI 02912.*

> The New Left has little confidence in the infallibility, either of institutions or of historical processes... The work of changing people's values and attitudes and the summoning up of aspirations to further change [is achieved] by means of utopian critiques of existing society... At every stage... the voluntary participation of the people must be enlisted, and the centers of power must themselves, wherever possible, be broken up... The New Left is sometimes identified by observers by its concern with "cultural" questions, as opposed to the basic bread-and-butter preoccupations of the Old Left. But this is true only if it is understood that the "cultural" questions are questions about life. For the New Left wants political and economic changes *for* something, so that people can themselves do something with their lives as a whole. We have heard enough of a socialism perverted into the worship of poods of grain and tons of steel... where "culture" is a means of social control directed by the Establishments.

Thompson had already predicted the epochal event that he did more to inspire than all the American intelligence agents and free market economists: the peaceful overthrow of Stalinism. He also assisted what they chose not to see, the unsatisfied demands and desires of brave dissidents who hoped and expected something far different than a sad imitation of the West.

Thompson's essays after leaving the Communist Party stirred the pot that yielded the 1962 *Port Huron Statement* on this side of the ocean, and helped bring about an American New Left. But a surprisingly larger number of Americans, including hundreds (later thousands) of budding Jewish intellectuals, heard him through quite another venue. *The Making of the English Working Class*, a massive text of rich detail published in 1963, sparked a revolution in ways of learning, teaching, and writing about history. By insisting that "class" was a relationship shaped by conflicting consciousness—and not merely a set of data about wealth, poverty, and economic location—Thompson revealed a human way of seeing our collective past. In showing, through beautifully developed anecdotes, that historical tradition and popular cultures contained elements of resistance that scarcely (sometimes never) surfaced as political challenges, he gave the lives of his workaday subjects both dignity and meaning.

He obviously revolutionized labor history. But Thompson also facilitated intellectual revolutions of other kinds, from women's history (and later, gay and lesbian history) to African-American history. Literary scholars—especially but not only of English traditions—often experienced a similar Thompsonian inspiration. Younger anthropologists found confirmation of an intuitive direction of their own work. From linguistics to sociology to critical legal studies, successive waves of influence, teacher to student and student to student, can still be felt today.

*In 1956, Thompson and his circle broke with communism to found a New Left, the first Anglo-Americans to use that term.*

But there was a catch. Effectively emancipated from older narratives, radical scholars could now go anywhere they wanted. If, however, the old story of individual rights and social progress emerging from industrial chaos toward the welfare state (or socialism) no longer seemed convincing, where did it all end up? By the 1980s, critics of the emerging scholarship joked that the working class under study had never come close to making a revolution. But they sure had a great subculture.

This *bon mot* suggests the objections that Thompson himself ran up against, both in methodology and politics. Many British New Left intellectuals wanted to dump Thompson and his English tradition of radical romanticism for Louis Althusser and "scientific" French structuralism. Some years later their ideological descendants, Anglo-American post-structuralists kneeling at the feet of Parisian psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, treated "historicism" as the worst of epithets and considered all the lovely symmetry of Thompson's historical details to be pure junk. Like Irving Howe, who came from a very different and mostly hostile tradition, Thompson therefore had an unhappy mid-1960s to mid-1970s.

He was out of the contemporary Left spirit in any number of ways. Thompson heartily opposed the U.S. war on Vietnam, but had no taste for Ho Chi Minh. He vastly preferred convicting the authorities of law-breaking to students breaking laws themselves. Intellectually, he spun his wheels on methodological polemics while the historical terrain gave way to a variety of postmodernisms, some interesting and some merely stupid.

He also turned back to teaching (sometimes in the United States, although never at a long-term job)

where he became a charming and generous mentor, an unforgettable lecturer—altogether a model of what radical professors should be and too often are not. He also proceeded slowly on a Swiftian science fiction novel. Published only in 1988 and titled *The Sykaos Papers*, it features a space-traveler who finds himself upon a doom-bent planet Earth (and in the arms of a welcoming feminist anthropologist), trying to understand the dualities of human consciousness " à la William Blake.

Out of the spotlight and thrown back on himself, Thompson also dug deeper into history, finding in old Britain a traditional sense of justice alive in ordinary people's consciousness. The emerging commercial class of the eighteenth century, as he showed in the picturesque detail of *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (1975), sought to blot out ancient legacies such as the use of the forest for game. The "free born Englishman" fought back with the rhetoric of law, a concentrated version of tradition. Pointing to such historical precedents, Thompson militantly and successfully defended the jury system as a popular institution against attempts by the current British Establishment to dilute its power. Less successfully but with great moral force, he demanded the repeal of the Official Secrets Act as a violation of common-law tradition. Traces of the common decency had survived, he insisted, even as the world stumbled forward under the shadow of nuclear war. And it was through an appeal in this accumulated decency that he found his last and greatest public role.

At the end of the 1970s, a renewed European peace movement challenged new forms of nuclear madness, the placing of American Cruise missiles in Britain and other NATO countries. Thompson published a little pamphlet in 1980, *Protest and Survive*, which became a best-seller in England and led to the founding of European Nuclear Disarmament (END). Thompson's ringing phrases hailed readers to "act as if we are, already, citizens of Europe" and to "throw whatever resources still exist in human culture across the path of this degenerative logic." Effecting the link between peace and democracy, END marked a giant positive step toward absolute nonalignment.

Thompson used the occasion of the anti-nuclear cause brilliantly, not only to rouse one of the greatest all-European movements of modern times, but to reach far beyond the Cold War's existing political limits. Denounced simultaneously in The *New York Times* and *Pravda*, at once a purported dupe of the communists and an agent of the CIA, Thompson personally completed the dialogue with Eastern European intellectuals that he had boldly opened a quarter-century earlier. Over the objections of the various governments, he organized British working groups on Eastern Europe which made themselves agencies for communications of citizens directly with each other. The unprecedented popular support marshalled for peace and human rights went far to create the space required to work for the fall of the tottering communist regimes.

In enlisting Eastern Europeans' collaboration in the movement against the missiles, Thompson had helped them free themselves, and to challenge the logic of nuclearism as the basis of world politics. His contribution to ending the Cold War was not likely to be acknowledged in Washington, nor indeed among Eastern European governments today. Nor would it end the vicious arms trade, nor the military Keynesianism at the heart of Western economics this past half-century. But he had showed what could happen anywhere, at just the right conjuncture. If, he often said, the threat of nuclear extermination could be pushed back, even a little, then humanity might yet find its own way to what had been lost between the great twin souls, Blake and Morris. The Master Romantic and the Master Craftsman, Thompson wrote, had both opposed "the annunciation of the Acquisitive Man," the victory of individualistic greed over the human capacity for freedom and love. They had lost, of course, but the defeat had not been absolute and perhaps not final.

Thompson could not have been too sorry about the undeserved obscurity of his final years. He had spent too much of his life at late meetings or between planes, contributing greatly to the breakdown of his health. If he felt, as often before, the sting of disappointment that his vision of socialism could not yet come to pass, he allowed himself the consolation of finishing tasks he had long put aside. A collection of historical essays postponed for decades, *Customs in Common*, a book on his father's relationship with the Indian writer Rabindranath Tagore, a volume on William Blake he had toyed with for nearly forty years, and a new set of historical essays all passed his final judgment. Still another volume, from a series of speeches about his brother Frank, awaits editorial completion.

Thompson himself, the great shaggy orator of our time, is gone. He leaves behind a model life, providing us in his person and his books a glimpse of what this century might have been and has not been since the First World War pointed the terrible road downward. This peace crusader and utopian has done more than most of us to offer an escape from the abyss as the next century advances upon us. □

# Museum of Death, Museum of Life

*Raymond P. Scheindlin*

The Jewish Museum in New York City unveiled itself on June 13, after months of renovation, reorganization, and renewal. This new Jewish Museum is both a record of and a participant in a dynamic Jewish culture that draws on the past in order to live in the present and to create for the future. By contrast, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which recently opened in Washington, D.C. to intense interest on the part of both the Jewish and the general public, is a monument to death. The coincidence of the opening of the two museums, each devoted to Jewish themes, each reaching out to the general public, invites comparison of their opposing visions.

Unlike the Holocaust museum, the Jewish Museum is not an entirely new institution. Begun in 1904 as a collection of Jewish ritual objects belonging to the Jewish Theological Seminary, it has grown into an extensive collection of Jewish ritual objects and works of art; its collections and its regular program of exhibitions have made it the most important institution of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. Both the collections and exhibitions are designed to display the range of the Jewish cultural heritage and to provide a forum for contemporary art by and about Jews.

Until now, the Jewish Museum's view of Jewish culture has merely been implicit in its permanent exhibits and activities. The museum has taken advantage of the opportunity provided by its renovation to make its vision explicit through its single most valuable innovation, the new permanent core exhibition, titled "Culture and Continuity: The Jewish Journey." It offers the visitor nothing less than a comprehensive conception of Jewish culture.

The core exhibit is organized into four main units: "Forging an Identity," dealing with the Jews in the ancient world; "Interpreting a Tradition," dealing with the Jews from the seventh to the eighteenth centuries; "Confronting Modernity," reaching up to the post-war period; and "Realizing a Future," bringing the show up to the present. The displays are organized around the dialectic of three forces that are understood to have shaped Jewish culture: the native Jewish tradition; interaction with other cultures; and the impact of specific historic events. Along the way, text panels, ritual objects, art objects, models, photographs, reconstructions, audio, and interactive computer programs are enlisted to introduce, organize, and render coherent the vast complexity of Jewish experience.

For visitors with little knowledge of Judaism, it is hard to imagine a better way to become oriented quickly in the maze of Jewish culture. For visitors with some personal knowledge of Jewish tradition and culture, the core exhibit poses a significant intellectual challenge: It invites one to transcend the parochial experience of Judaism acquired in home or synagogue; to learn to appreciate the complexity of the historical experiences and the variety of forms that Jewish culture has taken in the past; and to see that the future of the Jews lies not in the preservation of any one of the items that make up this complex, precious as any of them may be to some, but in embracing the present as a natural outgrowth of a rich and varied past.

Coming so soon after the opening of the Holocaust museum, the reopening of the Jewish Museum invites the question of the two institutions' treatment of Jewish suffering. What role is accorded to persecution in the Jewish Museum's telling of the Jewish story? How much of the telling is devoted to suffering? For the history of the Jews is generally considered a history of wandering, destruction, and dislocation, culminating in the transcendent horror of the destruction of European Jewry in World War II. Are not the Jews the people so systematically persecuted that only by the coining of the new word "genocide" could their experience even be discussed? Was it not Jewish history that gave the word "holocaust" its new

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status as a proper noun, the one enshrined in the name "Holocaust Memorial Museum?" What place, then, is accorded to persecution, the entire focus of the Holocaust museum, in the core exhibition of the Jewish Museum? And how does the new Jewish Museum treat the Holocaust itself?

*Because of the Holocaust museum's narrow focus, visitors will not learn anything about the people targeted for destruction except their Holocaust experience. The result will be the perpetuation of the image of the Jews as pitiable outsiders.*

The Jewish Museum's core exhibition deals with the past persecutions endured by the Jews mostly as historical forces that played a part alongside other forces in shaping the Jewish consciousness. Only three disasters receive special attention: the destruction of the Second Temple at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D.; the expulsion from Spain in 1492; and the Nazi Holocaust. The Holocaust is represented by a shallow alcove, a dark, constricted space contrasting with the open brightness of most of the exhibition, and particularly with the wide and extraordinarily high-ceilinged space of the preceding section. Thus the Jewish Museum reduces the telling of the event that is the entire raison d'être of the Holocaust museum to a single dark corner, a shallow cul-de-sac overwhelmed by the opulent display of Jewish cultural and historical riches that surround it.

As opposed to the telling of the story of the Holocaust, the effects of the Holocaust on Jewish creativity are given generous space. "Realizing a Future," the contemporary segment of the core exhibition, illustrates repeatedly how Jewish and non-Jewish artists have woven the memory of the Holocaust into the fabric of contemporary Judaism, a Judaism no longer defined exclusively by religion but primarily by historic memory. The Holocaust figures frequently in the temporary exhibition at the Jewish Museum titled "From the Inside Out: Eight Contemporary Artists" and in other museum holdings. But in the Holocaust-inspired work of the contemporary artists on display it is not the representation of death and destruction that overwhelm the viewer but rather the sheer power of the artists to imagine and express, to make life out of death. How different, therefore, the conception of Judaism conveyed by the two museums to their visitors!

The Holocaust museum was never intended to represent the entire Jewish experience; it may not appear to be quite fair to fault it for not doing that which it was not designed to do, especially when it succeeds at its mission so very well. But for better or worse, the Holocaust museum is at the moment the most prominent Jewish institution in the United States. As such, it will provide many of its visitors with a first glimpse of Jewish life and culture. There, thousands of persons for generations to come will acquire their initial and perhaps their only systematic knowledge of the Jews, and the picture that they will acquire and retain forever will be one of death and destruction. All the sophistication and subtlety that went into the conception and execution of the Holocaust museum cannot save it from presenting a distorted picture of the Jews, since its purpose is to tell the story of but one generation out of the millennia of Jewish history.

Because of the Holocaust museum's narrow focus, visitors will not learn anything about the people targeted for destruction in the Holocaust except their Holocaust experience. And this they will learn so exhaustively that they will see the Jews as nothing more than a people of victims. They will blend the overpowering images of destruction with the vague information they already have about the persecution of the Jews in Spain and elsewhere, and the result will be the perpetuation of the image of the Jews as pitiable outsiders.

The narrow focus of the Holocaust museum also plays into the hands of extreme Jewish nationalists. These militants, both in the United States and Israel, who base their cultural identity and therefore their political programs on the image of the Jews as a persecuted minority surrounded by hostility and hatred, will find in the museum ample reinforcement for their essentially negative view of the Jewish experience and their destructive political goals.

Certainly, the story of the Holocaust needs to be told, and told in detail, if only to keep the record straight at a time when politically motivated revisionists are attempting to deny the events that it amply documents. While no amount of documentation will convince the neo-Nazis and other crazies, the sheer quantity of documentation on display at the Holocaust museum will make the truth evident beyond

any doubt for the vast majority of its visitors. Unfortunate as is the necessity for making this case, the museum does it effectively and in as good taste as is possible given its horrible theme.

If the Holocaust museum were located anywhere else but where it is, it could serve its legitimate and important purpose of documenting the Holocaust in a modest and appropriate way. But located in our national capital, surrounded by such national icons as the Washington Monument, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Vietnam Memorial, housed in a massive building universally hailed as an architectural masterpiece, it will inevitably come to serve as the main institutional representative of the Jewish people to the American public, Jews and non-Jews alike. Thus, it is all the more unfortunate that the picture it presents is so narrow, so dark, so hopeless. Despite all its virtues, the Holocaust museum gives occasion for regret.

For it is not only the Jewish past that will be distorted for its visitors, but the Jewish present as well. The uninitiated will never divine that we are living in one of the great ages in all of Jewish history. We are seeing the greatest renaissance of Hebrew literature since the twelfth century, possibly in all time, a renaissance of such magnitude that it fully deserves to take the title Golden Age away from the medieval Hebrew poets of Spain. Visitors will not learn that by acquiring a state, the Jewish people have acquired the possibility of defining Judaism, for the first time since the sixth century B.C., in terms of political identity rather than religious community. They will remain ignorant of the phenomenon of creative members of the Jewish diaspora reflecting both on the Jewish past and on the Jewish present and producing a Jewish literature in English to rival the productions of the Amoraim in Aramaic, of Philo in Greek, of Maimonides in Arabic, of Heine in German. They will leave ignorant of the fact that Jewish painters and craftsmen in our time have created and are creating a Jewish art to furnish Jewish homes, communal institutions, and museums all over the world. Unaware of the fecund productivity of the present age, neither Jews nor non-Jews will be in a position to grasp the fact that the contemporary forms of Jewish creativity are but extensions of the variety of the Jewish past. This is the lesson that the visitor to the new Jewish Museum will absorb by attentively traversing the new core exhibition—a far more accurate picture for non-Jews; a far healthier picture for Jews.

Most disappointing, the Holocaust museum will confirm for its visitors a view of the Jews as suffering victims. This may be expedient in the present political climate, in which minority groups are engaged in intense competition over which one has experienced the worst holocaust. But it is neither a healthy foundation on which to build Jewish consciousness nor a sound basis for intercommunal dialogue and understanding. In national identity as in personal life, it is best to concentrate on future possibilities rather than on past wrongs. The Jewish Museum provides a model for a Judaism that grows organically out of its own past into the future, a Judaism forged not only out of persecution, but out of all the forces that make culture: language, artistic idioms, political structures, religion, nationalism, historical memory. How much more wholesome is this model, how much more firm a foundation for a Jewish future. □


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BOOK REVIEW

# Masochist to Sadist: "Torture Me" Sadist to Masochist: "No"

*Joel Kovel*

*Sadomasochism in Everyday Life: The Dynamics of Power and Powerlessness* by Lynn S. Chancer. Rutgers University Press, 1992, 238 pp.

Other animals may exhibit aggression and be ferocious, but no other species besides the human is cruel. Watching the cat play with her prey suggests cruelty, but the similarity with human sadism is superficial. Take the mouse away, and the cat will forget about it until the next mouse shows up. The cat has an instinct but no desire, no longing to cause another creature suffering for suffering's sake. The mouse releases the instinctual mechanism, but otherwise means nothing. Finally, it is unthinkable that a cat would ever assume the position of masochism, sadism's subtle counterpart, and seek suffering for itself, as humans do. Cats are too smart for that, or not smart enough. It takes a really intelligent animal to be irrational.

We humans are the cruel species—cruel to others, as sadists, and to ourselves, as masochists—or, since the two are remarkably twinned, we are sadomasochists. Humans are the only animals to raise cruelty to a principle of fate. As flies to wanton boys, wrote Shakespeare in what was perhaps the grimmest moment in *King Lear*, so are we to the gods: They kill us for their sport. Dostoevsky used the cruel streak in humanity as an argument to confound the liberal aspirations of the nineteenth century; Freud did the same for the twentieth. How can we believe in progress, the inexorable march of reason and welfare, if humans evince so great a capacity to take pleasure in pain? Spite and perversity, the delight in going against self-interest, the affirmation that 2+2=5 simply for the sake of saying what one wanted—these were the facts invoked by Dostoevsky's Underground Man against the believers in technical reason and progress. A half-century later, amid the rubble of World War I, Freud pronounced an even graver verdict: There was a kind of primary, essential masochism in us, product of the power of death itself, the drive to return to an inorganic state which, interacting with the drive to live, sets loose the forces of destruction.

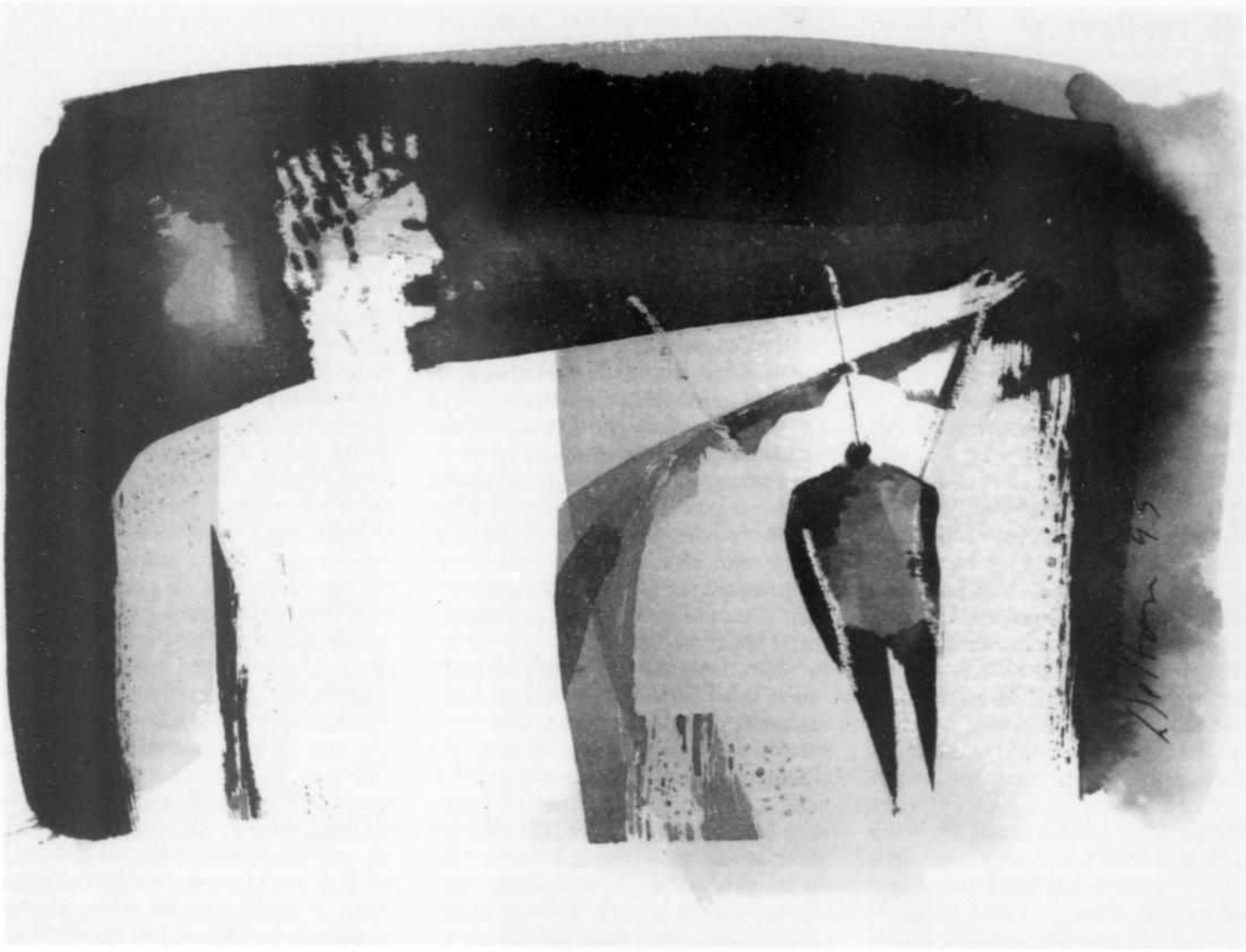
*The S/M paraphernalia that fill the sex shops, far from manifesting the pure form of sadomasochism, represent a weakened, watered-down version.*

If there was sufficient evidence at the beginning of the century to permit this line of reasoning, how much stronger do its claims seem as the century draws to a close. Torture, once rampant in medieval Europe, had more or less disappeared by 1900. Now torture, which is to say, sadism in the service of the state, has again become a quasi-official practice throughout much of the world. As the cruelties of Bosnia cap a century of mass murder, and the "New World Order" breaks up in tribal warfare, the dream of a better life dissolves into despair. Obviously, none of this can be reduced to an instinctual drive toward sadomasochism. Nonetheless, sadomasochism remains an all too obdurate factor. The expanded scale of destructivity of the twentieth century confounds liberal aspirations more effectively than the novels of a Dostoevsky.

Typically, progressives are nonplussed by the spectacle of human cruelty. The classical Freudian hypothesis rooting cruelty in an instinct has more or less had the intellectual field to itself. Yet, like all appeals to nature as the source of behavior, it remains politically unacceptable. Having no alternative critique of sadomasochism, progressives tend to finesse the subject altogether, thus leaving a major component of human existence out of their reckoning. Now, however, comes Lynn Chancer, a sociologist at Barnard, with just such an alternative critique, rooting sadomasochism in the dynamics of power rather than instinct.

In *Sadomasochism in Everyday Life*, Chancer widens the scale of sadomasochism far beyond the sexual sphere, i.e., of "S/M." Freud himself admitted this, recognizing sadomasochism in forms other than the sexual. As he looked at the bigger picture, Freud saw masochism in the sphere of character, as with the self-pitying person who just loves to suffer, or, in a characteristically misogynistic maneuver, as a "normal" tendency of women. Chancer eschews the classical psychoanalytic putdown of women, but otherwise goes beyond Freud. She sees sadomasochism as a fundamental principle of everyday life, including work and family relationships; and she sees it, more important still, not primarily as a sexual matter at all, but as integral to power, dependence, and unfreedom. Sadomasochism happens whenever

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people are bound together unfreely, in relations of domination and submission; where they ritualize their interaction; where the relationship is dialectical and dynamic; and finally, where the position of power is buttressed materially, so that the submissive, masochistic person experiences severe sanctions against breaking loose from bondage. From this angle, the S/M paraphernalia that fill the sex shops, far from manifesting the pure form of sadomasochism, represent a weakened, watered-down version. Precisely inasmuch as it becomes consensual, S/M is only playing at sadomasochism; only when bondage is for real does the full picture come into focus, as the Marquis de Sade knew all too well. Hence the point of the joke in which the masochist asks the sadist to torture him and the latter refuses. Were the sadist to beat the masochist as demanded, he would be granting the latter power. The only way to preserve the sadistic position—especially in an era of mass-produced sex—is to not beat, thus truly tormenting the masochist.

In this view, sadomasochism is grounded in the realization that the self is built from the dialectics of recognition between self and other. The source now, however, is not Freud's psychology but Hegel's philosophy. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel had demonstrated how self-consciousness, perhaps the most fundamental aspect of being human, emerges out of a life-and-death struggle for recognition with another person. Significantly, Hegel chose as the metaphor for elaborating this concept the notion of "Master and Bondsman," a phrase which is linked to the phenomena of sadomasochism as well as those of social class. Rather than being reducible to the animal part of ourself, sadomasochism occurs precisely at the point when we become human. It is a function not of nature, but of humanity itself—humanity as it goes awry in specific social circumstances, when the master-bondsman dynamic is not overcome but petrifies into cruelty, domination, and submission. The Marquis de Sade, after all, was an aristocrat caught between the old order and the new, who expressed both the dominion of a dying class and the sense of power with which the emerging modern self was invested.

The current preoccupation with sadomasochism is a function of the increasing isolation of the modern self, and its reaching for power over the other in compensation for a false existence. Chancer makes an important contribution by depicting an expanded scale of social relations that have become contaminated by sadomasochism. These are witness not to the power of a sadomasochistic human essence, but to the failure of the twentieth century's revolutionary projects whose time had come but could not be carried through. Antonio Gramsci, the Italian communist who died in Mussolini's prison, put it best: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear." □

BOOK REVIEW

# Case Reopened

*Jonathan Marshall*

*Case Closed: Lee Havey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK*, by Gerald Posner, Random House, 1993, 607 pp. $25.
*Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, by Peter Dale Scott, University of California Press, 1993, 413 pp.

In the last thirty years, the nation's attitude toward the assassination of President John Kennedy has undergone a fundamental transformation. With the passage of time, the disappearance of witnesses, and the muddling of memories, the crime has become less a mystery to be solved than an ideological Rorschach test. Believers in the fundamental strength of America's constitutional and democratic processes, including such decent liberals as the late I.F. Stone, see in this dark blot on U.S. history a single lone nut whose tragic act of lunacy could not sidetrack the American system from its true path. But millions of more cynical skeptics, reinforced in their fundamental distrust of the system by later assassinations, Watergate, CIA scandals, Iran-contra intrigues, and S&L horrors, readily share Oliver Stone's paranoid vision, evoked in the movie *JFK*, of a vast plot by the military-industrial complex, CIA, and right-wingers to overthrow the Kennedy administration.

That reasonable people as well as zealots can divide into such wildly opposing camps is not entirely a reflection of broader cultural and ideological splits in the body politic. The genuinely difficult, contradictory, and confusing record of evidence in this case, including scores of outright lies by witnesses and informants, has fostered the huge proliferation of alternative theories. It is hard to imagine many other crimes in which the chief suspect could be plausibly described, by apparently competent and amply footnoted biographies, variously as a KGB or Cuban agent, a U.S. intelligence operative, a "pawn" of the Mafia, or a deranged loner. Even those who believe in the "one lone nut" scenario acknowledge that Oswald was an inveterate conspirator who invented phony addresses, used aliases and post office boxes to cover his tracks, and tried to trick even his ideological allies in the communist world by creating apparently impressive but false or exaggerated leftist credentials.

By sometimes sacrificing truth to resolve this politically inciteful evidence in a way that would calm public fears and restore faith in the system, the Warren Commission only succeeded in recruiting an even bigger army of skeptics and planting the seeds of distrust that would grow into a giant "credibility gap" during the Vietnam War. Today, thanks in part to the cynicism and dishonesty of some official investigators, legions of conspiracy "buffs" now churn out nutty theories about teams of government agents surgically altering the President's brain, or about multiple snipers firing in Dealey Plaza from under manhole covers and from dart guns disguised as umbrellas.

Such scenarios have made the "buff" community an easy target of ridicule. But the defenders of official truth often have no more regard for the facts than do the wilder critics. Take, as a case in point, the acclaimed new volume by former Wall Street lawyer Gerald Posner, *Case Closed: Lee Harvey Oswald and the Assassination of JFK*. Awarded a cover story and excerpt in *U.S. News and World Report* and praised in cover blurbs by historian Stephen Ambrose and columnist Tom Wicker ("the case of JFK is indeed closed"), the book is extremely well written and argued. But it is the argument of a clever prosecution lawyer, not a disinterested historian or investigator.

For Posner, no evidence indicting Oswald is too far-fetched to repeat. Thus Posner quotes Marina Oswald's story of struggling with her homicidal husband in the bathroom to prevent him from taking his pistol to assassinate Richard Nixon in April 1963. Posner admits that Nixon did not visit Dallas that month, suggesting that Oswald could have misread news accounts about an impending visit by Vice President Johnson to mean Nixon. But Posner does not tell the reader that Marina changed her story of the struggle in ways that prompted the Warren Commission finally to conclude it was of "no probative value." Posner, who seems more intent on gaining a conviction than seeking truth, also does not tell his jury of readers that Warren Commission Counsel Norman Redlich concluded that Marina had "repeatedly lied to the Secret Service, the FBI, and this Commission on matters which are of vital concern."

If that admission would damage his case, so would any acknowledgment of the shady background of Oswald's assassin, Jack Ruby. Posner resurrects the Warren Commission's discredited picture of Ruby as a small-time bar owner with few potentially conspiratorial connections. Posner knew better. After a long investigation in 1978, the staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations produced a volume of more than a thousand pages detailing Ruby's suspicious criminal associations and activities. The Committee's chief counsel, Robert Blakey, concluded that Ruby's underworld ties and strange patterns of behavior immediately before and after the assassination strongly suggested some kind of Mob involvement in the murder of JFK and the silencing of Oswald.

Posner tries to reverse this judgment by quoting a friend of Ruby and "prominent entertainment reporter for the Dallas Morning News," Tony Zoppi, to the effect that Ruby was only "a born loser, a real low-level loser." But Posner must have known that the committee had talked to Zoppi and trapped him in a major lie about Ruby's visits to Havana casinos in 1959. Posner should also have known that

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*Jonathan Marshall is co-author, with Peter Dale Scott, of* Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America *(University of California Press, 1991).*

Zoppi, when interviewed by the committee in 1978, was working in a Las Vegas casino which contemporary press accounts described as being controlled by the Chicago crime family and long-time associates of mob financier Meyer Lansky.

Posner is hardly alone in selectively citing evidence to "close the case." Conspiracy theorists pushing a single culprit, such as the mob or the CIA, use much the same approach. In contrast, Peter Dale Scott, a UC Berkeley professor and poet, rips the case open by exploring hundreds of suggestive leads, discrepancies, and implausible coincidences. Scott's work on the Kennedy case has until now circulated mostly in Samizdat, cited by other published authors but unavailable to the general public. In his long awaited magnum opus, *Deep Politics and the Death of JFK*, Scott does not offer a "who done it." Instead, he uses the assassination as a point of entry for an extended tour through little known, long buried, and truly disturbing regions of American politics.

Instead of eliminating suspects, Scott multiplies them. Thus Ruby, far from being a simple bar owner or even just a pawn of the Mafia in Dallas, appears in Scott's account as a multi-state, even multi-national "fixer" straddling the worlds of organized crime, narcotics trafficking, law enforcement, and big city politics. Any one or all of these associations could explain Ruby's many suspicious activities in the days leading up to his successful silencing of Oswald.

And to understand Oswald, Scott argues, it is not sufficient to trace his mysterious connections to the KGB, CIA, FBI, Cuban government, and New Orleans mafia. Scott offers intriguing suggestions that Oswald may have acted, through intermediaries, as an informant for the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, army intelligence, and private security firms. Scott even makes a convincing case that Oswald's strange career in 1963 cannot be understood without reference to the major banana companies, whose political clout and ruthless business methods contributed to the corruption of New Orleans and Louisiana politics in alliance with organized crime, much as they corrupted Central American nations in alliance with mobsters and the CIA.

Scott's account will not persuade a skeptic, and did not fully persuade me, that a conspiracy killed Kennedy. It does prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that malignant conspiracies at the highest political levels, including such practices as sexual blackmail, were commonplace at the time of the assassination and have continued to haunt America because of widespread denial about their significance. Since Scott's book appeared, newly released documents support one of his central theses—that the story of a mysterious trip that Oswald (or someone claiming to be Oswald) took to Mexico in September 1963 was manipulated by various intelligence agencies (CIA, Mexican, and possibly Nicaraguan) to lay a false trail implicating the Cuban or Soviet governments in the assassination, thus prompting President Johnson to request a quick closure of the investigation lest it lead to world war.

It is a sad irony that millions of Americans already believe, but do not care to act on, worse things about American politics than Scott can hope to demonstrate. Conspiracies by CIA officers, oilmen, and military brass are common staples of Hollywood and TV movies, not to mention countless pulp novels. At the same time, public and private institutions that are the repositories of official truths continue to repress the darker facts that Hollywood both exaggerates and trivializes. In this polarized culture, Scott's book may never become a best-seller. It enjoys neither the huge advertising budget of Posner's quasi-official tome nor the lurid story line of other conspiracy tales slated for publication this fall. But it is hard to imagine a more challenging essay on American politics appearing this season. □

BOOK REVIEW

# The High Price of Getting Along

*David Brody*

*Negotiating the Future: A Labor Perspective on American Business*, by Barry Bluestone and Irving Bluestone. Basic Books 1992, 335 pp.

The past twenty years have been a humbling time for American capitalism. The reversal of fortunes that began in the early 1970s was all the more shocking because it came after two postwar decades of unprecedented economic success and because the loss of industrial leadership to the once-despised Japanese was so decisive. In their distress, American employers have looked for culprits in many directions. But no place seemed a likelier candidate than the shop floor, where authoritarian methods of production first conceived by Frederick Winslow Taylor and Henry Ford so obviously contrasted with German craftsmanship and Japanese team spirit. Given the market pressures and the politics of the Reagan era, organized labor would have been thrown on the defensive no matter what. But the rallying cry of American "competitiveness" and management's accompanying enthusiasm for more cooperation with workers gave a license to union-busting, much as had the dogma of the "open shop" had in earlier times. As a result, unions in the private sector have suffered huge setbacks and are scarcely better off than they were before the New Deal.

Embattled unionists have responded ambiguously. They have resisted as best they could the onslaught on their jurisdictions, but many of

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them—by no means all—also concede that the adversarial system (so-called) within which they operate has become counterproductive and needs reforming. No labor leader has done more to argue the case for joint experiments than Irving Bluestone, pioneer of the Quality of Work Life program at the United Auto Workers in the early 1970s, and, more recently, a professor of labor studies at Wayne State University in Detroit. *Negotiating the Future*, written in collaboration with his son, the political economist Barry Bluestone, is the ultimate statement of progressive trade unionism today, the most far-reaching exposition of labor's role in the postindustrial economy to date.

For starters, the Bluestones try to shed labor's image as a special interest. In the current crisis, they say, the union movement is committed, above all, to restoring American competitiveness. Productivity, quality, innovation are the keywords echoing through the book. Why these broke down in recent years is the subject of a lengthy discussion that concludes, predictably, that the main weakness was the nation's failed labor relations. They situate the unions at the center of the competitiveness crisis—not as part of the problem, but as essential to the solution. The Bluestones admit that blame for past error lies partly with the unions. But they are far more critical of corporate management, which after World War II made a determined fight to preserve its prerogatives from the claims of a resurgent CIO. Management rights clauses gained from that fight dealt a fatal blow to any genuine partnership across the class divide. Employers claimed that everything not specified as bargainable in the contract was off-limits to the unions. This covered nearly all decisions regarding investment, products, technology, and pricing. For the Bluestones, elimination of the management rights clause is the sine qua non of future labor relations.

They affirm the principle that has guided American trade unionism since the time of Samuel Gompers: that without co-equal power there can be no economic justice. Arbitrary power in the hands of management corrupts even the most sophisticated nonunion employee involvement scheme that human-resource consultants can dream up. The power workers gain through union organization in turn has to be translated into contractually binding rights. Far from seeking to abolish the contract, the Bluestones see it as the cornerstone on which labor-management partnership must be built.

The union contract of the future gets a new name, however—the Enterprise Compact. It begins with the various forms of workplace participation and gainsharing already in place, but broadened out and articulated to achieve what the Bluestones call the "co-management" of the workplace. Audaciously, they then move out of the factory to advocate co-management at every level of the firm—up to and including the CEO's office. Three preconditions govern the Bluestones' proposal: first, that labor commit itself to the goal of a "globally competitive firm" in terms of productivity, quality, and innovation; second, that management commit itself to company growth and market share rather than short-term profit maximization; and third, that all "stakeholders" share on an equitable and specified basis in the earnings of the firm.

From these preconditions, the Bluestones fashion a seven-point compact specifying productivity goals, wage increases, pricing policy, quality as a strikable issue, job security, and gain-sharing for workers. Point 7 bears full quotation:

> The company and the union agree that all strategic enterprise decisions will be made through joint action. These decisions include, but are not restricted to, product pricing, the purchasing of inputs, marketing and advertising, methods of production, the introduction of new technology, investments in new capital and products, and the subcontracting of production. The existing management-rights clause in the traditional contract shall be deleted.

All this is not exactly pie-in-the-sky. The Bluestones have a prototype in GM's Saturn project, in which standard work rules and job classifications have been swept aside in favor of a flexible team system, accompanied by a structure of joint councils that gives the union a voice up to the highest levels of the GM subsidiary. For now at least, the Saturn car is a hit, and the project that produced it serves as a source of inspiration for the Enterprise Compact.

But it's too early to tell whether Saturn is a genuine breakthrough or only a special case. Better that we take a longer view and consider the Enterprise Compact as an artifact of American labor-management history and of the current trade-union crisis.

The notion of co-managing the firm is not new, although in earlier incarnations it was called industrial democracy. The origin of industrial democracy lies in the late nineteenth century, when small-scale enterprise gave way to the great vertically integrated firm—and with it the modern concept of management as a distinct function.

To American socialists, the emergence of the corporate sector was a new stage in capitalist development, welcomed despite the power it gave the oppressor class. When the Left came to power, ran the prediction, U.S. Steel and the like would be nationalized and managed on behalf of the working class. The vision of the socialist state soon faded, but it left behind an ideal of democratized industry that periodically revived and inspired the labor movement—the Plumb plan for tripartite operation of the railroads after World War I, the industrial councils advocated by the CIO for running defense industries in the early phases of World War II, and Walter Reuther's abortive drive to get GM to "open the books" during the postwar strike wave.

All these initiatives elicited furious and unrelenting opposition from capital, which invariably defined them as fatal to the American free-enterprise system. And where, as after World War II, the threat seemed credible, no price was too high to thwart it—not the costly 1946 strike GM endured as its competitors picked up market share, nor the generous contract provisions that afterward paid for the management rights clause against which the Bluestones rail.

Why do the authors believe the principle of managerial prerogative no longer commands that deep-seated and unwavering loyalty? It can only be because they sense a drastic loss of confidence by management in its capacity to manage, as if a moment in American capitalism had arrived equivalent to the onset of perestroika in the former Soviet Union.

Measured by performance over the past twenty years, maybe that's how things should be. But clearly they are not. Witness the ever-more inflated salaries commanded by CEOs; the attentive monitoring of their comings and goings on the business pages of the press; the fact that, while college grad-

uates and newly minted engineers, lawyers, and academics languish, 95 percent of this year's graduates of the Harvard Business School have jobs before commencement.

If anything, the new competitiveness puts a premium on the management function and casts the Enterprise Compact in a faintly anachronistic light. The elaborate consultative process it envisages assumes a managerial hierarchy now rapidly being dismantled and a deliberate policy making pace just as everything is becoming fast-action. And what of irresolvable differences? One possibility, the Bluestones suggest, is that after exhausting all other avenues, labor might defer to management, not unlike (in a telling simile) the vice president "casting the deciding vote when there is a tie vote" in the U.S. Senate. Alternatively, a mediator might be called in or the issue put to third-party arbitration. One can imagine what a hoot these suggestions might give the new chief at IBM, whose first major act was to jettison the firm's celebrated job-security policy and announce that the down sizing he intended—39,000 jobs—would take place in one single blow. And beyond the strategic decisions, there are those core rights of private property to which the Bluestones lay a claim for labor—what level of profits to seek and how they are to be divided.

Still, it is true that little is heard nowadays about the sanctity of the managerial prerogative. And there on the back cover is a mild endorsement of the Bluestones' book by none other than the president of the National Association of Manufacturers. It may be that there are enough instances where corporate distress has drawn unions into the management realm as to have eroded the dogmatism we once would have heard from such a figure. But his complacency probably derives more from a painful truth about the Enterprise Compact. Demands for industrial democracy have characteristically come at flood-tides of the labor movement. This one comes at its nadir and springs not from labor's sense of power, but from the slim hope that it can make a case for acceptance.

The Bluestones rely on the idea that failed labor relations are the source of America's economic malaise and that mending the system can only occur in partnership with unions. But we don't know if the first part of that proposition is true. After all, it was under the discredited Ford-Taylor system that labor productivity rose to a historic high of 3 percent a year in the 1950s and 1960s. Insofar as the sharp decline thereafter can be attributed to authoritarian methods, it's not clear that participatory programs are a remedy.

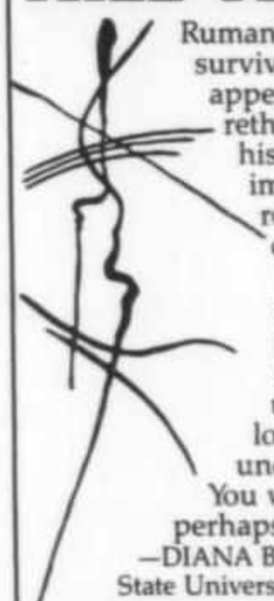
Given the hype currently emanating from Washington about "high performance" work practices, being skeptical on this matter is something like being an atheist at a camp meeting. To their credit, the Bluestones take the question seriously and devote a lengthy chapter to the research that has been done on employee participation, with entirely inconclusive results. They argue that the record of success is stronger in union than non-union settings because of the inherent advantages of joint administration and shared power. But even here, the evidence is ambiguous. In the end, they fall back on exemplary cases such as Saturn, which are by definition persuasive. But for every example one can find a counterexample. If the union is crucial at Saturn or GM's innovative plant in Fremont, California, then why have the Toyota and Nissan managers—whose work practices serve as models for General Motors—fought so hard against organizing drives by the United Auto Workers? The best the Bluestones can say is that the exemplary cases they discuss show "not so much the current state of success" as "the potential of EI [Employee Involvement] if it is implemented properly and effectively."

There is a palpable unreality at the heart of *Negotiating the Future.* The Bluestones speak of the need to create a "benign climate," as if anti-unionism were a matter of bad temper. "Old grudges" have to be set aside, they say, and so do "misconceptions" about the rigidity and self-seeking of unions. But anti-unionism is not the product of grudges or misconceptions, but of cool business calculation. If, as most labor economists now suggest, union workers are more efficient than nonunion ones, there is no question that unionized firms are less profitable than their non-union counterparts: The gains in labor productivity do not offset the higher wages. In effect, unions redistribute the earnings of the firm to the advantage of their members.

Since they well understand this reality, American employers enter collective bargaining out of necessity, rarely by choice. And while they then accommodate themselves as best they can, and find benefits in collective bargaining of varying magnitudes, we can be sure that when and where the power balance shifts and employers gain the upper hand, they will be moved to drive the unions out. It is not, as the Bluestones say, because "tempers have flared on both sides of the fence" that times are hard for the labor movement. Its decline is the entirely predictable result of economic and political conditions prevailing in this country over the past twenty years.

No one who believes in labor's cause would deny the ideals of industrial democracy espoused by the Bluestones. They may even be right to claim that American competitiveness would be well served by an Enterprise Compact. The nub of their problem is not so much about ends but over means—of how we go from here to there. And getting on that road means first of all doing something about the gross imbalance in the power relations between management and labor in this country, which is to say, reforming our labor law. *Negotiating the Future* appeared before the Clinton administration took office, but now labor law reform has arrived on the national agenda, and in a very particular way. The recently created


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Dunlop Commission is charged with looking into labor law reform and cooperative workplace relations. The Clinton administration (and Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich, its guiding light on this issue) insistently intermingle reform of labor law with the achievement of high-performance work practices and, hence, American competitiveness.

Something very like what opened the way for the original Wagner Act of 1935 seems to be happening again: The rights of labor are being attached to broader national goals. In the Great Depression, of course, no one worried about American competitiveness—the mass-production system then seemed unassailably the best there was or, indeed, could be—but American labor relations did produce a drag of a different kind on the economy, that is, on consumption. Encouraging collective bargaining meant generating the higher levels of demand needed to drive a robust economy. Secretary Reich et al. have, of course, become cagey about the role of unions in their high-performance vision. And this is where *Negotiating the Future* comes in: From the perspective of the new Democratic administration, no book could make labor's case better. Are Clinton and Reich listening? Well, there they are on the dust-jacket, warmly endorsing the book in their earlier personas as governor of Arkansas and Harvard political economist.

If it helps to restore labor's rights under the law in this roundabout way, the Bluestones' book will have brought an Enterprise Compact more within reach. But the path to it may not be the one they anticipate. Their reading of recent history, instructive as it is, has misled them. The labor-management settlement after World War II represented not a norm, but very much an exception in trade-union history, arising as it did out of a hegemonic moment in American corporate capitalism.

What gave legitimacy to the management rights clause was the belief that the General Electrics and U.S. Steels of this world were masters of their economic fates. The unions could take the money and leave the decisions to management. But that exit has not always been open to unions, and whereas in the coal and the garment trades competitive conditions demanded it, they in fact drove deeply into what we would today define as the realm of management. There are signs of a revival of that kind of strategic union thinking.

Concession bargaining also leads in interesting directions. Look, for example, at current airline union negotiations to purchase United Airlines, or the extensive management role the steel union has taken in the formerly bankrupt LTV and Wheeling-Pittsburgh firms, or the seats the same union has recently won on the boards of Bethlehem, National, and Inland Steel—as well as a lien on certain company properties as a guarantee that pension obligations will be honored. In all these cases, the starting point was a strong union, and the venue the give-and-take of collective bargaining.

Perhaps we might coin a maxim: first, power; then, maybe, cooperation. *Negotiating the Future* may have misplaced the order of things. But that doesn't mean it evokes the wrong vision or will not contribute to realizing it. Time will tell. □


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## THE END

*(Continued from p. 24)*

"I am so sorry that it's all over with already."

"Stop it!" he shouted, "How can you say that! Nothing has ended, we are together, we will be together. Always. Calm down, child. I'll make us some coffee."

His hands were shaking. He caught sight of a pale face in the mirror that didn't look at all like him. The girl was saying, "Why tell lies? It's the end. The end of youth, the end of love, of your paintings, of my music. We were very happy, but you don't need to lie. Isn't it better to tell ourselves that we had only three months of a great happiness? Isn't it?"

She met his gaze, read the answer. His face was drawn with pain and white as chalk.

She was awakened by a slight trembling of the window panes. She sat up abruptly, completely awake, conscious of everything. Semi-darkness reigned in the room and the squares of the windows were beginning to show gray. She waited. A few minutes later she heard a heavy, dull rumbling. One might have thought the earth was sighing. The windows once again began their thin melody, but a new explosion deafened her. She looked at her watch. It was almost four. Carefully, so as not to wake the sleeping boy, she moved and leaned against the wall. She looked at him. He lay there defenseless as a child and, like a child, unconscious of the evil that had been unleashed. She saw the swarthiness of his body, the sharp profile of this young face. She slid her hand gently over his hair.

"Sleep a while longer," she whispered.

She bent over him and remained like that, guarding the last moments of peaceful sleep. Dawn came and the sun rose. The war was fifteen minutes old. □

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## National Service

*(Continued from p. 12)*

The President's goal is nothing short of creating a national service program so successful that it will become a permanent fixture of American society.

### *Why the Naysayers are Wrong*

In my opinion, this President has real guts for proposing national service. The Washington insiders who defend the failing status quo pontificated that Clinton would drop his national service campaign pledge as soon as he settled into the Beltway. After all, national service has no existing constituency. It's complicated to explain. Furthermore, the people most likely to benefit from national service do not vote at very high levels. Just drop the idea, advised the sufferers of permanent Potomac fever.

But the President stood by his vision. He kept talking about the issue wherever he went, he presented a specific and well thought-out legislative proposal, and he made it a top personal priority to include national service as an integral part of a budget proposal notable for its cuts in so many other areas.

Why, the naysayers ask, is this President so hell-bent on making national service a reality, against all political odds?

I think I know. In December of 1991, Bill Clinton visited a remarkable program in Boston called City Year. City Year is an incredible effort—originally started with only private funding—that brings together youths from backgrounds as diverse as anyone can imagine. During Clinton's visit, participants in the program looked straight into his eyes and poured their hearts out to him. One by one, they told him how their national service experience had transformed their lives. How City Year took them off the streets, expanded their understanding and respect of others, and gave many of them a sense of purpose for the first time in their short lives.

On that day, national service for Bill Clinton was transformed from an intellectual abstraction to the most deeply felt passion.

I had similar feelings when I recently visited the Van Ness Elementary School in Southeast Washington, along with USDA employees who volunteer countless hours tutoring students. When those children looked up at me, I saw in their eyes rare glimmers of hope for the future. I understood immediately why this country does indeed need a new politics of meaning. And I understood why President Clinton believes so deeply that national service can help give us that new politics. □

## Reconfiguring Health Care

*(Continued from p. 18)*

of reform. But the even more complex, potentially fractious work of engaging the public over health-care reform is just beginning.

For reasons of political prudence, the Clinton administration elected to fashion its plan behind closed doors with the help of hand-picked experts. Although it irked organized medicine, it was a defensible strategy. Now that the plan is in place and the early hard-sell blitz is complete, however, the administration should turn to a different strategy. Because this reform plan relies for its success on people who are persuaded of its merits—not only experts but premium-paying people, variously healthy, variously vulnerable to the vagaries of accident and illness—the citizenry must be involved in a public dialogue about what matters most about health care. As the public debate in Oregon and elsewhere to reach consensus on our health-care priorities has shown, what matters may vary considerably from one place to another, despite the common need for health security.

Using the analogy of Social Security, President Clinton has reasserted a high moral purpose for our system of health-care provision in declaring that it must be redesigned as a program of social insurance that is both cost-effective and universal. Whether insurance companies have the capacity and the will to be constructive participants in such a scheme is an open question. Nevertheless, this is the kind of question we should be debating, not only in Washington, but all across the land.

While the administration and the Congress negotiate with each other and try to accommodate the organized groups that have a stake in the outcome of the legislative process, public forums should convene, organized perhaps by mediating institutions—synagogues, churches, schools, clinics, union locals, voluntary associations—in communities across the country to discuss how we want our health care handled. We are largely out of practice at this kind of public dialogue, not least because we take our differences so seriously. Ours is undeniably a pluralistic society. But surely we can acknowledge that and respect—even celebrate—our differences while simultaneously agreeing to be equals in public dialogue and action, attending and responding to each other in turn, in the process of discerning what binds us together and what common provision we owe each other. Only by doing this do we have a shot at reclaiming and humanely reconfiguring our fractured health-care system. □

## BABY-SITTERS CLUB

*(Continued from p. 10)*

they can watch Baby-sitters Club videos, play with Baby-sitters Club dolls, bed down in Baby-sitters Club sleeping bags, go off to school with Baby-sitters Club backpacks, and experiment with Baby-sitters Club cosmetics.

So deeply has the Baby-sitters Club invaded the world of female kid culture that it takes on a significance beyond the hours any single child may spend flopped in a chair reading about Jessi and Mallory. I had a privileged glimpse into this world one fall afternoon when I kept six girls company while they changed from mud-stained soccer uniforms into clean clothes for a post-season party. I had just watched them playing flat out, running like the wind, falling, knocking each other down, and winning. Now they were talking about the denizens of Stoneybrook as if they were friends from school. Every one of those girls, I am sure, knew the color of Dawn's hair and the name of Mary Anne's boyfriend. Without some knowledge of Baby-sitters Club lore a girl would have been an outsider, unable to participate in this casual conversation. Stoneybrook, I realized, has become the common ground of an entire generation of girls.

I fear not just for the steady barrage of the message about gender roles, but also for what these girls are missing. Girls mostly find themselves in Baby-sitters Club books and this, along with the easily digestible format that quickly becomes comfortingly and addictively familiar, accounts for their attraction. Gilligan is dead on the mark when she observes that girls dwell on relations. These books are about girls, much like our daughters, wallowing in relationships, their sensitive antennae attuned to the faintest nuances of the emotional lives of the people around them.

Looking back at the books I read as a child, I remember something very different from anything my daughters can find in Stoneybrook. I found possibilities. I discovered ideas about what I could be and what I might do with my life that existed nowhere in the world I saw around me.

Books—good books, anyway—are magic. They feed the imagination. They take us to places we have never been, they lead us back into history, they make us see what never existed. Shelves upon shelves of children's books accomplish these tasks. With Laura Ingalls Wilder, children look out on flat Midwestern plains where long lines of Indians pass across the horizon; with Frances Hodgson Burnett, they are on the windswept moors of Yorkshire or sheltered in an overgrown, walled garden; with Rudyard Kipling, they are in a time when the world was very new and camels had no humps and elephants no trunks.

Children, and, I would argue, girls in particular, whose aspirations this culture still too quickly restricts, need the passkey to worlds beyond their own. They especially need examples of daring and courage. Above all, they need heroines.

The books I remember most vividly from my childhood did have heroines. Many of them were biographies, in which I made the acquaintance of Amelia Earhart, Madame Curie, Clara Barton, Abigail Adams, and Mary, Queen of Scots. But the fiction I read, often classics written for girls, had heroines too. Much of the time the protagonists of these books met adversity and triumphed through their ability to empathize with and care for others, typically female pursuits. The stories of orphaned girls—Heidi, Anne of Green Gables, and Sarah Crewe in *The Little Princess*—come to mind. But they and their readers knew that theirs were extraordinary feats, and girls were rewarded with gifts of love and material security. Even the much and justifiably maligned Nancy Drew books, which in their current reissues are truly abysmally written, have a heroine who pursues villains fearlessly and faces physical dangers without flinching.

In Stoneybrook, there are no heroines. The acts of sensitivity and caring that members of the Baby-sitters Club perform so willingly and so well are ordinary, and the girls themselves are nothing special except maybe to each other. The readers who identify with them—who are meant to identify with them, who are subjected to a whole marketing campaign to get them to identify with them—gain nothing that will help them understand that they can shape their own worlds instead of living, as best they as they can, in someone else's.

So the pleasure I ordinarily feel at seeing my children, book in hand, lost to some other world, is tempered when I catch a glimpse of the block letters of the Baby-sitters Club logo. I do take comfort in knowing my children are surrounded by books, that they understand their magic, and that their visits to Stoneybrook are not the only literary trips they take. I have utter faith that they will find the books that will help them to see themselves as human beings who can imagine great things and make them happen. And I only hope that all girls—all children—may be lucky enough to find in books not just what they are but what they can be. □

*Tikkun (tē-kün) ...to heal, repair and transform the world. All the rest is commentary*

תיקון

# THE TIKKUN CONFERENCE OF LIBERAL AND PROGRESSIVE JEWS

**New York City**
**January 16-17, 1994**

TIKKUN was founded to support the struggles for social justice in the Jewish world in the U.S. and Israel and to help shift the dominant paradigm of liberal and progressive thought to a politics of meaning. This past year, we've experienced significant progress on both fronts. Mutual recognition between Israel and the Palestinians has dramatically altered the realities in the Middle East and in the American Jewish community. The Clintons' adoption of TIKKUN's politics of meaning has set the framework for a whole new way of thinking about politics.

We want to get our community together to think out the new situation—and to analyze some of the serious and troublesome issues that face progressives in the U.S. today. You don't have to be Jewish to come to this conference—it will be an exciting gathering of some of the best minds in America.

And it's more than just ideas. It's a perfect place to meet new people, make new friendships, or renew old connections. Because TIKKUN conferences have been overenrolled in the past, you must register early.

- **Clinton After One Year** How do we assess the accomplishments, how do we work with the limitations, how do we strengthen those within the administration who want a more principled direction?

- **Israeli-Palestinian Mutual Recognition** Let's celebrate this dramatic transformation—and build a new Jewish life that rejects paranoia and uses the Holocaust not as a warrant for "goyim bashing" but as an injunction to build a world based on caring and compassion. Right-wing Israelis, Arab fanatics, and neo-cons who continue to dominate American Jewish institutions will do all they can to undermine the movement toward reconciliation—we need to counter the cynicism they will engender with a new spirit of openness, dialogue, peacemaking, and serious analysis of how to accelerate the possibilities for lasting peace.

- **The Politics of Meaning** In the past year, our call for a paradigm switch in American politics has become the center of a national debate. We will explore the debate at our conference and discuss ways to shift the dominant discourse in American society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring.

- **Jewish Identity in a Multicultural World** Rightly offended by the chauvinism in some sectors of the Jewish world, many Jews have sought to emphasize the universalistic aspect of their thinking and their identity. But as progressives increasingly valorize multiculturalism, Jews are forced to redefine ourselves and to rethink the balance between our ethical universalism and our Jewish particularism.

- **Jewish Writers and Jewish Writing** The tension between Jewish particularism and universalism in a multicultural world comes into particular focus for Jewish writers—not only of fiction and poetry, but of television, movies, and other areas in which Jews help shape culture while drawing, consciously or unconsciously, on Jewish roots.

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**Pre-registration untill Jan.5, 1994: Incomes under $15,000 yr: $45; $15-30,000:$65; $30-60,000: $110; over $60,000: $150. Add 25% to these prices after Jan.5. Register soon: Send registration check or credit card information to: Tikkun, 251 W. 100, New York, N.Y. 10025.**