(tē•kün) To mend, repair and transform the world.

TIKKUN

Orthodox and Gay?
Reuven Kimelman vs. Yaakov Levado
Jews in the Stasi
Jeffrey Herf vs. Markus Wolf
Editorials: Farrakhan and the NAACP
O.J.'s Pseudo-community

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY JULY/AUGUST 1994 $6.00

The Boundaries of Politics



Todd Gitlin *Mary Edsall*
Paul Berman *Peter Gabel*
Hazel Henderson *Robert F. Drinan*

Fascism Again?

In Italy *Richard Wolin*
In Germany *Anjana Shrivastava*

Can Unions Be Saved?
Dan Cornfield

Hannah's Prayer
Marcia Falk

Liberal Burnout
Letty Cottin Pogrebin

Blood Libel
David Biale

Wendy Orange on Gaza • **Jacqueline Jones** on the homeless
Wild Women & Kosher Chickens by **Jyl Lynn Felman**
South Africa's Message by **Jacklyn Cock**

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Getting the Message

God, the rabbis tell us, never assigns
exalted office to a man until
He has tested his mettle in small things.
So it is written in the *Midrash*
that when a lamb escaped the flock Moses
overtook it at a brook drinking its fill
and said, I would have taken thee in my arms
and carried thee thither had I known thy thirst
whereupon a Heavenly Voice warmly
resounded, *As thou livest, thou art fit.*

Divine election's scary. The burning bush
might have been brightened by St. Elmo's fire
according to *The Interpreter's One-Volume*
Commentary. The slopes of Exodus,
scrub growth close-cropped by tough horned herds
of Jacob's sheep (now prized as an heirloom breed)
lack treetops, mountain peaks or spires
that might discharge electrical ghost-plumes.
St. Elmo's seems less science than the desire
of modern exegetes to damp the flame.

I like my Bible tales, like Scotch, straight up
incontrovertible as Dante's trip
through seven circles, Milton's map
of Paradise or Homer's wine-dark epic.
On such a stage there falls a scrim between
text and critique where burst of light may crack
and dance as if on masts of sailing ships
and heavenly voices leap from alp to plain.
In Sunday School I shivered at God's command:
Take off thy shoes, thou stand'st on holy ground

and lay awake in the hot clutch of faith
yearning yet fearful that the Lord might speak
to me in my bed or naked in my bath.
I didn't know how little risk I ran
of being asked to set my people free
from fording some metaphorical Red Sea
with a new-sprung Pharaoh raging at my back.
I didn't know the patriarchy that spared me
fame had named me chattel, handmaiden.
God's Angels looked me over but flew by.

I like to think God's talent scouts today
select for covenant without regard
for gender, reinterpreting The Word
so that holy detectives glossing the bush
(most likely wild acacia), scholars of J
E and P deciphering Exodus
will fruitfully research the several ways
divine authentication lights up truth.
Fragments of it, cryptic, fugitive
still spark the synapses that let us live.

Maxine Kumin

TIKKUN

A BIMONTHLY JEWISH CRITIQUE OF POLITICS, CULTURE & SOCIETY — VOLUME 9 NUMBER 4

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Letters

TWENTYSOMETHING OPTIMISM

To The Editor:

As a college student and a twenty-year-old, I identify with Akiva Lerner's portrait of our jaded, "disempowered" generation, and I applaud his effort to seek an alternative to this sort of unproductive cynicism ("My Generation," March/April 1994). But I take offense when Lerner blames the media which allegedly "see through everything, but understand nothing... break down all comprehension of history... do all they can do to undermine any common language."

No doubt, film-making is immensely expensive and Hollywood's conservative standards of image acceptability limit the medium's potential for the dissemination of progressive ideas. But if that were all there were to it, I might as well quit film school now.

Lerner's dichotomy of "the power of the people" versus "the man's technology" is a fantasy. Technology isn't some impenetrable monolith, conspiratorially undermining our genuine aspirations and identities. Technology might be one of our generation's greatest assets. A truly productive campaign to "take on the dominant discourse" must tap into all of our creative resources, including the industries of technology and mass communication.

Brian Kates
New York, New York

UNIONS

To the Editor:

Michael Zweig's "In Defense of Unions" (March/April 1994) requires some factual corrections. The PATCO unions lost because their claims of safety hazards due to understaffing were false. Their counterpart unions in

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Europe took a larger total traffic load with many fewer controllers. Subsequent experience in the United States confirmed that the system did not need so many controllers.

The Roosevelt era helped correct capital's abuse of workers. Then, some unions destroyed their own jobs by forcing concessions for pensions and health care. The auto industry's UAW drove good jobs to Japan and Europe by overpricing American labor. Luddites always lose!

Unions help members best when they encourage learning alternatives and higher skills.

Irving Kahn
New York, New York

Meaning

To the Editor:

What American Jew will begin his/her *Schindler's List* and rescue the disgracefully ignored Bosnian Holocaust victims? This is a 1994 Holocaust! For Jews, something "politically meaningful" would be to start another Israel for beleaguered Bosnians, Muslims, non-Serbs, et al. and let the murderers have their land. We should rescue the oppressed. Here is something with meaning.

Joel Rosenblum
President, WISR Radio
Butler, Pennsylvania

Haggadah Supplement

To the Editor:

I frequently adopt parts of your Haggadah Supplement for use in my family Seder and I want to thank you for putting the supplement in Tikkun.

However, there is a phrase that recurs each year that sets my teeth on edge where you mention "the power of the bosses." This sounds like it comes from a tract from the 1930s, and when I hear it, I expect someone nearby on a soapbox to shout, "Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!" I am a retired librarian and hold no brief for the "bosses" and their power, but the phrase does not resonate with or resemble the social conditions in the United States today.

The above is to quibble. Your magazine is a provocative bimonthly spiritual renewal. I wish you and your endeavor the very best.

Daniel M. Groden
Water Mill, New York

Psychoanalytic Theory

To the Editor:

If psychoanalysis could change in the way that Michael J. Bader urges, ("Helping the Patient Get Better," May/June 1994) it could become an important vehicle of social liberation instead of the instrument of accommodation to oppressive social reality that it has been. To see human beings as merely governed by pathology, as current psychoanalysis does, is to play to the conservatizing tendencies in contemporary thought that try to convince us that nothing fundamental can ever be changed. Psychoanalysts Bader and Joseph Weiss argue that there is an equally important psychic tendency toward health and, by implication, liberation from oppression. Just as the psychoanalyst tries to get on the side of a patient's health, so, Bader argues, a politics of meaning is attempting to get on the side of the society's collective aspiration toward psychic health.

I can imagine people aspiring to health. But I can't imagine the psychoanalytic establishment ever accepting theories that would tend toward social empowerment. They are so richly rewarded for convincing people that all problems remain internal and that focus on the oppression in the external world is a diversion. I hope Bader and Weiss form some separate school of analysis and train people in their perspective, but if they think that they are going to change things from within the psychoanalytic world, they'd better meet the New York analysts I've known. They'll realize that it may be easier to make a revolution in America than to get a bunch of well-paid doctors to see instincts towards health when their whole self-understanding is based on characterizing others as sick. Because they need the rest of us to be dependent on them, both because of their own internal sense of inferiority in comparison with other doctors and because that dependency generates their livelihood, they will never see the world in the terms Weiss or Bader seem to be suggesting.

R. Smeltzer
New York, New York

To the Editor:

Joel Kovel presents a misleading portrait of Freud and of his great con-

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tribution, psychoanalysis ("Freudianism and its Discontents," May/June 1994). Freud's treatment of patients was always respectful and humane.

Kovel faults psychoanalysis because "it doesn't address the essential questions about justice and emancipation and the workings of society, or about the spiritual side of existence." But Freud himself repeatedly maintained that psychoanalysis was "a method of medical treatment for those suffering from nervous disorders." Freud modestly saw his new findings as a supplement to science, to help the battle against mental anguish and ignorance. That it is not a magical panacea as Mr. Kovel seems to wish it to be is not the fault of Freud but of those who would expect it to be such.

Ari Ungar
Oradell, New Jersey

Settler Violence

To the Editor:

As an Orthodox Jew, I was deeply moved by Rabbi Tzvi Marx's letter to his son in the Israeli army (May/June 1994). I was deeply shocked by the massacre in Hebron, but even more shocked at the reaction of many Jews in the Orthodox world. Some spent more time critiquing TIKKUN editor Michael Lerner for his *New York Times* editorial, or for TIKKUN's subsequent articles showing that hundreds of Israelis have visited Goldstein's grave and proclaimed him a martyr than they did attacking the murder itself. So it was a real *mechayeh* (spiritual lifesaver) to read Rabbi Marx of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. Rabbi Marx's article is a fine example of the moral sensitivity in Judaism that I learned in yeshiva and that continues to resonate for me in much of my religious life. In recent years many non-Orthodox have gotten the impression that we who are Torah-observant Jews have lost all moral compass. I think that this view is nothing but blatant prejudice and even a variant of anti-Semitism. But your printing of the Marx piece is the best defense possible of Orthodoxy. It shows that the moral debate is alive in traditional circles, and that one can be both *shomer mitzvot* (religiously observant) and morally as sensitive as anyone else in the Jewish world. I've shown this piece to some other people in the *shul* where I *davven*, and I can tell you that it shut them up about TIKKUN being

anti-Orthodox, just as it shut up some of the secular Jews with whom I work who had been acting as though I killed people on the West Bank just because I wear black clothes and a black hat! Thank you.

Shmuel Leitnik
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor:

Your obscene obsession with a fringe sect of Jews in Israel disposed to violence in order to destroy the peace process evidences a moral myopia and historical amnesia typical of most of TIKKUN absurdity.

The PLO reality is that they have waged a ruthless terror war against Israel and the Jews since the inception of the State and promoted a Charter calling for the utter destruction of this State and the correlate of sweeping in the sea Jews who arrived after World War II. Having rejected the state provided them by the UN resolutions, they, and their cohort Arab nations, assaulted Israel repeatedly to "eradicate the cancer in their midst."

Live by terror and be known by terror as terrorists. It is the Palestinians who have succeeded in demonizing themselves as the arch terrorists in the world, a scourge upon civility and decency.

What evidence is there that these so-called peace agreements are not cynical concessions for the PLO to gain a foothold from which to exert continued pressure towards destabilizing Israel and rendering it vulnerable to a massive attack by Iran, Iraq, Syria?

There is abundant evidence of this PLO cynicism. Consider the alliance with Hamas, a violence prone organization that has rejected any settlement that permitted Israel to survive.

Too bad your Christian-flavored Judaism precludes your seeing reality with all the hideous options and instead makes a hit on frightened Jews whose forebodings may yet (God forbid) come to be.

Arthur Ginsberg
New York, New York

To the Editor:

In your article on *Schindler's List* (March/April, 1994), you talk about Jewish suffering being "so much greater than the suffering we unintentionally inflicted on Palestinians."

Leaving aside the Holocaust comparison—which you rightly go on to reject—I challenge your use of the word "unintentionally."

There were indeed some unintentional consequences of original Zionist enterprise. But there has been nothing unintentional in the structure and policy of the occupation over the last twenty-seven years. From every petty rule governing the daily life of the nearly two million Palestinians—every military order, road block, school closure, act of harassment, and humiliation—to the headline violations of house demolitions, unprovoked killings, ill-treatment and torture in detention, deportations, undercover units...everything has been intended and planned. To present all this as a series of unfortunate unintended consequences is not only to miss the point, but to do precisely what you condemn: "to refuse to acknowledge the import of our actions."

This was not just an incidental and isolated use of the concept. In the same issue (March/April) you repeat twice the "burning building" fable: "The Jewish people jumped from the burning buildings of Europe and unintentionally landed on the backs of Palestinians. We did not intend to hurt them..." But, as you know, there was nothing about the accident that required us to go on kicking the Palestinians.

TIKKUN has praised the Israel-Palestinian peace agreement; you have reported being moved to tears by last September's White House ceremony of reconciliation. But for the notion of reconciliation to have any meaning at all, there must be an acknowledgment that actions have intentions and not just consequences.

Stan Cohen
Professor of Criminology
Hebrew University Jerusalem

SCHINDLER

To the Editor:

You criticize *Schindler's List* for not probing the deeper, more insidious aspects of the Holocaust. But that was not the film's intent. Instead, Spielberg opted to bring the Holocaust to the goyim. In a world where Holocaust deniers abound, *Schindler's List* is a godsend. No, this film is not the fodder of intellectuals. But when the theaters empty and their devastated and speechless film viewers emerge,

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deeply moved by the film, I say "Thank you, Steven Spielberg."

Jane Schweitzer
Fair Oaks, California

HESCHEL

To the Editor:

Bravo for Joshua Halberstam's "Encounter with A.J.Heschel" (May/June 1994). TIKKUN has always seemed to me to be the best testimony to the lasting impact of our greatest theologian and social activist on American Jewish life and thought. At the beginning of your publishing, you stressed that connection. But in subsequent years you have not written enough about Heschel. Halberstam's article takes an important step toward rectifying that. I've often marvelled at the fact that Heschel could have been so isolated at the Jewish Theological Seminary, so little appreciated while he was alive. Then again, judging from your yearly appeals for financial support, TIKKUN itself faces this same irony: those who serve the Jewish world best and most faithfully are seen, as Heschel was, as too radical. But I suspect that there is another dynamic as well: a fear that his colleagues must have felt that they were inadequate, just as the Jewish world probably feels somewhat inadequate when comparing the drivel it puts out to the high level of thought in TIKKUN. Keep up the good work, and give us more discussion on Heschel!

Randy Katzneilson
Los Angeles, California

CRIME

To the Editor:

It's commendable that you print positions critical of TIKKUN, like Ellen Willis's analysis of "Crime and Cultural Politics" (May/June 1994). But I still find myself bristling at her unreconstructed hostility to family as the source of "demonizing children's desire," apparently unaware of Peter Gabel's longstanding analysis in TIKKUN of the way that the entire social order underconfirms and frustrates our need for mutual recognition and that it is this that causes the rage at humiliation and fear that one doesn't exist. Far from seeking to "discipline desire," as Willis attributes to the politics of meaning, Gabel has insisted that it is the "denial of desire" that is a central mechanism of repression. But to blame the family as though that were the primary culprit, as Willis seems to do, is to fall back into a naive late-'60s liberatory style that imagined that once free of families we'd be free of repression. That nonsense has been proved a deep mistake, as Willis's own subsequent choice of family life must reflect. What I find hard to understand is why Willis, who seems to share with TIKKUN an understanding that crime is sometimes an outraged expression of rage at the humiliation imposed by a society that systematically denies adequate recognition, wouldn't embrace the politics of meaning, which is the only actually existing tendency in the liberal or progressive world to worry about how to change those dynamics. And if the politics of meaning instrumentally embraces families for the purpose not of idealizing them but of finding a way to change them so that they provide more recognition, why should Willis pretend that this is fundamentally similar to a conservative embrace of families that so clearly seeks to insulate the family from precisely the critical scrutiny that the politics of meaning endorses? I don't get it.

Wanda Jones
San Francisco, California

SLAVE-TRADING JEWS?

To the Editor:

If Ralph Austen ("The Uncomfortable Relationship," March/April 1994) is going to conclude that "our forefathers were generally, and at times significantly, on the side of slavers," he should tell us what facts that conclusion is based upon. What does "on the side of slavers" mean? How do we reconcile Austen's statement that "the vast majority of the New World slaves were captured, bought, traded, and forced into labor by non-Jews" with his statement that Jews were "heavily involved" in the slave trade? Does he mean some Jews, many Jews, or what? What was done and how many of us did it?

Austen surely knows Jews are not a monolithic group. There were millions of poverty-stricken Jews in Eastern Europe who knew nothing of the slave trade. Perhaps Mr. Austen could tell us how many Jews in the Americas were not heavily involved in the slave trade.

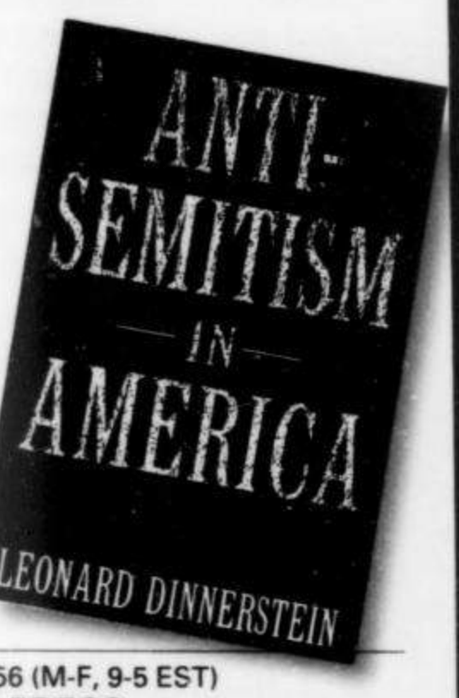
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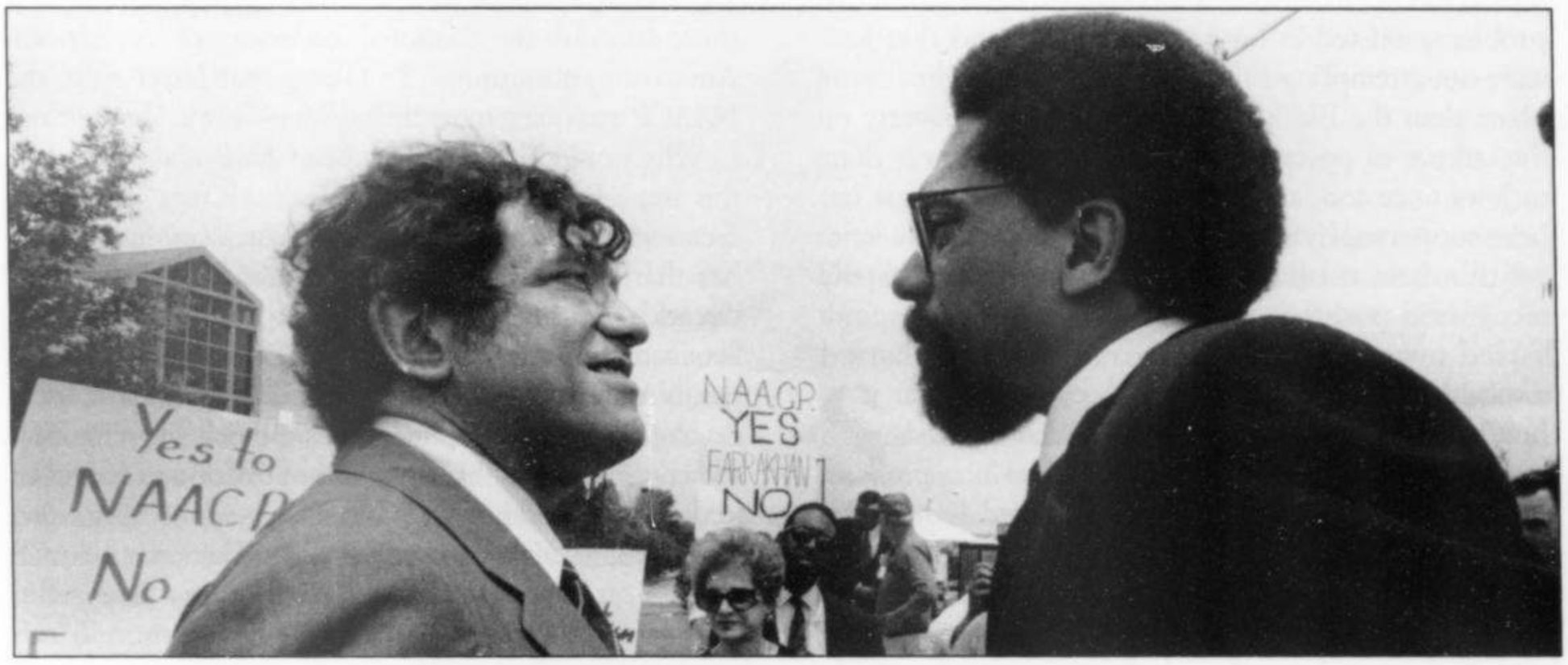


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EDITORIALS

O.J.; The NAACP's Farrakhan Blunder



O.J.'s Pseudo-Community

When people lined the freeways in June to cheer on O.J. Simpson as he fled from the L.A. police, they were living out yet another dimension of the pain caused by the breakdown of real communities. Isolated from each other both at work and at home, increasing numbers of people rely on television as their only significant way to get contact with others. The pseudo-communities created by television rarely interact face-to-face, rarely are able to give feedback, or shape what is being presented to them—but they are excellent audiences for the products that television sells as the regalia and symbols of membership of these fantasized forms of human connection.

In the world of fantasized community, O.J. Simpson was such a nice guy. Those who have argued that television's impact in shaping mass consciousness is overstated are going to have a hard time explaining why, in the immediate aftermath of O.J.'s arrest, so many people simply refused to believe it, despite all the evidence of brutal murder, and despite the evidence of an on-going pattern of vicious spousal abuse.

Desperate for connection, many Americans live in a fantasy world of images and personalities supplied by the media, and in some ways that world seems more real to them than any other part of their lives. When people can find meaning in no other part of their lives, they hungrily absorb the partial meanings conveyed by television.

The media's lionizing of cultural and sports celebrities is the mirror image of its extreme cynicism and belittling of change-oriented political leaders or social movements. Attempts to build real community are ridiculed; nothing is allowed to replace the imaginary community in which O.J. was a respected figure.

Perhaps that world of false community made O.J. himself believe that he was invincible, because he was a hero in a world where heroes always come out O.K.

But whatever went on in *his* head, the collective pathology of believing that *we* "really know" O.J. is one more sign of the desperate need for real community and for a framework of meaning and purpose for our lives. This remains America's number one problem.

Farrakhan and the NAACP

Sixty TIKKUN demonstrators stood outside the NAACP national headquarters in Baltimore on June 12 to protest the inclusion of Louis Farrakhan in a "National African American Leadership Summit." We carried signs that said, "Yes to the NAACP, No to Farrakhan," or "Black Libertion Yes, Black Anti-Semitism No."

Farrakhan's inclusion in the summit was a major step toward legitimizing and mainstreaming him in the Black world. Our protest received considerable media attention precisely because we were *not* the predictable right-wing voices that have shown little caring about the condition of Black poverty and oppression over the years, but rather those Jews who have been most involved in the struggle to

end racism and economic oppression.

In a leaflet we distributed we urged the NAACP to join with TIKKUN and other progressives in the Jewish world to convene a national gathering of Blacks and Jews to launch a national campaign against anti-Semitism in the Black world and against racism in the Jewish world. We made it clear that we understood that problems existed in both communities, and that Jews were not attempting to put ourselves on a higher moral plane than the Black community. Blaming poverty on the culture of poverty rather than vice versa was done to Jews once too, and it is a disgusting move that has been supported by too many Jewish intellectuals.

Still, there is no comparable figure in a nationally recognized position of Jewish leadership who spews hatred toward Blacks like Farrakhan spews hatred toward Jews, gays, and whites.

When Meir Kahane was alive, spreading his message of hatred for Arabs and Blacks, TIKKUN voiced its opposition. And when the ADL's leadership honored Kahane by attending his funeral, we protested. Give credit, also, to the Israeli Knesset that suspended Kahane and passed a law prohibiting racists from running for office.



So progressive Jews will continue to oppose Farrakhan until he publicly repudiates anti-Semitism and guides his followers in the right direction. We're glad we protested.

But the rest of the Jewish establishment didn't join us. Using the old ostrich-head-in-ground perspective, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Baltimore passed a resolution opposing a demonstration on the grounds that it would give more press coverage to Farrakhan. Yet Farrakhan's presence *was* the story, whether or not we protested; the media have made it so. Apparently, the many Jewish community leaders are not aware that Farrakhan has been drawing crowds of thousands when he speaks in the Black community.

Farrakhan follows the classic pattern of twentieth-century fascists. He articulates legitimate anger at economic and cultural oppression, he promotes a community of meaning and purpose that gives people some sense that they could be part of a larger "we" that has some transcendent purpose. He fails to challenge existing forms of capitalist oppression, but rather attempts to accommodate to them, and when his community fails to provide any significant solutions, he chooses a "demeaned Other" to attack—in this case, the Jews.

So why would the NAACP and legitimate forces in the Black community take him in?

"We are not taking him in," say some progressive Blacks. "We are merely including him in the dialogue."

There's a world of difference, however, between inviting someone to participate in a dialogue on a particular topic and inviting someone to be a participant at a conference of those you dub the "national leadership of the African-American community." In taking that latter step, the NAACP was doing more than talking—it was legitimizing.

Why would NAACP chair Ben Chavis and others take this step? Because in speaking to Black rage, Farrakhan seems to tap into a segment of the Black community that has the energy that the NAACP has lacked in recent decades. If this rage is inextricably bound to anti-Semitism, it should be fought rather than welcomed into the NAACP. If it is not, the NAACP should have developed a way to tap it besides publicly aligning itself with the man who most symbolizes Black anti-Semitism to the Jewish world.

By publicly aligning itself with Farrakhan, the NAACP has given many Jews who waver between Torah commitments to social justice and America's ethos of self-interest that leads them to want to reduce their taxes and underfund social programs just the excuse they need to turn their backs and shut their ears to the suffering of the African-American community. But for those of us who have been insisting that Jews remain in the vanguard of caring for others, the NAACP conference was a tragic event almost certain to weaken our ability to be effective in fighting for the interests of the poor and the oppressed.

A skilled media tactician, Farrakhan is using the Black Leadership Summit to advance his own credibility. His message of hatred may have increasing plausibility as the Clinton presidency pushes for such measures as the proposed two-year cap on welfare and more repressive anti-crime legislation as its only palpable response to Black suffering. Nevertheless, Jews have every reason to demand of our friends in the African-American community that they speak publicly and unequivocally about the dangers Farrkhan represents, and that they join with us in devising a strategy to prevent the hatred from spreading.

Meanwhile, the NAACP Summit reconvenes at the end of August in Baltimore. Should we demonstrate again? Would you join us? Write us with your responses (P.O. Box 1778, Cathedral Station, New York, N.Y. 10025). □

German Neo-fascism and the Politics of Meaning

Anjana Shrivastava

Martin Jay and Elliot Neaman, in a recent issue of TIKKUN, (November/December 1993) debated the nature of neo-fascism in Europe and in particular its future in Germany. While Jay argues that contemporary, postmodern conditions would never support fascism in the way that the conditions of the 1920s and '30s were conducive to the rise of Hitler, Neaman is not comforted by these disparities, given the amount of neo-fascist activity in Europe in the last year. Comparing the differing historical contexts in industrial and post-industrial periods, Jay and Neaman give lucid accounts of the intellectual issues surrounding fascism. But the reality in Germany, as in other European countries, is rather more complex and cannot be understood by means of a debate such as theirs about the historical periods.

As proof of this contention, let three scenes out of that contemporary reality suffice:

• Last January, pictures of a swastika cut into the cheek of a wheelchair-bound schoolgirl in Halle shocked German television viewers. The girl accused three neo-Nazis of disfiguring her after she had refused to join in the chanting of xenophobic slogans. The police later discovered that the girl had wounded herself; the cuts were hesitant and her testimony incoherent.

• A fourteen-year-old in Dresden with a shaved head fingered a small metal pendant around his neck when asked by this writer to explain its significance. The boy offered the explanation that there is a God in German mythology whose name is Thor, and that the pendant in the shape of the hammer was Thor's symbol. The hammer, he conceded with some apology, was deficient—without the engraved face it should have borne. He leaned over, alcohol on his breath, speaking as if he had just revealed the mystery of some sacred truth slightly beyond his own comprehension.

• In the same month, the press reported that in a provincial German city with a high unemployment rate, three skinheads accosted a pregnant Nigerian woman. Despite her pregnancy, or more likely because of it, the three young men kicked her in the abdomen.

Such random reports from Germany reveal cracks in the surface of national life, as if evidence of a kind of San Andreas fault on the European political map. While these scenes of confused youth do echo the dilemmas of modernity and postmodernity, of cultural pessimism and the commodification of culture, they also reach beyond the historical concerns of Nolte, Heidegger, and Jameson around whom the philosophical debates revolve and indicate something about the meaning and the lack of meaning in individual lives. Such incidents, along with the recent arson attack on the Luebeck synagogue, lead many Germans to ask themselves the same questions which Jay and Neaman pose about the future of fascism: Is the decade-long optimism of a prosperous nation justified, or simple delusion?

The self-mutilation of the handicapped girl clamoring for attention, the skinhead attempting to explain a past he and his generation no longer command, and the unprovoked attack against the pregnant woman which, in its brutality, goes far beyond any attempt to explain it, point to the crises of individuals in a society where meaning—historical, social, and psychological—has suffered many defeats. And because social meaning is at stake, TIKKUN's discourse of a politics of meaning is as applicable to the situation in contemporary Europe as it is elsewhere. Since the politics of meaning claims that modern politics are as much about values as about distribution, in order to understand fascism one must take a closer look at how political meaning is formed among the angry young men of the Right.

Fascism offers false answers to a crisis of meaning which has emerged in broad reaches of German society. While the overwhelming majority of Germans agree with those who participate in the candlelight demonstrations held to protest racist violence, the recent changes following unification have reduced, as an earthquake might, the communist versions of meaning

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to rubble and churned up relics of the fascist past. The crisis of values in German society is just as acute as the nation's current recession. And Germany, with its long and sophisticated tradition of state stabilization of economic cycles, is more thoroughly disconcerted by the disturbances in the national mood than by the contractions of national income.

If we want to understand the appeal of fascism to the roughly ten percent of German voters we know respond to it, we must avoid the appeasing logic of Martin Jay as well as the alarmist logic of Elliot Neaman. While Jay underestimates the depth and the seriousness of current German problems, the more pessimistic Neaman restricts his deeper analysis mainly to cultural phenomena. But the new brand of right-wing intellectual he cites is not nearly so influential as he assumes. Neaman's neglect of socio-economic explanations leads him to conflate issues of intellectual fashion with superficial trends, and ultimately renders his justified warnings unconvincing. If, however, we connect the socio-economic evidence with the evidence of a crisis of meaning, we see the devastating potential of fascism. In this light, it is clear that fascism, far from being an anachronism, is an ideology fashioned for our times.

German society is undergoing new divisions which are similar to the old ones between east and west. Germans fear that they are becoming a two-thirds society—run exclusively for the benefit of the wealthiest two-thirds of the population. This kind of society calls for an aggressive individualism which neither the west or east German versions of the welfare state made necessary in the past. Such divisions make an analysis based on Jay's model of a modern Germany versus a postmodern Germany virtually impossible, because German reality itself is so dysynchronous.

In Berlin, for instance, the western district of Charlottenburg is perhaps the quintessence of postmodernity. Its gentrified buildings feature whimsically mismatched windows and facades painted in marbleized pastels. Foreign restaurants of every description serve the international tastes of the area's residents. At Charlottenburg dinner parties, Yuppies discuss modish themes like the mobilization of creativity or the efficacy of Germany's strongly progressive taxation.

A few kilometers to the east in Marzahn, the world is more uniform. Identical high-rise buildings lining the streets look sterile and prefabricated. If Charlottenburg is a celebration of individuality, Marzahn is an elegy to mass society, giving one the feeling of a Fritz Lang film, like Bauhaus or Le Corbusier gone wrong. And it is here that one is most likely to see gangs of skinheads, who, as if in a kind of tribute to their architectural environment, hang around in regulation look, their figures self-parodies of manliness, their bald heads as anonymous as the apartments in which they live.

In part, the contrast between these milieux is a product of the crisis of values, which includes a new unwillingness to share economic resources; in part, such divisions further aggravate the crisis of meaning. The process of denationalization among German elites since World War II has resulted in a welcome cosmopolitanism, but these very classes have begun to question the welfare state. The well-being of the community, no longer ethnically defined, has become less important. With this new Zeitgeist and in the tough economic conditions of the early 1990s, the foundations of the postwar constitution are beginning to crack. In particular, the clause that forced rich states to subsidize poor ones, thereby counteracting the development of "fly-over country," is being undermined by western states alarmed by the voracious neediness of eastern states. Germany has thus become more like America, both in ways which are to be welcomed and in ways which make for social tension.

But in Germany, these tensions of individualist, liberal society are grafted onto other, less individualist traditions. It is these corporatist traditions, inherited from the estate society of feudalism, which make fascist leaders like Franz Schönhuber, leader of the right-wing Republican Party, dangerous. In the past hundred years it was often fascist movements that integrated outsiders into the political system. In Germany of the 1920s, fascists appealed in this way to the lower-middle classes robbed of their savings by postwar inflation. Today, the potential outsiders are the young (who will bear the burden of escalating public debt), the East Germans, and the chronically unemployed. These outsiders respond less to leftist political traditions, which have suffered since the collapse of the GDR. But as the state flounders under too-heavy burdens and is barely able to accomplish a satisfactory socialization in its schools and streets, it has been the conservatives as well as the fascists who have known how to respond to the ensuing fear and disorientation with the discourse of tradition: traditional roles for Germans and foreigners, men and women, law and order.

If, as Professor Jay often suggests, the end of the Cold War closed the chapter of European fascism, why have fascist parties found a new appeal? Citing the work of Ernst Nolte, Jay argues that fascism was essentially a reaction to an aggressive communism; the latter's demise delivered the world from the former's threat. And yet in any conversation with a skinhead one is reminded of something which apparently escaped Professor Jay: As a popular, vote-



winning movement, fascism was not merely a crusade against communism, but much more obviously a protest against the free market. As Henry Turner has shown, it was not until after fascist parties won serious electoral victories and after Hitler soothed the nerves of boardrooms, that broader industrial funding started to flow to the NSDAP. Fascism was neither the stooge of capitalism, as communist historians have suggested, nor the simple totalitarianism more or less equivalent to Stalinism which liberal thinkers have maintained, nor an independent movement against communism, as Nolte implies.

Rather, interwar fascism was an ideologically incoherent movement which first gained support among the dissatisfied lower-middle classes, the losers of the free market, by promising them a better deal, and which went on under Hitler to promise conservative elites help in preserving the status quo from the danger of communist revolution. Fascism carried out its intrigues between the battle fronts of class and ideology, belonging neither wholly to capitalism nor completely mirroring communism, being at times totalitarian and at times anarchic. By what logic should it simply disappear with the ended quarrel between the systems of the east and west?

Today, in the midst of the greatest recession since World War II, German popular opinion is again turning against certain consequences of the free market, mainly the structural unemployment which leaves over ten percent of the work force without work. Furthermore, the impending unified European Common Market has earned distrust, because as a free-trade zone it threatens the industry of high-wage countries. The European central bureaucracy, based in Brussels, confronts the simple people, who speak only their national languages, with the potential loss of political and cultural identity. Far from all of the Germans who are worried about these developments of an open economy are receptive to fascism, but it is nonetheless these fears of unprotectedness which fascism has traditionally best addressed. Its simple certainties are particularly appealing to the young. For youth living in the peripheral areas of cities and in the monotonous countryside—and not only for the criminally violent among them—"right-wing" seems to stand for a cool, confident youth culture against an indifferent system.

II

Against the dangerous uncertainties of open society, the skinheads of Marzahn have erected something in their minds they call the "*Kotzgrenze*," the strangely named "border of vomit," or, more literally, "puke-line," a boundary which disgusts them too much to cross. As if they have decided that their world is completely incompatible with the wealthy Charlottenburg, they have walled themselves off from the new realities. Although most skinheads have some kind of apprenticeship, they show the frustrations of an alienated lower-middle class afraid of slipping, afraid that in all likelihood their years of training will fail to bring them good, secure jobs. They generally see themselves not as nihilists but as the romantic carriers of communitarian ideals. Rarely venturing into the rest of Berlin, they are like barbarians who manage to keep civilization at bay.

In the coming years, the way in which political meaning is formed in places like Marzahn is going to be a key indicator of the future of fascism. Such places are not quite ghettos: They receive full health services; law and order is precarious, but still functional. Economic deprivations are not yet enough to explain, let alone excuse, racist violence. But Marzahn and its counterparts in the east and west are ghettos in the making. The general society is withdrawing, and the youth sense it: The state is closing local youth centers because of shrinking funds; the banks have been practicing a kind of red-lining against aspiring eastern small business people; outsiders rarely venture in. And already these places are effectively ghettos, producing

their own brands of meaning and half-meaning. Evidence of that ghetto-meaning appears in the defeatist graffiti on school walls and in the skinheads' ill-informed opinions on asylum law.

Police in areas like Marzahn deal with all kinds of skinheads, from the activists of forbidden organizations—who, according to a recent report in *Die Zeit,* number 42,400 nationwide, and of whom close to six thousand are criminally violent—to the fourteen-year-olds whose clique is beginning to steal cars, or the rarer middle-class skinheads. As the police have toughened their initially lax enforcement efforts, skins no longer have a free run of peripheral areas; right-wing violence has been reduced, and its leaders have gone underground. But for the police, the skins are primarily a problem of order and not of politics.

It is social workers who are most concerned with the way skins think. Two caseworkers who have set up projects behind the *Kotzgrenze*, Michael Heinisch, a minister, and ex-journalist Michael Wieczorek, try to break the skinheads' brutal cycle of experience and ideology. Many of the skinheads grow up in households run by single mothers, where the only male figure is likely to be a grandfather who remembers the glorious days of past militaristic regimes. These young people develop a mythical vision of manhood formed in the absence of working fathers and influenced by the nostalgia of old men; their most vital role models are often the violent heroes of television and videos. Heinisch, an East German, sees the boys' problems stemming primarily from a lack of security, while the West Berliner Wieczorek identifies lack of meaningful activity as the chief cause. One man addresses modern insecurity, the other postmodern boredom.

Heinisch is a father figure for the youth who live and work with him fixing up old houses in Lichtenberg in preparation for the world of work. He works with the children of mainstream east Germans, those who functioned fairly well under cradle-to-grave socialism, in which they were assured their jobs, apartments, and cheap beer. His projects are well-supported by the state and private sponsors, one of whom is a Jewish violinist of the Berlin Philharmonic.

Heinisch's charges appear to lose their right-wing perspective over time. As some of them watched the burning houses of foreign refugees in Rostock on television, they remarked that they, like the skinheads in Rostock, might have thrown Molotov cocktails in the past, but that they no longer would. Heinisch interprets their racist feelings toward foreigners, who are seen as dangerous rivals for jobs and state money, as part of traditional German popular culture. This German racism is encoded with a peculiar egalitarianism: Jews are assumed to be miserly and economically successful, while Poles are seen as lazy and good-for-nothing—both unacceptable extremes to the lower-middle classes of central Europe.

Wieczorek deals with a hard-core clientele who try, in their stultified and largely eventless lives, to emulate the fantasies of MTV and horror films. Wieczorek sees little difference in the youth of Marzahn from those he worked with in high-rise areas of the west. He regards right-wing crime and scapegoating as outgrowths of a desperate search for meaningful activity. To counteract such emptiness, Wieczorek has devised creative projects such as the production of music videos, or the organization of soccer leagues that provide the opportunity for the German kids to interact with a wide range of people, including foreign players.

Heinisch's and Wieczorek's programs have strikingly similar results. Both men observe that once young men have a steady job or a steady girlfriend, they tend to drop out of the scene and lead the respectable life of their parents, spending their free time in front of the television, beer in hand. This reality, stifling in itself, disappoints the social workers, but neither they nor others have found a way to give these resocialized skinheads a new identity of any scope or depth. Skinheads respond to various methods of bread and circus, to the work-oriented regime of Heinisch and to the sophisticated moralizing of Wieczorek. But is their dilemma resolved or only dormant until the next serious waves of layoffs?

III

Skinheads such as these will never bring fascists into governments; postmodern apathy and fragmentation, as well as alcohol problems, make skins unsuitable foot-soldiers for ambitious political parties. But the level of their anger does unsettle Professor Jay's postulate that bureaucratization and commodification are so far advanced as to make any resistance to the instrumental rationality of the state and market impossible. Such resistance as theirs is dangerous because today party organization is relatively unimportant.

The recent case of Vladimir Zhirinovsky in Russia shows how media exposure can create broad political support with alarming rapidity. The popularity of the Russian demagogue provides evidence of the viability of a postcommunist, postmodern fascism. Arguments which would deny such realities resemble the "end of history" arguments recently made for the case of Eastern Europe. There is no such force which, gracious and anodyne, can simply limit the forms fascism might take.

The 1994 election will help to determine the future of fascism in Germany. Most telling will be the

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Mussolini's Ghost
Europe and the Specter of Fascism

Richard Wolin

Should the specter of a neo-fascist Europe be a cause for concern? The question has new urgency in the wake of the political gains made by the neo-fascists in the recent Italian elections, and the answer is an emphatic yes.

En route from the airport to a conference on the future of European democracy two years ago in Naples, I got a foretaste of Italy's changing political mood. It was the weekend of state-wide municipal elections; amid all the exuberant roadside election placards and billboards, certain ones stood out: the posters for the neo-fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) party.

The MSI is the party of Mussolini's heirs in more than a metaphorical sense: One of its leading figures, Alessandra Mussolini, is Il Duce's granddaughter. Her face was prominently on display that Sunday afternoon in April 1992. She was running on the neo-fascist ticket for a seat in the lower house of the Italian Parliament.

The colorful MSI posters bore the slogan, "La Flama Ritorna!"—"The flame returns!" Unfortunately, my poetic efforts to redub it "The shame returns!" were lost in translation among my too sober fellow conferees. But Signorina Mussolini ended up having the last laugh: Her bid for a parliamentary seat was successful—an ominous portent of things to come.

In the Italian elections of March 27 and 28, the MSI's showing was even more impressive than in 1992. The neo-fascists, in January reincarnated as the National Alliance, have become members of a peculiar, yet victorious coalition headed by media magnate Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* ("Go Italy," after a popular Italian soccer slogan) Party—Italy's fifty-third government since the end of World War II.

Since Berlusconi, who has never before held public office, controls three of Italy's major television networks, as well as a media empire including publishing and advertising companies, accusations of conflict of interest have arisen.

Yet few steps have been taken to lessen Berlusconi's considerable media influence. And such steps will be even less likely in the future, since, as of May, he was officially sworn in as Italy's new prime minister. Berlusconi's main virtue as a political figure seems to be his status as an outsider to a post-war electoral system that collapsed under the weight of corruption scandals that have left none of the traditional Italian political parties unscathed.

The third member of this unsavory alliance is the secession-oriented Northern League (until recently, the Lombard League), headed by the charismatic Umberto Bossi. Until now, the Northern League's chief complaint has been the inequitable taxation burdens that Italy's wealthier northern provinces have borne, to the benefit of the poorer south. In many respects, its separatist agenda bears affinities with a new regionalist sentiment that has other Western European central governments (Spain with its Basques and Catalans, France with its Corsicans, Britain and Northern Ireland) quaking.

But the real story of the Italian elections and the government that was formed in May has to do with the neo-fascist National Alliance. For the first time in the post-war era, an avowedly fascist party has been brought into the governing coalition of a major Western European nation. In the new cabinet named by Berlusconi, the National Alliance rated five ministerial appointments, including the important office of deputy prime minister. With this act, a momentous political threshold in post-war European politics has been breached—a situation that should not be treated lightly.

To be sure, the National Alliance has tried, albeit feebly, to distance itself from the ignominy of fascism's past. "Fascism finished in 1945, and history marches on," pledged party chief Gianfranco Fini in a recent

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speech. "Only dictators chase people away, and I'm not a dictator."

Instead, Fini is fond of describing his party as "post-fascist"—an epithet which, in its grammatical ambiguities, is far from wholly reassuring.

Moreover, assurances come cheap, and the scenario is an all too familiar one. The National Alliance acceded to power after gaining an impressive 14 percent of the vote in the March elections and more than 100 parliamentary deputies. It now needs to expand its heretofore circumscribed electoral base. The logical way to do this is by further encroaching upon the rapidly thinning ranks of the center-right Christian Democrats, many of whose former leaders are currently under indictment in the *Mani pulite* (clean hands) corruption sweep. Hence, there are crucial tactical reasons why Fini needs to display an acceptable constitutionalist facade.

On previous occasions, however, Fini has not shied away from referring to Mussolini as "the greatest statesman of our century." In the fall of 1992, party stalwart Alessandra Mussolini led a well-attended rally at Rome's Piazza Venezia—the site of Il Duce's former official residence—to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of Mussolini's March on Rome—the event that marked the end of the Italian Republic and the first step toward the fascist regime. And in the wings lurks former party leader and unreconstructed fascist ideologue Pino Rauti. "Behind us we have the March on Rome, the corporate state, the Second World War against the plutocracies, the Social Republic. And some of this must remain like a mine, a pool from which to draw," insists Rauti.

As with other prominent European right-wing parties, youthful skinheads (in Italy known as "nazi-skins") constitute neo-fascism's anti-immigrant shock-troops. In May, they staged a dramatic rally in the city of Vicenza, causing considerable political embarrassment to Fini, who later opined that they should be sent to work in mines. But many National Alliance hardliners, including Rauti, who was a candidate in the recent European parliamentary elections, refuse to disavow the nazi-skins.

Nor have Fini's own recent remarks been of much consolation to those mistrustful of his newly acquired democratic convictions. In the weeks prior to the European elections, one of the MSI/National Alliance candidates, Piero Buscaroli, said of gays: "If it were up to me, I'd send them all to live in a concentration camp." Fini's efforts at damage control only fueled the controversy. Gays are all right as long as they "don't try to seduce me," Fini commented, adding that of course they should not have equal rights with heterosexuals.

Other recent events involving prominent MSI figures have been no less disturbing. In May, a former supporter of Mussolini's Italian Social Republic (the puppet state established by the Nazis at Saló in the last years of the war), sixty-seven-year-old Mirko Tremaglia, was elected president of the Italian Parliament's newly created foreign affairs commission, which is charged with safeguarding the welfare of Italians living abroad. After summarily denouncing the Maastricht Treaty on European unity, he proceeded to raise irredentist claims with reference to Italian territories that were ceded to Yugoslavia following World War II. "Istria, Dalmatia, and Fiume (Rijeka) are Italian lands in historical and cultural terms," he remarked in a widely noted recent interview.

European political leaders, including France's President François Mitterand, have rather perfunctorily objected to the inclusion of the neo-fascists in the new government. But such gestures are often more for the benefit of domestic political consumption (France has its own neo-fascist party to contend with) than anything else. In the last analysis, Mitterand concluded diplomatically, one must respect the sovereignty of the Italian voters.

Characteristically less evasive was Mitterand's political bête noir, Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the extreme-right National Front. For Le Pen, the Italian example should serve as an inspiration for all the European right-wing parties in their "electoral battle against the Europe of Maastricht."

Also revelling in the neo-fascist electoral triumph was German historian and relativizer of Nazi atrocities, Ernst Nolte. According to Nolte, Mussolini was the most "interesting" political figure of our century. He was a reasonable, "constitutional fascist," who was pushed toward totalitarianism by his opponents. Insofar as Italy has broken with the taboos of antifascism, it belongs to the European political avant-garde, concluded Nolte.

Perhaps the only group to take an appropriately strong stand against the National Alliance's triumph was the Socialist group of the European Parliament, which threatened to nullify the Italian list in the June elections should neo-fascists be included in the Italian list.

President Clinton blithely entered the hornet's nest of European politics during a June stopover in Rome, the first leg of his D-Day anniversary excursion. The President had come to commemorate Italy's liberation from the yoke of fascism by American troops. Yet despite his good intentions, he unwittingly became the first head of state to bestow legitimacy on a

government that includes five fascist ministers. The whole scenario played itself out as a sort of Bitburg in miniature.

The renewed neo-fascist presence in European politics should indeed be cause for concern, but not for the reasons that immediately leap to mind. For while the historical image of fascism bequeathed to us by the infamous dictatorships of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco is probably very much a thing of the past, there exists a new variety of European fascism that, in its own way, remains equally sinister and equally virulent.

For some forty years following the end of World War II, European fascism seemed defunct as a legitimate political alternative. Quite simply, the unprecedented devastation it had wrought in the course of World War II—which, unlike World War I, had been unambiguously provoked by the Axis powers—was a phenomenon that few citizens of Europe were interested in reliving. Instead, the new political watchwords were security, stability, and steady economic growth.

During the 1980s, however, Europe's fascist parties underwent an ideological face-lift. Essentially, they modified their program to conform to the values embodied in the aforementioned political watchwords, though with an important twist. The new variant of European fascism would certainly be nationalist, but non-expansionist. Instead, the neo-fascist parties would focus—and herein lay the essence of their "updated" political message—on the domestic political enemy: on those who were foreign, non-European, and nonwhite. They would target immigrants and asylum-seekers who, by virtue of their non-European ethnicity, were diluting the "national substance" (read: "race") and depriving "honest" Europeans of jobs.

Fundamentally, the neo-fascists were playing an old European political card—the card of "race" and "racism"—and reaping significant electoral benefits. It was Le Pen's National Front that perfected the discourse of neo-racism in the 1980s. Its methods were soon successfully imitated by Germany's misleadingly named "Republicans," led by former SS man Franz Schönhuber and Italy's MSI.

What's so deceptive about the new European fascists is that they look like you and me. No longer do they dress in brown or black uniforms and rant about impending territorial acquisitions. Instead, they come nattily outfitted in business suits, power ties, and designer clothes. They claim to be parliamentarians who espouse the noblest of humanitarian precepts, such as equal rights for all. But in their way of thinking, the rights of North African immigrants should be



Umberto Bossi

honored in North Africa; those of so-called Turkish "guest-workers" should be enjoyed in Turkey. France for the French, Germany for the Germans, Italy for the Italians, Europe for the Europeans—so goes the new right-wing battle cry.

To all intents and purposes, such strategies boil down to a policy of parliamentary ethnic cleansing. For what's important to keep in mind about these parties is the fact that, even when they are not actively incorporated into governments, their neo-racist idiom has had a chilling impact on contemporary European political discourse.

For example, a year ago both France and Germany passed extremely restrictive—in the eyes of some, positively racist—immigration legislation. In May 1993, the French National Assembly—since the March 1993 elections, overwhelmingly dominated by the center-right UDF-RPR coalition—passed legislation that revoked a long-standing tradition of granting automatic citizenship to children of foreign parents born on French soil. Instead, these children must now apply for French citizenship upon turning sixteen; and the results of the application process are far from guaranteed. French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, who once spoke gleefully of deporting prospective immigrants on

"charter flights"—from which "you do not return"—has vowed a further crackdown on non-French residents. New "stop and search" procedures have been approved, permitting police to detain at will bystanders of foreign appearance—to all intents and purposes, on the basis of race.

In June 1993, the German parliament, with the cooperation of the Social Democrats, passed a constitutional amendment to alter what had previously been Europe's most liberal asylum law. This was the sad governmental response to the rising persecution of foreigners by skinheads and rightists, culminating in the bloody episodes at Hoyerswerda, Mölln, Rostock, and, in May 1993, Solingen, where five Turkish women were burned to death.

Instead of cracking down on the perpetrators, German politicians decided to capitulate to the new xenophobic groundswell by making immigration more difficult—they essentially proceeded to blame the victims. Chancellor Helmut Kohl has declared, publicly and frequently, that Germany is not "an immigration nation." His statement is both a provocation to the 7,000,000 foreign residents currently living on German soil and part of a craven effort to sway some of the vote among the backers of the extreme Right parties, whose support Kohl desperately needs if he is to succeed in his bid for a historic fourth consecutive term in this fall's national elections.

In the German case, one would do well to keep in mind one of Theodor Adorno's maxims: "I consider the continued existence of National Socialism within democracy more threatening than the continued existence of fascist tendencies against democracy." Translated into the terms of the contemporary German political landscape, this means that neo-Nazi violence, as horrible as it is, remains a relatively marginal phenomenon. It is estimated that the number of right-wing extremists has stabilized at around 65,000. And their thuggish tactics have found little support among—indeed, they have been roundly condemned by—the mainstream population.

What should give more immediate cause for alarm is the so-called *Wende* or ideological shift in German political culture since reunification in 1990. The watchword from a variety of political quarters has been that Germany must once more become a "normal" nation. Following reunification, a variety of political and cultural taboos—anti-Semitism included—seem to have been lifted. Many have begun to view the relatively liberal political culture of the former West Germany, overly influenced by the "un-German" worldview of the American occupiers and returned German-Jewish emigrés, as a forty-year hiatus in the overall course of German history. Instead, one must have the "courage" to be German again; and Germany must have the courage to become a "nation" again—that is, a nation now free to act without regard to the sordid misdeeds of its past, such as the Holocaust and the Third Reich.

How all this will play out in future years remains to be seen. But as Elliot Neaman pointed out in an earlier issue of TIKKUN ("Fascism and Postmodernism," November/December 1993), in recent years there has been a concerted effort to rehabilitate many of the leading figures of Germany's so-called "conservative revolution" of the 1920s. They are deceptively trotted out as representatives of an "authentic" German conservatism, unspoiled by the "excesses" of Nazism. That there existed a considerable overlap between the ideology of the conservative revolutionaries and that of the Nazis is a fact that is conveniently omitted. Much of this nostalgia for an authentic German conservatism entails the conviction that there are socially tolerable levels of nationalism, illiberalism, and xenophobia that deserve to be resuscitated.

The ongoing shift in Germany from a relatively liberal social consensus to one that is increasingly national-conservative is of more than academic interest. At 80,000,000 strong, a reunited Germany is now the most populous nation in the European community. Despite the financial problems involved in incorporating the former East Germany, the mark remains the strongest European currency. Germany's longstanding historical and linguistic ties to the newly liberated states of East Central Europe, coupled with its economic might, suggest that it is well positioned to resume the goal of continental geopolitical mastery. All of which suggests that the shift in German political culture must be monitored closely.

In future years, the answer to the German question will likely depend on the extent to which the (albeit fragile) liberal social consensus of the old FRG—including a strong commitment to European integration, which national conservative types have condemned—is strengthened and the appeals for a "normal" national consciousness kept at bay. For such appeals have always harbored a nostalgia for autocratic-jingoistic German political traditions: that is, for an "authoritarian state" capable of acting in the tradition of "power politics." A return to such traditions would bode calamity both for German domestic politics as well as for European stability.

In both Germany and France, the traditional conservative parties have embraced the xenophobic discourse of the extreme Right for the sake of tapping

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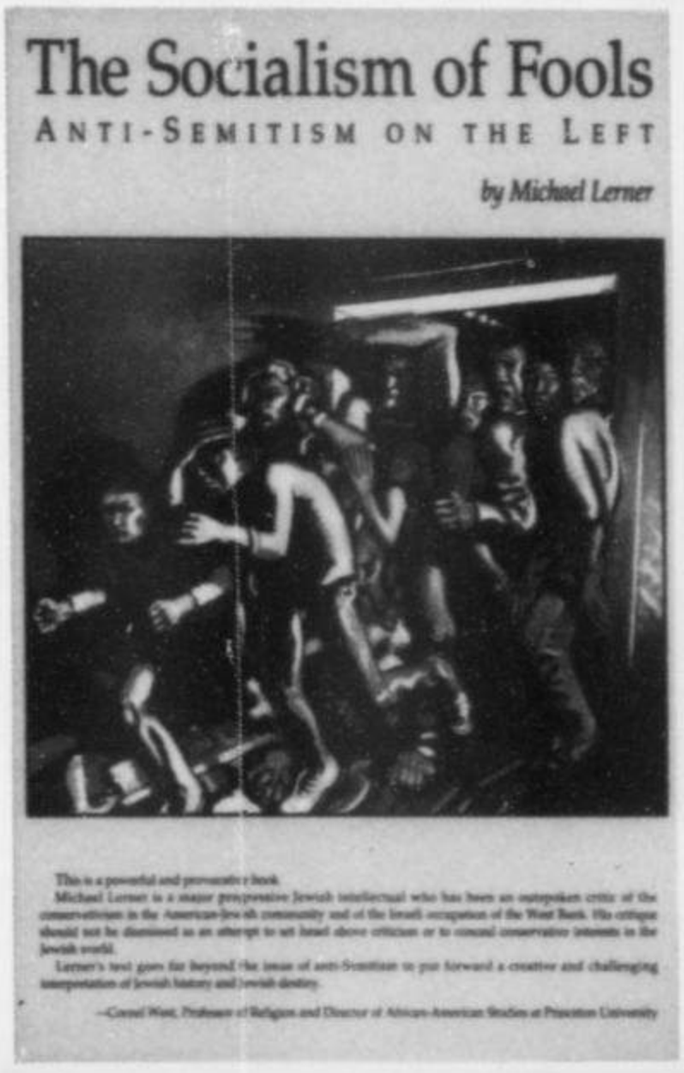
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Beyond the Rainbow

Jacklyn Cock



When Nelson Mandela called for the creation of a "rainbow nation" in his May 10 inaugural speech as president of South Africa, there were echoes of Jesse Jackson's appeal for a "rainbow coalition" in his unsuccessful 1988 bid for the U.S. presidency. Despite the metaphorical resonances, however, race—the subtext of these rainbow images—is understood very differently in South African and American politics.

Under apartheid South Africa, the dominant discourses of both liberation and subordination centered on race. In the United States, the race question, as Toni Morrison continues to warn us, is "hidden and covert." In 1994, the fiftieth anniversary of Gunnar Myrdal's ground-breaking study, *An American Dilemma*, in which he examined whether it is possible to eliminate racial intolerance, Americans still cannot openly confront the politics of race. Just recently, Lani Guinier—whom many see as a very public victim of Americans' hypocrisy and confusion about racial questions—lamented, "What is missing from public discourse is a vision of the future in which society commits itself to working through, rather than running from, our racial history and racial present."

The African National Congress (ANC), which led South Africa's liberation struggle and is now the majority party in the government of national unity, has long espoused the concept of "non-racialism." This philosophy does not involve a denial of racial inequalities; indeed, the liberation struggle was directed precisely against such inequalities and the coercion that maintained them. Rather, non-racialism is linked to a nationalistic solidarity, asserting a common South African citizenship irrespective of race or ethnicity. This inclusive ANC nationalism has always been linked to a notion of democracy which was similarly broadly defined to include the democratization of both the state and of civil society. The ANC continues to be committed to the creation of a non-racial democracy; a vision in which the coupling of nationalism and democracy is pivotal. Much of the ANC's vision came directly out of the American civil rights movement of the early 1960s, and it is not surprising that much of Mandela's imagery is reminiscent of the soaring, spiritual legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.

One of the greatest challenges now facing the ANC is to maintain this ideology of non-racialism. This may be increasingly difficult in light of the fact that the voting in April's historic all-race election followed racial fault lines. The fact that Coloreds and Asians seemed susceptible to race-based arguments of F.W. de Klerk's National Party underscores the fragility of the ANC's non-racial appeal to all ethnic and racial categories.

The actions of fearful whites and angry Blacks also threaten "non-racialism." The murder of Amy Biehl, a white American student doing research in South

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Africa, for example, reinforced the worst fears of many American and South African citizens alike. Yet the chant of the Pan African Congress (PAC) youths charged with her murder—"one settler one bullet"—is devoid of substantial intellectual content; it is not anchored in any Fannonesque notion of violence as liberation from psychic colonization. The PAC views the conflict in South Africa as a colonial struggle between a white settler ruling class and the oppressed Blacks. Yet when challenged, one PAC supporter maintained that the term "settler" refers to "oppressors" of all types rather than whites.

PAC polled a mere 3 percent in the election, evidence of its lack of support. But thirty years ago, racial pride was a tenet of the emerging Black Consciousness movement. That ideological project paralleled the Black Power philosophy in the United States, but was largely the creation of petit-bourgeois intellectuals with a limited grasp of class politics. While Black Consciousness was a separatist movement, one incident at the mass funeral of its leader, Steve Biko, may illustrate the absence of any strong, personalized racial animosity. Early in the morning before the start of the formal proceedings, a Xhosa praise singer in the center of the field ended his song with the refrain, "we love you." When he passed in front of my friend and me—at that time the only whites in the crowd—he pointed at us and sang, "we love you all."

Other political groupings such as the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) of Gatsha Buthelezi have attempted to mobilize a militant Zulu nationalism for political purposes. But this ethnic emphasis is reminiscent of the apartheid government's use of tribalism and ethnicity as an obvious strategy to maintain white domination. Ironically, Inkatha has attracted a number of white members, several of whom are prominent Buthelezi advisers. These whites were attracted by his rejection of economic sanctions as a means of exerting pressure on the apartheid regime and his glorification of free enterprise. So even this racially exclusive identity does not imply a political separatism, and the IFP election results do not seriously challenge the ANC's model of a non-racial, supra-ethnic unity.

One threat to non-racialism at present comes from political notions from abroad. There are deep schisms between ANC ideology and the ideologies of some African Americans and their white American counterparts, who have abandoned Dr. King's vision of a race-blind society and substituted "multiracialism."

Maintaining race as an exclusive category, multiracialism is, sadly, the liberal alternative to an even more pernicious resurgence of Black separatist ideology in the United States. The Nation of Islam's hate-mongers like Louis Farrakhan and academic dissemblers like Leonard Jeffries constitute a tiny but vocal group of media-savvy spokespersons who incite both whites and Blacks to acts of violence against one another. Many African Americans seem to find Black South Africans' commitment to non-racialism implausible. Shortly after the election, an African-American *Newsweek* correspondent asked in incredulous tones on a popular South African televised talk show how Black South Africans "can be so forgiving."

Recently, a distinguished African-American sociologist argued that "social class does not exist among Black Americans. There are social networks which connect us in a way that transcends class differences." He was making a familiar argument in the United States, namely, that race is the defining datum of identity. This kind of thinking, ironically, is more similar to the pernicious racially exclusive ideology of apartheid than it is to the vision of the ANC.

Clearly, racial categorization will be necessary in the new, non-racial democratic South Africa, especially in redressing inequity and implementing affirmative-action programs. Racial definitions will also be important in census figures, in order to measure how far we have progressed toward social justice. But, getting beyond race is a fundamental ANC value.

Beyond ideology and beyond the "rainbow," there are several demographic and economic factors which make non-racialism more possible and more palatable in South Africa than in the United States. First, people of color will always be the majority in South Africa, and our new democratic system cannot subordinate the will of the majority in the way that the United States has been able to subordinate its Black minority for more than two centuries. Second, Mandela and the ANC can always rely on African nationalism to unite the peoples of South Africa. Everyone has the same roots in that particular soil. But those whose roots are deepest and most certain are those who are African.

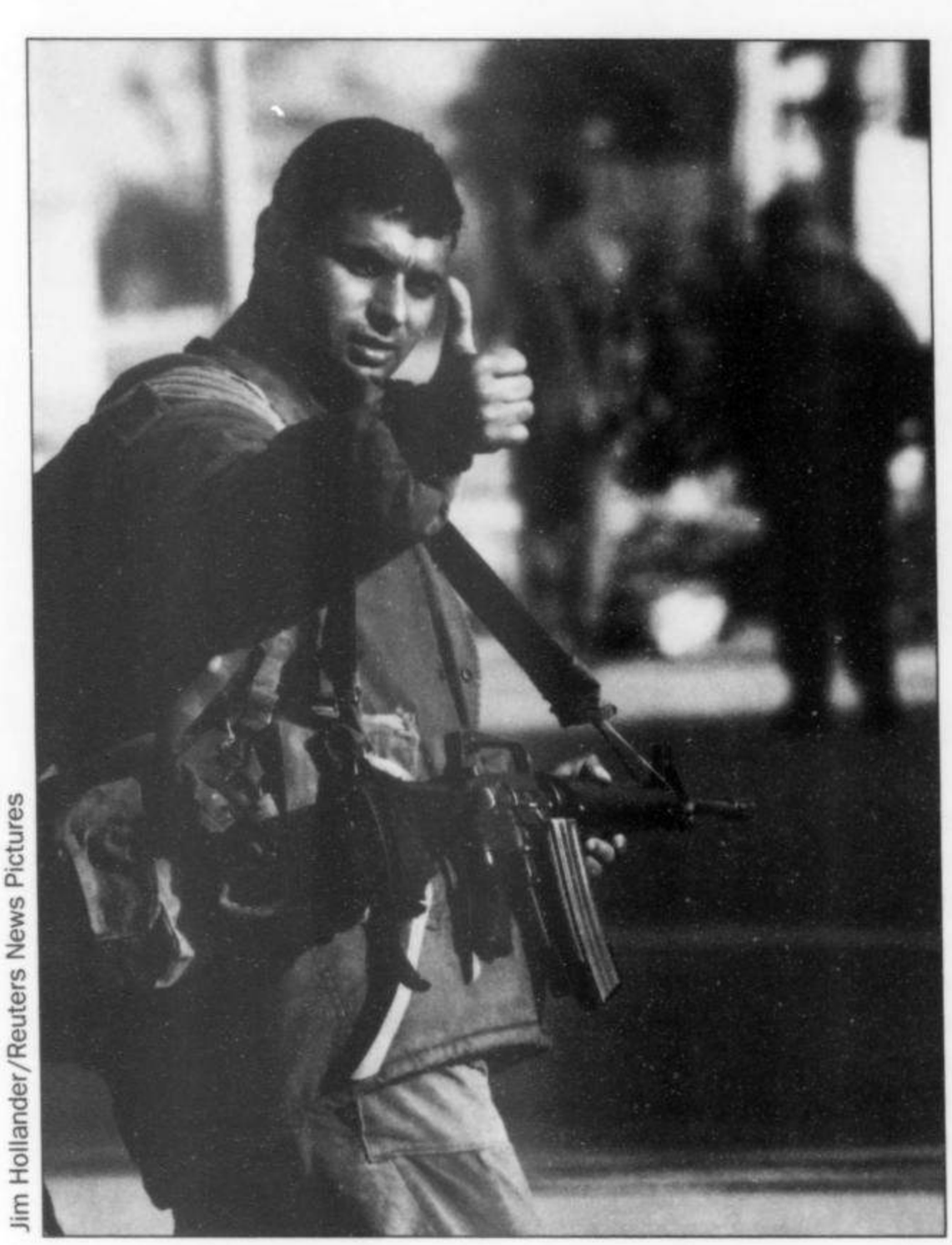
A similar claim about American national identity is more difficult to make for the United States; it is estimated that 50 million Africans were uprooted and sold into slavery which brought them to America. Clearly, Blacks and whites share a 300-year history on American soil, but the circumstances which gave rise to this relationship make simple appeals to a common nationhood problematic.

Third, South Africa cannot survive, let alone prosper,

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Troop Reversals in Gaza and Jericho

Wendy Orange



Jim Hollander/Reuters News Pictures

The Moment

Like the graffiti scrawled all over Gaza's walls, the criss-crossing narratives of what's to come after autonomy almost obliterate the actual moments of its arrival. Narratives and predictions, ominous premonitions vying with optimistic scenarios germinate not only locally, but come at us from all over the globe, superimposing themselves on the troop reversals finally happening on the ground.

Standing in the midst of the festivities in Gaza and Jericho, it's nearly impossible to isolate and grasp this historic moment itself, to freeze one clear frame. For many of us, the possibilities and impossibilities of what's to come war in our minds, even as these scenes unfolding in mid-May ostensibly signify the beginning of the end of occupation/intifada. Or do they? The uncertainty of what we are all moving toward here in the West Bank and ultimately in Jerusalem hangs like a giant question mark in the air above the tumultuous celebrations.

Yet all analyses, predictions, hopes, and fears come down to this: finally in the dead of night, under cover of the black sky, when most of the journalists and the Palestinian population, exhausted from waiting, are asleep: in both Jericho and now Gaza, Israeli troops have at last departed, along with the telecommunications, barbed wire, trucks, jeeps, the contents of the prisons, soldiers' and administrators' tents, beds, and desks, the vast network of computers and files: all the equipment that sustained occupation has exited out down the main roads, as the PLO fighters from Jordan and Egypt, in green uniforms oddly similar to the Israeli's (except for their rounded berets) have arrived: the new Palestinian police.

Until the very last daylit moment before the Israelis' departure, rocks are thrown, guns and tear gas go off in response. It is as if the mutually addictive fighting, the nouveau machismo of the Israel Defense Forces and the *shebab* (Palestinian street fighters) simply cannot resist each other's temptations (who's beat whom? who's the victor?), each side good to the last drop of hate, costing lives up to the end—or the beginning of the end—of occupation/intifada, which is what most present hope we're witnessing. The Israeli soldiers are clearly as happy to leave as the Palestinians are happy to be free of them.

Standing in the Gazan heat and sand, journalists conduct interviews through the shouting, chanting, and

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clapping as the crowds raucously greet the new police force in Dar El Bair, close to the very spot where the intifada began seven long years ago.

Guns are suddenly everywhere: Palestinian boys and men shoot in the air in celebration. Aging PLO fighters hug young kids they don't know, tears running down their faces. I ask one PLO veteran how old he is. He pauses. "Only three days old," he replies, choked with emotion. A few boys approach me as I write, asking with hostility: "Where you from?" Then they jeer: "America makes all our problems."

In Jericho, behind the scenes of celebrations and embraces, there's secretive talk of money, new cars, political ambitions. The recent Palestinian discourse, fueled by a collective vision and a common enemy, is now inevitably getting frayed, even corrupted, by the promise and the doubt of what's to come: Arafat and his men from Tunis, international funds, the possibilities of power and position.

As yet, nothing's in place except the initial units of the new police force, men without even beds to sleep on, symbols of autonomy, but no infrastructure on which to build.

Later, I'll wonder if this moment of troop reversals isn't surrounded by the lingering doubts and the niggardly spirit that infused the negotiations in Taba, Cairo, and Rafah since October. For these negotiations included no gestures of largesse, were rather a contest in telescopic wariness, a mood that now permeates the collective consciousness.

Unfortunately, the Oslo spirit of mutual recognition, full of the possibility for co-existence (well documented in Jane Corbin's book, *Gaza First*,) no longer prevails. The opportunity these last nine months offered for breaking through psychological barriers between the two peoples was not advanced. But there's plenty of excitement today, not to be confused with the euphoria (mixed with disappointment) that was so present in mid-September, a far more inclusive emotion.

A Photojournalist Sees a New Gaza

Rina Castelnuovo, a *New York Times* photographer who's covered every aspect of Gazan life since the beginning of the intifada, observes:

"It's amazing. I've been covering Gaza for years and I never saw the people of Gaza smile. You don't even associate the two words: 'Gaza' and 'smiling'; I thought they were mutually exclusive. Now," she goes on, "everyone is smiling. I went down to the ocean in Gaza and there were thousands swimming in the Mediterranean, barbecuing on the beaches, this stretch of sea that has always been so desolate, even ominous. If it weren't for their long dresses and veils in the water, you might think this was Tel Aviv, it's so cheerful and relaxed. This really is an overnight change: new coffee shops spring up every night. Music, theater groups, and poetry reading fill the streets at night. A purely happy feeling among the people.

"For example, there's a tiny park, not what anyone would call a park anywhere else in the world: a patch of yellowish green grass that has six trees, five flowers, two swings. The *shebab* kept it closed all through the intifada to protect it. Now hundreds of Palestinians dress to the nines to line up and come and see it, even though by anyone's standards it's not a park, not even a playground, it's nothing, you simply would not notice it anywhere else in the world. But people are coming from all over Gaza to gaze at it, ecstatic with their tiny plot of land."

Listening to her, I see that the story right now isn't the West Bank or even sleepy over-journalized Jericho; the story isn't in the Israeli street, or the Palestinians under occupation in Hebron and Nablus. None of these stories is going away, and none is central to this moment. The focus now is the sudden freedom in Gaza, this moment when autonomy is just beginning, which, as we say of God, lives in the details.

Mohammad Dawwas

I return to Gaza days later to visit Mohammad Dawwas, a Palestinian journalist with whom I've shared long afternoons during the snail-paced Washington negotiations. I've heard in minute detail about his depression, particularly his constant sense of Gaza as a giant prison. Born and raised here, Mohammad is a small man who usually looks serious, almost sullen, but today Mohammad's joy is written all over his face:

"Because I'm a journalist I was the first Gazan to see the returning Palestinian troops at four a.m. coming in from Rafah (Egypt)," Mohammad begins proudly. "And what I saw was not a sign of freedom, but was real freedom. For these are our fighters from abroad, and when all 7,000 arrive, they will bring their families back; that means 20,000 of our people returning. This is important."

"What is the biggest change?" I ask. "The most amazing moments I have are walking after dark," Mohammad replies. "For the first time in seven years, we do not have curfew in Gaza at nine p.m. All these years, walking only meant hurrying home in fear. Now we are walking and walking every night until 3:00 or 4:00 a.m.: This is freedom, it's joyful, just walking without fear, without Israeli troops anywhere around. This is the first time in my life I've felt relaxed.

"Before we were all in prison here. Now you could say it's still a prison because we are cut off from the rest of the



Jim Hollander/Reuters News Pictures

West Bank and East Jerusalem. But walking at night, standing on our roof-tops at night with no Israeli soldiers, believe me we are not thinking 'prison,' we are thinking 'freedom,' and that is joy, that is reason for celebration.

"In two weeks, everyone will look around, look for work, look for our country to really begin, the celebrations will wind down, but for now you must know this walking all night is a great sweetness. When I look ahead, I worry, of course. Soon we will need work, infrastructure, international money, so that we can build our country—that's the key."

I notice so many guns, I tell him, and that seems dangerous, doesn't it? "In truth I don't like the sounds of gunshots; I will be happy when the police really take over, get down to security and take away these guns. I understand the need to celebrate, but I wish for a celebration without guns.

"The press always says: Gaza is hell. We who live here don't like that phrase at all. For we feel that Gaza is our land, the land we need to build. Hamas and PLO: There will be no bloodbath, you'll see. Every night the factions meet and we agree: No more Palestinian blood must be shed."

"What about the killing of the two Israeli soldiers in Gaza immediately after the Palestinian police arrived?" I ask. "The killing of the two Israeli soldiers was not popular at all, not even among the extremists. We all know the time for violence against Israelis has passed, this is a time for organizing ourselves. Getting to work on our own country.

"Look, we Palestinians are the ones who built all these other countries: We built Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, even Israel. So why do they say we cannot build our own country? We must and we will."

Our talk turns to Arafat, how inept he seems to many, how out of touch not only with his own people but with shifting from the role of revolutionary into statesman. "I cannot speak without emotion about Arafat," Mohammad begins. "I was born in 1960. As soon as I could see: there was Arafat on everyone's wall, large pictures. He makes many mistakes, no question, but he remains my hero. Though I doubt he will come to Gaza anytime soon. Many are against him and it will not be safe for him. But this is not the time when people are thinking about the future, because of the freedom and the walking and the absence of fear.

"I've told you many times how I'd leave my children and my wife in the morning and each time I'd look at them I was never sure I'd be alive to see them that night. That is gone, that fear, that dread. Many times, with Israeli guns pointed at me, I thought I was dead. Once a tear gas canister landed directly on me; as I was taken to the hospital I was sure I was dying. This will not happen now."

We're talking now of the legacy of hatred here toward Israelis and all Jews, of the many Palestinians (Mohammad estimates more than 50,000 in Gaza alone) who are mentally disturbed by the conditions they've lived under, used to a life of hatred: "Let me tell you," Mohammad says emphatically. "Like many here I can separate Jews from soldiers, Jews who support our independence from soldiers who did not. Once, right after the Gulf War ended I saw a scene I will never forget. The people of Gaza had been shut up under curfew for forty-five days and nights. All we did was play cards. Terribly boring, horrible. Then the war ended and I went to the Erez checkpoint. There I saw all these Israeli employers hugging and kissing and crying with their Palestinian laborers. It wasn't about business; it was human. There is love between Jews and Gazans, what you never hear about in the press. The press loves blood and death and hate. But I know we will practice co-existence someday. Even now there is plenty of business going on behind the scenes even though this is a time of great separation from the Israelis. It cannot last.

"As for the returning big shots from Tunis. The really powerful guys, how many are there? Maybe about 200 who will live here; there are so many more of us. We who have suffered, fought all through the occupation, intifada. It's they who must adjust to us, not the other way around. There is no way they can take charge without giving us our voice. No way."

As Mohammad walks me out of his house, he introduces me to two guys; he whispers to me that they belong to Hamas. I freeze but they are smiling. "What do you think?" I ask them. "We were not for this peace accord," one says, "but who can deny, it feels wonderful right now."

Gazan Checkpoints

A week later, the stretch between the Erez checkpoint and Gush Katif (where Jewish settlers live) is noticeably different than before. In the past there were four or five Israeli checkpoints at most; today there are eighteen checkpoints on this same road. The first is manned by Palestinians, the second controlled by Israelis, the third is a joint patrol; this sequence keeps repeating itself throughout Gaza. Traveling this road, Israeli journalists get a taste of the demeaning inconvenience of being checked out and checked over. The wasted time and the fear involved are wearyingly familiar to every Palestinian in the territories.

For Amog, a Gazan taxi driver, this is a strange turn of events. While taking journalists today to interview settlers, Amog is repeatedly stopped and searched—his truck, his tires, his person, his passengers, everyone's identity card scrutinized at each roadblock. He turns to the journalists in the back of his car and says: "I spit on Arafat; now we have two armies opening our trunks, wasting our time."

What's astonishing throughout these ordeals is the extent to which, after only one week of autonomy, the Israeli and the Palestinian officials resemble one another in appearance and behavior, using the same harsh interrogations while joking in comraderie with each other. Witnessing the easy fraternity between former enemies, Amog becomes enraged. "Why are you being so friendly?" he shouts at the Palestinians. Stone-faced, they pay Amog no mind; he passes through one search, only to face the next a few feet down the dirt road.

As his car screeches out past a search patrol, Amog can't contain himself, sticks his head out the window, and yells in Arabic: "I had to go through this humiliation for twenty-two years. And now you, our own people, are doing this. *Go back to Tunis!*"

By the time he finally reaches the entrance to the Gush Katif settlement, Amog is confounded: "I drive this every day for years, taking journalists. What always took one hour, now it's almost two hours."

For Amog, "liberation" means this heightened inconvenience. But speaking more softly, he acknowledges: "The Palestinians are imitating the Israelis, some are even more hard-nosed with us already. But just the same, when it comes from your own people, yes, I get mad, but I know they don't want to kill me. With the Israelis I was never sure about that."

For the Israeli journalists in the back seat, though, it's another matter, a foreboding of what might be to come. "The kids of Gaza never really scared me," one journalist insists. "They don't scare me now. I appreciate what autonomy means for them, what they've been through and I'm glad for their freedoms. But this is a new atmosphere for us, because Gazans have always appreciated the press. We saved them from being a forgotten third-world refugee population, kept their story alive, gave them what they needed: publicity. We are used to being welcomed by them.

"Now I worry, because these Palestinians trained abroad are not used to democracy or a free press. I notice on the Palestinian press passes issued us, we must write 'country of origin.' This national identity is not the way the press is defined in any democracy, not Israel, not anywhere. It smells of totalitarianism. I'm not comfortable showing these Palestinian border patrols my card with Israel written on it. It makes us more vulnerable as Jews; these guys seems fiercer and harsher than the Israelis did. Many times I was driving in Palestinian cars and saw how the Israeli soldiers treated the people at checkpoints. Because I was with them, I thought I knew how it felt. But now they are Palestinians checking us out, and as an Israeli I really know how it feels: It feels scary."

The Personal and the Political

Back in Jerusalem, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has just returned from a day with Palestinian leaders in Jericho after shuttling back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem. We few journalists not covering the final troop withdrawals in Gaza tonight are waiting in the early evening sun outside Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's office for a press conference with Christopher to begin. The light in Israel at this time of day, this time of year seems wider, sweeter, more redolent of mystery and hope than light anywhere else I've ever lived. As I walk to the press conference, there's a fragrance of roses blossoming all around us in the parks and lawns that surround the Supreme Court, the Knesset, Rabin's office.

Twenty journalists are standing outside as Christopher, Rabin, Shimon Peres, and others emerge from their meeting. Rabin's face is beet red from the Mediterranean sun; Christopher looks even paler and more lifeless than his predecessor, James Baker, who in the flesh looked plastic and cold to me years ago when the Madrid process was just beginning. Christopher looks even more contained than Baker, and I feel grateful to be living in Israel, where politicians, whatever else you may say about them, are passionately engaged.

I have heard moderate, educated Palestinians call Rabin a "war criminal," and seeing what they have suffered at the hands of the Israelis, I have had moments of understanding that point of view. But as I observe Rabin at close range, it occurs to me that his work these past two years has given him a moral stature few on the Left in Israel acknowledge.

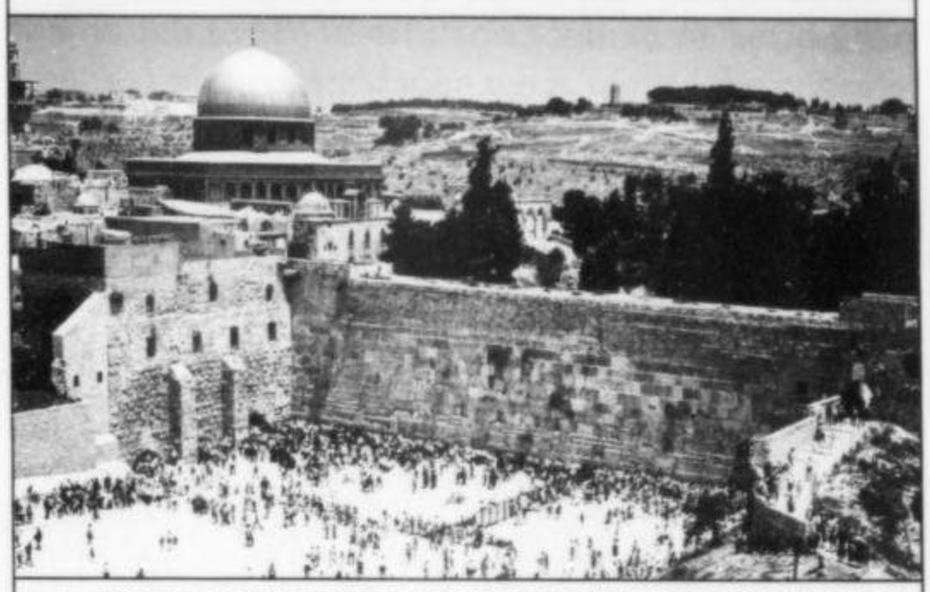
Rabin is not a visionary, not a dove at heart, yet somehow on this day of ever closer negotiations between Israel and Syria, on this day of final Gazan troop withdrawals, on this week after we've left Jericho, especially at this moment when his recent speeches are growing stronger in support of "not ruling over another people, not denying them what we ourselves have achieved," I look at Rabin with new eyes. He has worked hard, and something in his dogged persistence, in his contradictions, in his cruelty and courage move me to admiration, something Peres, with his visionary flights and vanity, does not inspire at close range.

The initial subject of the press conference is Syria; the subtext is cautious optimism. Then the subject is Arafat, and his latest foray into the politics of personality—his startling speech to South African Muslims about the need for a Jihad against Jewish Jerusalem, for an Islamic Jerusalem. It was a speech clearly aimed at Hamas, not at the Israeli street, and this on the very day he'd inherited

(Continued on p. 77)

Untangling the complexities of the Middle East

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ROUNDTABLE

The Boundaries of Politics

Values and Spirituality in the Public Sphere

We debate the criticism of the politics of meaning, raised by some members of the TIKKUN *community, that the deprivation of meaning is an inappropriate focus for politics.*

Paul Berman is editor of a forthcoming anthology called Blacks and Jews: Alliances and Arguments. *Father Robert F. Drinan, professor at Georgetown Law Center, was a member of the House of Representatives of the U.S. Congress from 1971-1981. Mary Edsall co-authored* Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics *with Tom Edsall. Todd Gitlin teaches sociology and media at the University of California, Berkeley, and is the author of* The Sixties. *Peter Gabel is president of New College of California, chair of San Francisco's National Service Commission, and associate editor of* TIKKUN. *Hazel Henderson is the author of* Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics. *Her syndicated columns appear in 400 newspapers around the world. Michael Lerner's book,* The Politics of Meaning, *will be published by Viking in 1995.*

Todd Gitlin: At the core of the "politics of meaning" is a presumption that there's a psychological, or what is sometimes called a spiritual, dimension that needs to be addressed in common by people who wish a political transformation of a leftish sort. Though the language often used is spiritual, I hear mostly a psychological claim. And the claim is that what discourages good people from doing good and entering the public world to do that good, is that they don't feel up to the challenge, they feel demoralized, they feel their lives alienated. And therefore, the politics that can mobilize them, and that can generate the solutions to social problems, is a politics that speaks a psychological and spiritualist language. I hear further that people go, and should go, to political life for healing their injuries, hidden and not so hidden.

I think the "politics of meaning" invites people to find something in the public world that is actually extremely difficult to find. It seems to suggest that unless politics reaches that high pitch of meaning, then it is trivial or insubstantial. At the same time, it doesn't address the tremendous upheavals that are happening in our economic and political and cultural lives.

Insofar as it aims to be practical by setting up groups and rules for the conduct of political life under this psychological and spiritual heading, it could actually be damaging to freedoms. We already have too much cultural supervision of speech and feeling, and I don't think we need any more in government agencies or bodies of authority. I too feel what a lot of other people feel about the difficulty of finding sense in life, but I don't think there is going to be one big bang of a redemption that heals everybody's wounds. They are too many, too different. To demand of politics that it address all that difficulty and pain is to be self-paralyzing. We need redemptions, in short, but not *a* redemption, no *big* redemption.

We need politics that is both electrifying and modest. That's a paradox. The modesty part is important. It is that people not demand a thrill from politics and find ways to talk to each other across all the boundaries of their differences. Even if they don't satisfy their deepest hungers in the process, they might actually in the process form alliances that feed some people and create some useful jobs.

Hazel Henderson: Economics is paraded as a science where it clearly isn't and it doesn't meet any of the rudimentary requirements to be called a science. I have always called economics "politics in disguise," and normative to the core. And it purveys a value set which I think in this country is so pervasive that people no longer even recognize that it is normative. If we deconstruct economics we find that the bottom line that all industrial societies use, the gross national product, not only ignores external social and environmental costs, but also ignores the unpaid work in society, which I call the love economy. In many societies it is 75 percent of all of the productive work that goes on, and it is just totally ignored. Even in industrial societies it is fifty percent of what goes on. So there's no point in talking about the "real problems" being economic or political, as though those could be separated from the meaning dimension, because these areas are thoroughly infused with a set of unexamined

value assumptions themselves.

Robert Drinan: I wonder, Michael, if you would comment on what Todd said.

Michael Lerner: Liberal politics has largely confined itself to addressing the economic entitlements and political-rights dimensions of human needs. But in ten years of work that I did as a psychotherapist with American workers I came to understand that the reason many of them were being attracted to the Right is that the Right was addressing the ethical, spiritual and psychological crisis in American society, a crisis that manifested in the rising rate of divorce and instability of families, the decline in long-term loving relationships, the decline of loyalty and trust among people, the crisis in ethical values that pervades politics but also impacts on every human interaction, the growing sense of alienation and stress at work, and the pervasive sense that people have that they are living in a society in which each person is so focused on his/her own self-interest that they cannot be trusted and hence that each person is very alone. These are not merely psychological concerns, because they are rooted in changes in the economic and political structure of the society, and because people have come to understand that they require political responses. But unfortunately, it is only the Right that has defined them as political issues, and then proposed morally unacceptable or other-blaming solutions.

But the liberals have been unable to deal with these issues because they don't fit their definition of politics, a definition based on a conception of the world that discounts spiritual needs and that assumes that human beings are motivated primarily or solely by economic needs and the need to be allowed to do whatever each individual wants to do.

The politics of meaning seeks to reintroduce an ethically and spiritually grounded way of thinking that was invalidated by the rise of a materialist empiricism and by a particular form of liberalism that discounted communities. It's got a great deal in common with a form of communitarianism, except that: a, the politics of meaning is more concerned that in the process of achieving community we be sure to preserve individual liberties; and b, the politics of meaning is more explicit about the ways that communities are undermined by the workings of the capitalist market. Contrary to Todd's assertion, the politics of meaning is not about redemption. It is about putting back on the agenda of liberal and progressive forces a way of thinking about reality that emphasizes the way that the current reality undermines peoples' spiritual, ethical, and ecological needs, and the way existing economic and political arrangements undermine human relationships.

The politics of meaning has a very specific political goal at this historical moment, not a messianic or redemptive one: Just as Kennedy and the movements of the sixties helped legitimate idealism, and Reagan and the conservatives helped to legitimate selfishness, our goal for the nineties is to shift the dominant framework of thinking of this society from an ethos of selfishness to an ethos of caring for others, from cynicism to idealism, from a "bottom line" focused on short-term material self-interest to a "bottom line" that focuses on how much every institution, course of action, or proposed piece of legislation tends toward the creation or sustenance of human beings capable of sustaining loving relationships and capable of ethical, spiritual, and ecological sensitivity.

The politics of meaning has much in common with, and is in many ways derivative of, the women's movement and its growing concern with what it calls the caring needs. Caring has been systematically invalidated by patriarchy, and so the work that women do around caring has been largely unpaid, and where paid, paid at a very low level. That patriarchal invalidation of caring is one important element that politics of meaning seeks to combat.

Drinan: Could you concretize this a bit?

Lerner: We have published a long platform covering how these ideas would shape our approach to the economy, health care, housing, the aging, education, foreign policy, and much more. Let me give you one tiny symbolic act that might indicate a direction. We want corporations and governmental agencies to develop an ethical impact report so that when we assess "productivity" of a corporation or the value of proposed legislation, we shift the public debate to focus on the degree to which it tends to create or promote human beings capable of loving and caring and ethically and ecologically sensitive relationships, to counter the current tendency in which corporate and political life tends toward undermining those capacities in human beings. Toward legitimating that way of thinking, we are planning a national "Ethics Summit" in Washington, D.C. in 1995 that would try to focus national attention on the way that current political and economic arrangements have the opposite impact, making it hard to sustain ethical and spiritual sensitivities, loving relationships, and trusting friendships. But as you can see, this is a movement that focuses, much as feminism has done, on changing the dominant way we think about the world, and not just on this or that particular piece of legislation, though it would certainly have legislative consequences as well.

If you want another specific, we have proposed that schools teach empathy as a "major" that is given equal

importance with the three Rs. And we have called for the creation of occupational safety and health committees with the power to reorganize the workplace to give workers greater opportunity to exercise genuine control and self-determination and greater creativity and use of their intelligence and ability to cooperate with each other.

Mary Edsall: It seems to me that on one axis what Todd is talking about is relevant. He's talking about what is practical, what is in present time politically viable or doable. And that's a legitimate area of critique.

But at another level I think that what Michael Lerner is doing is attempting to mount a substantive critique of an entire paradigm.

I would characterize the paradigm that is coming under fire by people who sympathize with the politics of meaning as "the autonomy paradigm," the separatist, individualistic paradigm that stresses values like self-determination, individual sovereignty, self-reliance, self-steering, self-rule, self-government, separateness.

That's a whole way of approaching reality, a way that has been identified by the women's movement as "masculine." Michael Lerner is spearheading an attempt to bring a feminist critique of this masculine approach to politics. And many women can resonate to that, because of their experience with an alternate behavioral mode stressing interdependency, interrelatedness, connectedness—the so-called "affiliative mode."

What you really have here in the conflict between Michael Lerner and his critics is a clash of two values sets. I don't think that's easily resolvable. I think the obvious solution is to create some kind of synthesis.

I think what's most striking about the very hostile reception to the politics of meaning among many male politicians, and particularly to the language, "the ethos of love and caring," is sort of a visceral, reflexive repugnance that a lot of people feel to this concern. Some people go up the wall at the idea of "an ethos of love and caring," at the idea of an "empathy regime," or, as Todd called it, an atmosphere of cultural surveillance. People whose primary value is autonomy, who emphasize issues around individuality or separateness, feel that it is very threatening to have this sort of boundariless connectedness. A certain wing of feminism has analyzed this fear and argued that the male psyche is in some way dominated by the trauma of disidentification with the primary female caregiver. The enormous valuation that many men place on separateness and individualism and autonomy may represent a defense against feelings of dependency, connectedness, interrelatedness, and so forth.

Henderson: I very much agree with Mary and see nothing utopian or ungrounded in the politics of meaning. For example, we can teach empathy in schools. I like what you would try to achieve through an ethical impact report, but I think it might be more effective to focus on popularizing the notion of an alternative bottom line to the GNP, such as the one I've developed which I call the CFI: the Country Futures Indicators, which includes indicators of the state of health, education, environment, culture, and societal participation. This, I believe, is a better way to start this great debate than the ethical impact report, useful as that will be.

Peter Gabel: Calling the politics of meaning merely psychological tends to make it too much of an individual phenomenon, The politics of meaning is motivated by the recognition that human beings desire confirmation by others as the most fundamental aspect of their social identity and social existence. It's not possible to develop a successful politics that does not address the most fundamental aspect of what it means to be a social person. A child cannot thrive unless it is recognized by its mother and unless it experiences a sense of vitality or vibrancy in the interexperience with other human beings. When we live in a society or culture where that dimension of peoples' existence is not validated or confirmed, we see the kind of alienated nationalism that is operating so destructively in the world, whether it's in Bosnia or in Africa or in our own country.

People develop false, hyper-inflated forms of social identity that are based on an internal pain and a sense of collective rage at not being recognized by one another in their everyday lives both at work and in personal life. They seek that denied recognition and connection in various alienated communities, and they can engage in acts of extraordinary violence in order to preserve that alienated sense of identity that they partially achieve in those communities.

On the one hand there is an internal absence or emptiness within these false groups which leads them to be extremely rigid and extremely terrified at the thought of losing their sense of alienated, nationalistic identity. On the other hand, participation in these false groups blocks people from actually being open to feeling empathy for others outside the group—to take a contemporary context, for homeless people, for jobless people.

They can't care about others because they're suffering from what you might call a social defense mechanism which is affected by a grandiose, false, nationalistic identification on the one hand, a hardness on the other, and an internal lack of openness or empathy for other human beings. One of the arguments

that we have been making in TIKKUN is that past successful social movements that have appealed to economic issues like the importance of full employment have been able to motivate people most successfully when they are framed in terms of higher meaning. The New Deal, for example, addressed unemployment within the context of a moral frame and a sense that it was committed to compassion for others that transcended a narrowly economistic program. Successful movements have a metaphorical as well as a literal meaning, and it is often this larger framework that moves people to support economically driven political campaigns for social justice or social change.

Putting our programs in a meaning context also helps to make them evocative rather than flat, externally oriented, and policy driven. In other words, the need for people to be moved by a higher vision of purpose deserves as much respect as the need for them to eat, because it speaks to their fundamental social need for recognition and connectedness with other human beings.

Paul Berman: To me, the politics of meaning is an empty speech-writer's phrase. It is like Hubert Humphrey's silly old phrase, "the politics of joy." It has a nice ring, it seems to promise a great number of things: interconnectedness, empathy, love, spiritual superiority, all kinds of things. But when I look at what is actually proposed, all it advocates is a more or less standard liberal program that anybody who is a liberal, or on the liberal left, would be in favor of.

Plus a minuscule sprinkling of other items: teaching empathy in school, or issuing ethical impact reports. The tiny sprinkling of extra things are somewhat laughable after the great pomposity of the phrase itself. And the tiny things are rather troubling. I try to picture the ethical impact report. Who will issue it? Will it be the Ethical Impact Agency? I live in New York State. Will it be the New York State Assembly? What a thought!

There is a covertly nasty aspect to the politics of meaning that should be mentioned too. When the politics of meaning is presented, a kind of bogeyman is created against which the politics of meaning is offered as an alternative. The bogeyman is an empiricist, selfish, materialist, and anti-feminist notion, that is attributed to the liberal Left as a whole, or to liberalism as a whole. That's really deeply wrong. The whole history of liberalism and of the democraticLleft is quite contrary to that. Notions of fraternity, of a social sense have predominated. The very name socialism implies a completely different view than the one that is attributed to the democratic left.

The critics of the politics of meaning are routinely labeled "cynics," so if you don't agree with the politics of meaning you end up being called a cynic. The notion that there might be an idealism, a sense of solidarity that comes out of the democratic Left and out of the Left liberal tradition and out of the grandest traditions of American liberalism, this is all swept aside. And the meaning of this, finally, is that the politics of meaning comes down to a kind of a sect or a cult, which like all sects, prospers by conferring a sense of moral superiority on its own adepts. The sect has a slogan, it has leaders, it has followers, it has everything except a substantial doctrine. And as a sect it has already done a bit of harm. TIKKUN was founded in order to give voice to, to give shape to, the great liberal Left tradition in Jewish American life. And I think it did give voice to that for some time. But that's a very broad kind of opinion, the liberal Jewish Left, and the politics of meaning has taken that and shrunken it into the little raisin of its own sect, and so all TIKKUN's accomplishments prior to the advancement of this idea have been overshadowed.

Lerner: TIKKUN remains the only nationally distributed Jewish magazine explicitly identified with the liberal and progressive social change movements in the U.S. and the Israeli peace movement. We are the major voice still willing to take stands on the issue of settlements in the West Bank, and of a progressive Jewish agenda. It simply is not true that TIKKUN has become simply a vehicle for the politics of meaning. That's not what it is. It remains the major voice of liberal Jews on a wide variety of other issues. And people can be part of TIKKUN and not agree with the politics of meaning perspective of its editor. That's true of many of our writers and many of our board members.

Gabel: Why not think that, at least in part, the politics of meaning is trying to foreground fraternity, solidarity, and actually describe more what the dimensions of that aspect of peoples' strength is, that aspect of what political movements on the Left are serving and are speaking to? I agree with you about that. I am a socialist, and it is in significant part because of that fraternity and solidarity that I support the politics of meaning also.

Berman: If that's all it was, if it was an appeal to the spirit of solidarity, and the spirit of community, in addition to the respect for individual autonomy that has always been the great tradition of the liberal Left, that would be fine. But in fact it has all these claims to some sort of spiritual loftiness, to a notion of putting into the hands of the state all kinds of values which are in the end, I think, religious values, spiritual values, the sort of thing that is not the business either of the state or of a political movement.

Edsall: I think what the politics of meaning is trying to do is to get people on the liberal Left to look seriously at the costs as well as the benefits of autonomy regimes or an autonomy ethos.

Clearly there are benefits. But there are also costs to human aloneness, and costs to the valorization of the private self. Those are the costs that the liberal Left has refused to face.

We are seeing a dual motion now in late modernity—one motion toward separateness and individuation and autonomy, toward traditionally conceived self-government, self-determination, and self-rule. And we're seeing a backlash against that with a kind of hunger for connectedness and interrelatedness. If you look at the word "religion" it comes from the Latin *legare* which means "to bind" and it is that sense of being interconnected or bound or tied to one another that is the comfort of religion and also that is its constriction. The late modern dilemma is the way human beings are caught between the allures and the benefits of freedom and the costs of standing alone. I think that is the crisis of the late twentieth century.

That crisis inevitably gets played out in domestic electoral politics, particularly at the presidential level, insofar as presidential elections are referenda on moral, social, and cultural values. And that's why I believe that the politics of meaning will play a continuing role in our national debate, as a serious and important approach to these issues from a progressive perspective.

Berman: How could you possibly say that the liberal Left has refused to face those costs? The whole principle of the liberal Left over the last hundred and fifty or two hundred years has been to raise the idea both of autonomy and of solidarity, which translates into a million things—some appreciation at least for collectivist economy even if we don't want a totally collectivized economy, which we don't, a great appreciation and support for the principle of trade unions whose basic concept is solidarity and so forth. These are the deepest values of the Left.

Edsall: As long as the Left focused on economic issues, used a language and ideology that emphasized fraternity, connectedness, and interdependence, it was successful. But when the Left moved into a cultural realm and started to focus on personal autonomy and sexual freedom in ways that privileged the individual and seemed to ignore issues of caring and commitment to others, it began to alienate large numbers of voters. Emphasis moved from economic and political issues like suffrage and workplace protection, minimum wage or minimum hour laws, moved into the cultural realm and seemed to many Americans to be threatening to the family and to community.

It began to seem to many Americans that the Left was championing self-actualization and self-potentiation as the highest goals of life, and many Americans felt that in their real-world situation, that goal was in conflict with their obligations or duties to other human beings—their spouses, their children, their parents. So it is this part of the cultural agenda that Paul Berman leaves out of his description of the Left and that the politics of meaning does address.

Gitlin: I want to try to join a support of Paul's remarks with a response to Mary. If the terms "Right" and "Left" have any meaning, and I think they still do, I understand the Right to be essentially the party of the market and the party of the state.

The Left, to me, is the party of democracy and liberty. Now democracy and liberty are sometimes at odds and so be it. You could be fancy about it and say they're dialectically related or you could be not so fancy about it and say simply that these are the ideals that have spurred the people who have considered themselves to be the Left for several hundred years.

There's no argument: The Left can always stand a redoubled commitment to humanism, by which I don't mean disbelief in a supreme being, but decency and respect. No phrase as puffy as "the politics of meaning" was needed to remind the Left that what it stood for was mutuality, was the principle that no person was an island, and that institutions should be cultivated to further the people's flowering.

The Left did produce one great institution which was the embodiment of these principles, and it was unions. Unions provided a form of solidarity that cut across all kinds of lines: age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation. The union was the place where people did find meaning. Unions weren't simply economic units or dry, meaningless abstractions. Unions were places where love and connectedness happened in public life. The reason why there's ethnic war and moral one-upmanship where there should be solidarity is that the principle institution where people could overcome those differences or balance them out has been eviscerated. The biggest thing that could be done for the prospect of connection and politics is to contribute to the revival of a union movement.

If there is something specific about a "politics of meaning," and I really think the phrase is hideous, then it is intrusive and bureaucratic. It's a bureaucratic pseudo-solution to a real spiritual and political problem. Nothing could be more mechanical, nothing could be more (in the crudest sense) masculinist than the imposition of a rule for deriving ethical impacts. All conversations about politics are really conversations about ethical impact. The Right also cares about ethical



impacts, it just has different ideas of what matters.

Lerner: It's ironic that you should call for the revitalization of the labor movement, since the whole strategy of the politics of meaning emerged from the work that Peter and I and others did in the labor movement, and the ways that we discovered that its decline has been caused by its abandoning the "meaning" dimension and focusing its agenda more narrowly on an economistic and rights agenda. At the Institute for Labor and Mental Health we worked with literally thousands of working people, listening to working people tell their stories and hearing *their* explanations of why they were turned off by the liberals, the Democrats, and the labor movement. Paul and Todd might wish that these workers had experienced the labor movement, the Democratic party, or the liberal and Left forces in this country as the embodiment of humanistic values or the forward movement of the human spirit, but when you get out of academia and the rarified atmosphere of the *New Yorker* and the *Village Voice* and actually begin to speak to working people, as I did for ten years of solid work, you find that most of these people felt that the unions and the Left were totally insensitive to the human spirit and reframed every issue that touched on these larger ethical and spiritual concerns into a narrow economistic or political rights focus. Whatever problems working people faced in their work that couldn't be reframed in these terms was dismissed as "not really a political issue at all" but rather something that should be dealt with in their personal lives. As a result, though they were glad to have unions to defend their economic interests, just as they were glad they had car insurance, they felt no connection to their labor movement, no inclination to recruit others to it, no desire to participate in its meetings, and no sense of connection to the Left. Of course, the Left likes to blame all this on working people, assume that *they* are defective in some way for not responding to the various wonders of the movement, but the politics of meaning finds the fault not in the people for failing to join the Left, but in the Left for failing to speak to the needs of the people.

And the Left couldn't speak to the needs of these people, for the very reason that attempting to do so would elicit the kind of hostility being reflected by Gitlin and Berman, a dismissive attitude toward spiritual and psychological needs, a way of talking about them that reduces them to "airy" or politically irrelevant concerns. When you create a Left with that kind of atmosphere, don't be surprised if people don't feel safe to talk to you about what they most care about

politically, and suddenly they end up on the opposite end of the political spectrum, responding to right wingers who have the courtesy to take these needs seriously, even if their solutions are repulsive.

Nor are the psychological needs that workers expressed to us metaphysical and abstract. People missed a sense of solidarity with other workers and a sense that their work had some larger purpose or meaning or that in some way it served the common good. While reductionist psychologists thought that this stress was merely an internal emotional affair, we at the Institute recognized that the stress workers were experiencing was directly connected to the organization of the world of work and to the subordination of work to the private profit interests of the owners. But the issue here was not that workers felt that things were unfair, that they had a "right" to more money or power, but rather that they felt alienated and misused in the world of work, but blamed that on themselves because they imagined it to be their own fault that they had this kind of work, a reflection of their personal failure to be more successful in the competitive market, and because neither the left nor the unions helped them to understand the social dimensions of this alleged personal failure. These kind of supposedly psychological issues are in fact structural and political issues. But they were never addressed by the Left or by the unions, who dismissed these as merely psychological and having no legitimate place in the focus of the liberal agenda, except to the extent that they could be reduced to grievances about the contract or demands for higher wages. So what we found, in part, was that workers were hungering for more meaningful work and for a way of contributing to the common good, but that the Left and the unions were unable to assimilate this kind of thinking since these were "meaning" demands and not economic or individual rights demands.

Gitlin: These were traditional Left ideas on the socialist or guild-socialist left, articulated by G.D.H. Cole a hundred years ago. I don't "dismiss" spirit or psyche or consider them "airy": The dispute is over where, in what arena, people should tend to their spirits and psyches.

Lerner: But articulated within a narrow materialistic framework that could not really understand the deepest human needs, and so eventually displaced by more economistic demands.

One other point, responding to an earlier comment. The goal of politics of meaning is *not* to get the state to impose a particular value position on anyone. Rather, like feminism, the politics of meaning is an attempt to change the dominant paradigm of thought. Yes, like feminism, it will also have some consequences for state action, but that's not its primary aim.

Gitlin: How is what you advocate different from humanism and the Golden Rule of taking other people into account?

Gabel: It's an attempt to specify that kind of humanism in considerably more detail.

Drinan: We have to recognize that many people used to be with us who are no longer, and the politics of meaning analyzes that in terms of people's hunger not merely for jobs but for meaning. I agree with that. But what does politics of meaning tell us to do tomorrow morning?

Berman: Exactly. The program of the politics of meaning seems merely standard liberalism plus a few things that would have bad effect, like seemingly introducing religion into government.

I don't doubt that the people you were dealing with were deeply unhappy, or that society is full of people who are profoundly miserable and wretched psychologically and spiritually. These are deep problems, but they are not the problems of politics.

There is a reason why politics is one thing and religion or literature are other things. There are issues that one wants to see addressed by a poet or a novelist and other things one wants to see addressed by a state assemblyman and these are not the same things.

Gabel: I don't agree. The capacity to generate a social movement depends on our ability to bring together both levels.

There are practical dimensions to the politics of meaning. First, in the trade union movement we would want it to address the non-economic, non-market dimension of people's existence. Labor unions ought to develop cultural centers in which these other kinds of needs are the central focus, rather than the narrow focus on economistic needs. Building worker involvement with this kind of activity is a very immediate, practical consequence of a meaning-oriented focus that would strengthen the labor movement as an economic force and would decrease the perception of unions as merely insurance policies for wages that disconnect people from the solidaristic, collective dimension of union life. It's a political idea that doesn't involve the state.

Second, we should strengthen the impulse behind the national service movement, an impulse that is not primarily a jobs or economic program—it has the potential of getting people to enter a mode of giving to their own community. It has within it an ethical ideal of giving to others that is good *for that reason* and a Left extending this program would be a very concrete way of doing something consistent with the politics of

meaning focus.

Third, within contemporary politics there are aspects of things that politics of meaning will seek to foreground, for example, Clinton's emphasis on universal health care, and to provide an intellectual framework that Clinton does not always adequately provide, one that stresses that there is a "we" here and not just a series of "I"s that are looking out for themselves. The affirmation of that dimension of the health-care program is of a different order than the discussions of the different cost/benefit analyses of the different versions of the plan. If the Left had a politics of meaning, it would be drawn to this kind of political activity, seeing the struggle for this kind of way of thinking as a central task of the current period—and that is both immediate and practical.

Gitlin: Anybody who comes from the humanist Left would agree with all these things without the hoopla. We would agree with the universalist scope, the passion to recognize other people as other people. The politics of meaning mantra adds nothing new to that.

Lerner: Everybody on the Left might agree that there ought to be universal health care; but the *way* that one advocates for it might be different. Are we fighting this because we want to expand the panoply of agreed-upon rights, so that now there's a new individual right for health care; or are we fighting for this because we believe in a fundamental connectedness between human beings? What we say and how we say it will be different, so it's not mere hoopla to say that something is at stake in a politics of meaning perspective about how to do liberal politics.

Gitlin: It's the Right that talks about rights, the rights of doctors and the rights of insurance companies. What the Left says is that human beings owe each other a society which affords medical care for everyone. The Left *is already* the party of caring. To the Right, all there are is monads, while the Left says that young people owe the society more than a market for compact discs, and unions owe their members some kind of fellowship. Most people already believe in social obligation. The reason we don't yet have universal medical care is not that the liberal rhetoric is a rhetoric of rights, it's that the opposing lobbies are fierce. The error of the "politics of meaning" crusade is that by claiming to deliver something new it is at best distracting, at worst cant.

Edsall: You can attribute the Clinton victory in '92 to his ability to use psychologistic and spiritual language, a language of love and caring, without activating anxiety about being emasculated. When you use that language and it evokes anxieties about feminization and emasculation, as happened with Dukakis and McGovern, it's death for the Left. But when it is used in the way that Clinton did, connecting to the religious concerns of lower-income Southern Protestants, as well as to Catholic voters, for example, it is electorally powerful.

Berman: If the language of loving and caring is a speechwriter's language...if the language is used in this limited sense, I have no objection. The politics of meaning arouses an anxiety in me about where its limits will be....

Edsall: A kind of "surveillance anxiety," where will this stop, an autonomy anxiety..

Berman: I'm entirely sympathetic with Michael's emphasis that we should address the issues of national service or health care by appealing to the common good or social solidarity. If we need to be recalled back to our most fundamental values of the democratic Left tradition, then let us do that. The unions should be developing solidarity and move beyond wages and benefits, and I'm in agreement with Michael on this too.

But I don't want unions to address the soul. I don't want my own union to address my own soul. Insofar as the politics of meaning is just a reformulation of the eternal Left verities about the common good, it would be fine. But it has this other element that leaps off and flies skyward, into the realm of the soul and the spirit, into what is for some of us the region of religion. What we on the Left must remember is that our own principles can become tyrannical when they pretend to do more than they should do. The Left too often is seen as demanding conformity to all kinds of ethical codes, and this is its great weakness and danger.

Drinan: I have read everything that the politics of meaning people have written, and I simply do not see this tyrannical focus on a demand for conformity in their writing. They are saying that people have an underlying hunger for meaning that the Left has not addressed. The politics of meaning is responding to an emotional/intellectual/spiritual need that obviously lots of people have.

Lerner: In validating the need people have for loving connection and for a framework of meaning and purpose that transcends self-interest, we do not suggest that the state or the Left should impose one particular framework of meaning as the only correct answer, but only that it must take these needs seriously and support a variety of different responses to them.

But the politics of meaning also seeks to validate the need of human beings not only for a loving connection to each other, but a non-manipulative, non-dominating relationship to the universe. Not that we want to validate only one particular religious approach, but that we want to validate any that support us in recognizing

this non-dominating form of relationship to the spiritual and physical realities of the universe.

Berman: Here you go again bringing in the spirit and the universe!

Lerner: Yes. But there's no escaping this in politics, because politics is *already* involved in supporting a particular relationship to the universe, one that assumes that human beings have the right to dominate and control the physical world without regard to the well-being of the other species or the well-being of other parts of the universe. The political arena is not neutral—it has already taken a stance on what is the appropriate relationship. But there's another possible relationship to the universe, one of awe, wonder, and radical amazement, which can be an appropriate element in how we as a community (not just in our private lives, but in our allocation of public resources) should relate to the universe. We can do that without imposing any particular way of how to do that.

Berman: This is exactly what's wrong with the politics of meaning. You're talking about ecological reform, and I'm in agreement. But when you phrase this in terms of "awe" you are using phrases from religion, and you've managed to say that you are in favor of ecological reforms, and spirituality itself endorses *your* reforms, so if I'm not for your reforms, then I am condemned as spiritually lacking. There is, in short, a bit of spiritual correctness in the politics of meaning.

Lerner: How we orient toward the physical world is already in the political arena. When we think that the world is a resource to be used for our own particular pleasures, that is a particular moral/spiritual view, not the only possible view, the assumption of a particular way of organizing the categories of experience that comes out of empiricism.

Henderson: The revival of indigenous cultures around the world has reraised these issues, in alliance with sectors of the environmental movement, and placed these issues squarely in the political arena. The instrumental empiricist approach of the last three hundred years is profane.

Berman: "Profane!" Are we discussing an ecological issue or a spiritual issue?

Henderson: Indigenous people all over the world do not make this distinction between ecological and spiritual.

Berman: But those of us who are democrats do and must make that distinction.

Lerner: Todd and Paul are trying to define these issues out of politics, but they are already there. But when you get to a discussion of how to deal with public resources, this is a public question that can't be dealt with in the private religious sphere only.

Gitlin: I agree with people who live in rain forests and who don't want them torn down. But I may have somewhat different reasons than they. My sense of awe and wonder may not be *their* sense of awe and wonder. They shouldn't want me to wait for a conversion to their spiritual way of life before they can make a claim on me to do what I can to keep these stinking companies from tearing down the rain forest. Far be it from me to invalidate anybody's need to find spirit and transcendence in their lives. The question is what is required of me as a political being, as a citizen. It's far too steep a price to ask that people come to some kind of religious communion before they get done the work that the world requires of them.

Henderson: That's a straw man. What we are saying is that this will come into the political realm and will be debated along with all the other values, like the values supported by economism.

Berman: It's not a straw man. Look at the sexual issues. On gay rights or abortion, people reflecting about their awe and wonder at the universe or what they might owe to the Almighty arrive at very different views on these questions. How do we as a society deal with that? My answer: Keep the church/state separation very clearly in mind. That is the issue. If the kind of values we appeal to are secular values of democracy and secular humanism, fine, we should appeal to those values. But if we go beyond that and appeal to values that are essentially spiritual than there's reason for people to get nervous.

Henderson: *You* would have a greater comfort level if such values were banished from the political world, but you aren't going to have any such luck. They will be there.

Lerner: The pain that people have through the decline of families is directly connected to the form of social organization we have. They bring the spiritual and moral crisis of daily life into politics not out of an abstract desire to impose a particular religion, but because the actual form of social organization in this society generates an ethical and spiritual crisis for people. When those needs are not being addressed by the progressive forces, people turn to fascism, xenophobic nationalism, or Islamic or Christian fundamentalism, connecting them to worldviews that are extremely oppressive. Our task is to address what is legitimate in their needs and delink the answer to those needs from approaches that undermine individual freedoms or choice, that delink it from a metaphysics that prohibits abortions or that requires us to persecute some societally defined "Other" like gays and lesbians.

The politics of meaning is not empty, it is a direction of attention, part of which is the humanistic agenda

which you and Todd say has always been part of the Left (but which I can document has been wildly underplayed in the actual history of the Left), part of which concerns these meaning needs that are systematically being thwarted and which are already being addressed in the public sphere by the Right.

Edsall: The Christian Right, the Islamic Right, the fascist Right have all addressed these issues. Paul and Todd say that they don't want these issues in the political realm, but they already *are* in the political realm. So we need to explore the discomfort about dealing with them.

Berman: Sure, we must address these questions, but the *way* we must address these questions is to say, "these are not the correct questions for political life." Our answer to those who wish to impose religion on society is to say, "there's a place for religion, but not at City Hall." This is the single most important aspect of democracy: freedom of conscience.

From a Jewish point of view this is a clear issue. The United States is an overwhelmingly Christian population, and the temptation is always very strong to make the U.S. some kind of Christian state, or to take the symbols of Christianity and make them the symbols of society as a whole. The proper answer is not, "Oh, no, the symbols of Judaism or some other religion are the proper symbols of society as a whole," but instead to say, "religion has its place, but civic life has to be the sphere of secularism, and in City Hall we are not going to have religion."

Gabel: Some of us are saying that to build a successful political culture you must address the psychological and spiritual dimension, the whole person. Because the Left does not do this, it has not succeeded in building a political culture that people want to be part of. It has alienated people. If we wanted to build such a culture, we could learn something from the religious culture, for example, the value of breaking bread together or of certain kinds of communal celebrations. There are elements in the religious tradition that need to be incorporated without being totalitarian, and these can appeal to the resonance in people's hearts and not just to the arguments in people's minds.

Berman: The great values that you are yearning for have a place in secular democracy. Democracy itself, the notion of individual freedom, the ability to realize yourself, to live in a society of equals, this itself is a beautiful idea that has every element that can connect to our hearts and make us feel that it is something worth living or dying for, if need be. This has a grandeur to it. The value which we wish to respect is a value of individual autonomy.

Edsall: There is a way of thinking, which Paul has just articulated, which valorizes autonomy; and there is another values set which is more concerned with affiliation. In practice in contemporary America those two value orientations are in conflict, and Todd and Paul are articulately representing the autonomy pole of this tension. Hazel, Father Drinan, Peter, Michael, and I are more responsive to the solidaristic, participatory, communitarian, inter-relatedness set of values.

Berman: That does not describe what either Todd or I have been saying. We all agree that a good society must have both autonomy and solidarity. I think the issue is where to draw the line between social values and values that are fundamentally religious.

Edsall: Those religious traditions emphasize the solidaristic side of the spectrum.

Berman: But soon this slides over into a coercive approach imposing a particular view of how to approach political issues.

Edsall: But we, on the other hand, are victims of a coercive autonomy ethos which has led people to break out of committed relationships, and which abandons people to the ravages of selfishness. And that can be equally coercive.

Gitlin: I find myself wanting to back away from this polarity. There is a profound need for people to find inspiration in each other's presence. The civil rights movement was an archetype. But the meaning folks forget that the civil rights movement had to respect its limit. It went to church to get people to go out of church and into the streets, not to turn the streets into a church and not to require that people go to church.

Gabel: But it brought its music, its evocative appeals, into the streets.

Gitlin: It didn't require of the Jews that they go to church.

Lerner: The reason why Father Drinan talked of a straw man here is that there has never been any element in the program of the politics of meaning, spelled out in detail in TIKKUN, which even vaguely suggests that we are trying to get people to go to any particular church or synagogue, or to church or synagogue at all. It has only said that there are elements in the religious and spiritual consciousness that need to be brought into the public sphere.

Gitlin: Let's look at what Martin Luther King, Jr. did. He did not stand up in the church and say, "Follow me to Jesus Christ." He said, "We are in this together." He talked about God, which is fine with me, he talked about humanity in the language of civic religion. But he recognized the boundary. What Paul and I want is to hear the party of meaning recognize those boundaries rather than say that concern about autonomy or the

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rights of minorities simply represents masculine insecurity.

Gabel: When Martin Luther King, Jr. said "I have been to the mountaintop," or raised his voice in evocative ways, it was the evocativeness that resonated within us and within the courts, eventually changing the civic society's understanding of itself. The transcendent meaning that he carried as a political person in the streets has initially influenced the social and legal meaning of words like "equality," meanings which got turned to dust by the increasingly isolated nature of those movements after King's death.

We are not trying to tell people that they have to go to church, but to speak to the centrality of the evocative power of that movement and to show that there is a link between that and the music and the experience that people have in churches and the quality of marching—all the things that are so hard for us to talk to each other about because they are so little a part of our public life together.

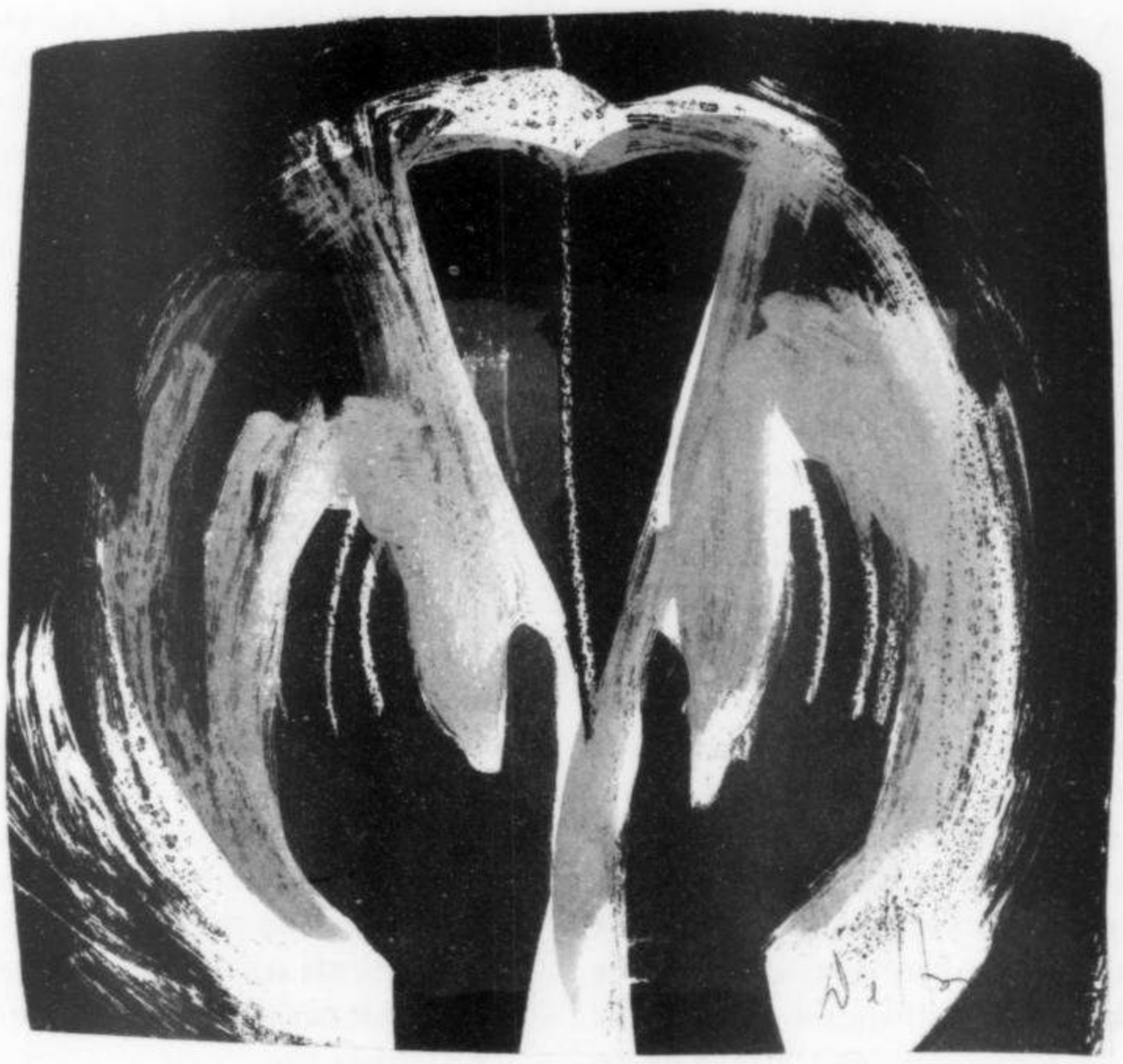
Gitlin: The call for a "politics of meaning" is the symptom of an absence. We are all for resonance, invigoration, or the music of the soul that makes people transcend themselves. If King were alive, maybe he would still know what the right language of the moment is. But you do not produce the spirit of the moment by writing a call for it. We are not hearing the call of the spirit, we are hearing a call for the call of the spirit.

Lerner: Which is precisely why we are not just doing that, but forming politics of meaning groups all around the country, organizing a national ethics summit, and creating small groups on the local level in which people can come together and discuss how a politics of meaning perspective might illuminate their personal or work lives, or how their own work or profession might reorganize itself if it had the politics of meaning shaping its own bottom line.

Drinan: It seems to me that we should welcome the politics of meaning. I talked at length about this whole problem in my last book, *Fractured Dream: America's Divisive Moral Choices*. I've lived through the Moral Majority and the religious fundamentalists and we can easily reject them, but I do think that the people are looking for a vision and a moral consensus, and the politics of meaning is providing an approach to those concerns. There's something missing on the Left, among the liberals, among the democratic forces, and anything that helps them understand that missing dimension in ethical and spiritual terms makes a real contribution and doesn't deserve the disdain I hear some people use in talking about the politics of meaning. □

Staying Fired Up
Antidotes for Activist Burnout

Letty Cottin Pogrebin



Like many progressives, I sometimes delude myself into thinking I know exactly what must be done and how to do it. There's a problem? There's a need? It's simple: We'll just call a meeting, invite the best people, build a coalition, get thinkers to think, writers to write, funders to fund, organizers to organize—and before you know it, the problem will be solved, the need will be fulfilled, and the world will be transformed.

But you and I know that it's not so simple. Inevitably something happens to complicate matters. Someone throws a monkey-wrench into the proceedings, there's a clash of egos or an ideological schism. The issues get muddied, the opposition gears up, our troops slow down, and *tikkun olam* is postponed another month or year or decade.

Emerson said we are what we think about all day. If that is true, I must be a schizophrenic, because my thoughts on this topic are always swinging like a pendulum between optimism and pessimism. One day I see the *building* blocks for a just and caring society, the next day I fixate on the *stumbling* blocks that obstruct the path to social change. Tonight, I want to focus on just one of those stumbling blocks, activist's battle-fatigue—otherwise known as burnout—because the diminution of our troops so often is what prevents us from moving forward.

Letty Cottin Pogrebin is a founding editor of Ms. *magazine and the author of seven books, most recently,* Deborah, Golda and Me: Being Female and Jewish in America *(Anchor paperback).*
This article is adapted from a speech presented at the TIKKUN *Conference, January 1994, at which the author received* TIKKUN*'s award for healing and repairing the world.*

Burnout is the reason people say no when we ask for their time, their name, their labor, or support. Burnout explains why some dip in and out of liberation movements and others have given up on collective action altogether, no longer believing change is possible. Before long one individual after another becomes exhausted or disillusioned, then one group after another shrinks and eventually disbands, and finally, what was a movement dissipates into separate people nursing their separate dreams and disappointments, their energy lost to the liberal community which is only as strong and vibrant as its rank and file.

Burnout comes up all the time in my reader mail and at my lectures. People suffering from political battle fatigue ask questions like, "After twenty-five years of struggle, how do you keep the passion in your politics? How do you protect against cynicism? What keeps you going?"

Or they say: "I feel deeply about—fill in the blank: Bosnia, gay and lesbian rights, Jewish education, fighting racism and anti-Semitism, welfare reform—but moving the issue is such a battle and every minor advance takes so long that I'm ready to give up. I don't have the strength for another round of protests. I'm tired of the infighting. I can't stand explaining the basics over and over again to every new listener. I'm sick of arguing with my friends. I'm tired of being the resident radical or the town trouble-maker. I feel stigmatized. I feel defeated. I feel alone."

People who say such things are neither gratuitous whiners nor martyrs looking for medals. They're just worn out by the hard work of social change. Maybe nobody warned them that the struggle would be this arduous, its fruits so meager, its time lines so protracted. Maybe they are strangers to the dynamics of political change, or the lessons of past social movements or the prospects for a politics of meaning. Maybe they're too impatient, or thin-skinned, or naive. Whatever the explanation, the problem they describe is real, painful, and often ignored by leftists who are too busy trying to move forward to notice how many have dropped out along the way.

In the last couple of decades, several brigades of seasoned activists have come and gone. Just look at the Jewish world. Whatever happened to the folks in Breira, the multitudes who identified with the New Jewish Agenda in its heyday, the crowds who turned up at past Jewish feminist conferences here and in Israel, the Jews who demonstrated against the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, or marched for organized labor, civil rights, women's equality, and gay rights? Where are the stalwart forces who first supported Women in Black, or The Shalom Center, or Jews for Racial and Economic Justice; the huge audiences that turned up to hear Amos Oz or Alice Shalvi, Avrum Burg or Shulamit Aloni, the thousands who at various times have affiliated with the pro-peace politics of American Jewish Congress, International Center for Peace in the Middle East, New Israel Fund, and Americans for Peace Now?

If all these progressives had banded together and stayed on board for the long haul, our movement would be unstoppable, and instead of dealing with an overflow crowd at Columbia University, TIKKUN would have had to hold this conference in Madison Square Garden.

So I put the problem to you bluntly: Why haven't we retained a critical mass of experienced social justice advocates? And how do we inoculate one another against losing heart and losing hope?

I have no easy answers, only those that have worked for me during a quarter of a century in the movements for women's equality, Jewish feminism, and Middle East peace.

As I see it, there are three major causes of burnout— backlash, backsliding, and backbiting.

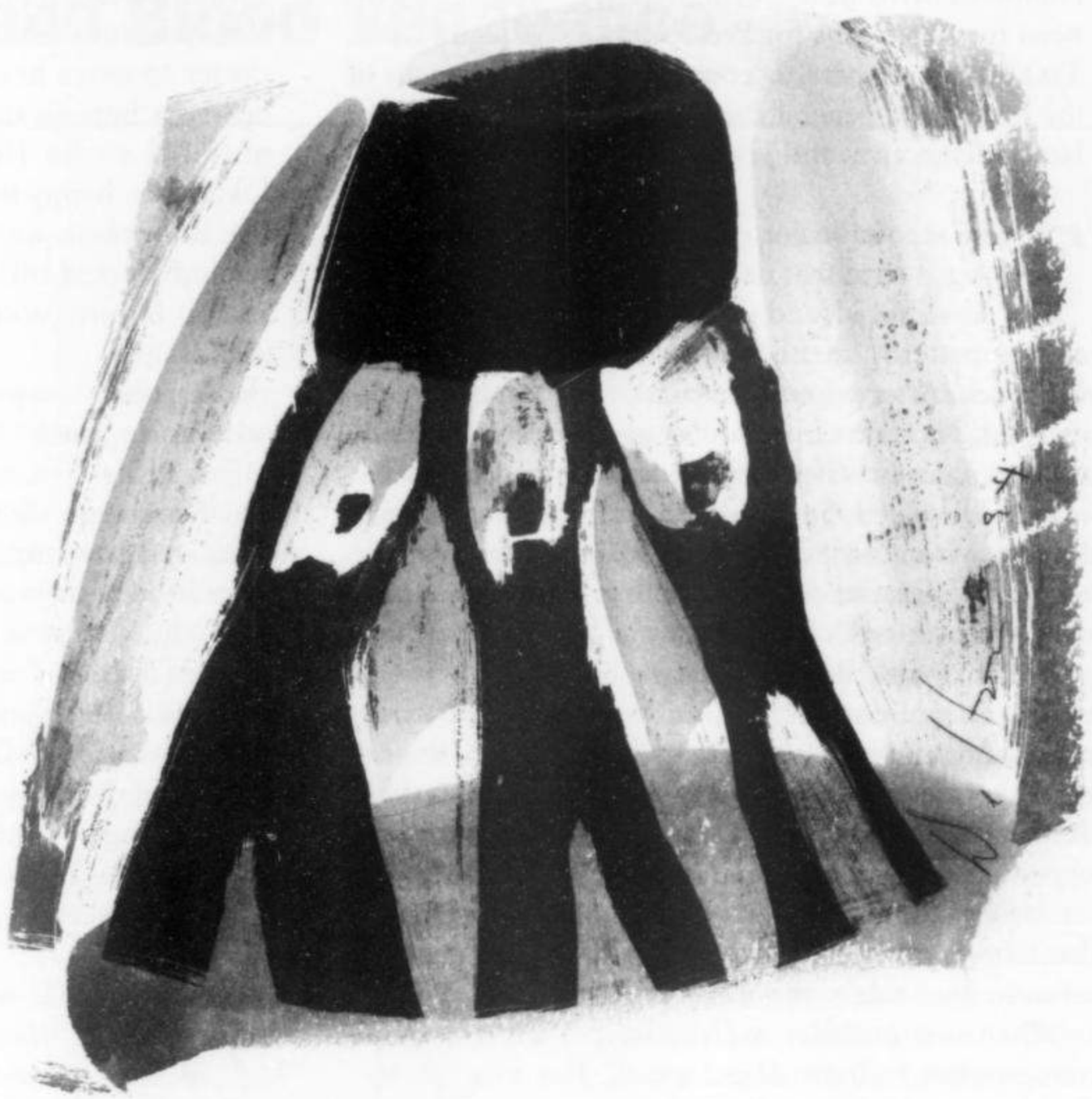
What we call backlash, of course, is the invidious, often invisible, countervailing response to any serious effort to challenge the status quo. Our first protection against the pain of backlash is to accept that a reaction from one's adversaries is inevitable. When you disturb the comforts and privileges of the dominant class, you cannot expect them to roll over and play dead. The next step is to decode the particular backlash and analyze how it is taking root and spreading, lest it seem to be a natural or evolutionary socio-political response rather than a well-choreographed crusade by special interests who can be neutralized or offset.

To understand the anatomy of a backlash, read Susan Faludi's book of the same name in which she deconstructs the campaigns of co-optation, defamation, and disinformation that characterized the 1980s war against American women. The book explains how political conservatives, corporate interests, media, and certain strata of American men mobilized against the progress made by women during the 1970s, specifically how these reactionary interests tried to vilify feminists and delegitimate the organized women's movement in order to silence our continuing challenge to male supremacy and patriarchal norms.

But even with an understanding of the machinations of backlash, I've found I need an

emotional shield, a way to trick my psyche into transmuting backlash reactions into nourishment for further struggle. I do this by taking the virulence of the opposition as a clear measure of the success of my cause. In other words, the harder they fight, the better we must be doing.

For example, since the handshake on the White House lawn on September 13, there has been a growing backlash against the peace process. Driven by their failure at the Israeli polls in 1992 and the success of the Oslo negotiations last summer, Israel's right-wing parties have grown desperate in their attempts to fan security fears, arouse settler violence, and play the treason card against those who support Yitzhak Rabin. Most recently, they have stooped so low as to suggest that future Israeli governments will not feel bound to honor agreements reached by the Rabin government.



As an Americans for Peace Now activist, I gauge the effectiveness of our sisters and brothers at Shalom Achshav in Israel by the extent of the hysteria of the Jewish Right.

Likewise, in the United States, I take the Jewish Right's attack as evidence of the perceived power of the Labor-Meretz-Peace Now position. This is not to say I welcome the recent escalation of belligerence in the American Jewish community. I'm not happy about the Times Square demonstration by World Committee for Israel at which fanatics called Rabin and Peres liars and traitors. I'm not happy about the hate mail, harassment, and defamation of peace advocates with invectives like "sell-out," "enemy of Israel," "murderer," even "Hitler." Such inflammatory speech *by* Jews *against* Jews raises the threshold of hostility and creates a climate in which extremists feel free to resort to violence, whether that means throwing eggs and tomatoes at Israeli Ambassador Itamar Rabinovitch, shouting death threats at Israeli Consul-General Colette Avital, planting bombs outside the offices of Americans for Peace Now and the New Israel Fund, or training American Jewish volunteers in guerrilla warfare, a bit of surrealism in everyday life that was documented on "60 Minutes" in a piece on the fringe group Kahane Chai.

Some leaders of the organized Jewish community responded to these developments with silence, others with ambiguous press releases that seemed motivated more by concern about respectable Jews being embarrassed in the eyes of non-Jews than outrage on behalf of those who were in danger or a desire to issue a clear and forceful condemnation of violence. I couldn't help but wonder what the mainstream leaders would have done had a bomb been left outside 110 East 59 Street where the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations have their offices.

Violence infuriates me but backlash feeds me like a tonic. It tells me that pro-peace views are proliferating and our groups have become a perceived threat to the reactionary forces. It tells me where the vulnerabilities are on the other side, and where our side has to strengthen its message and improve its outreach. It assures me of the importance of our continued support for Israel's effort to negotiate a

comprehensive peace with security, and the urgent need for Americans for Peace Now, New Israel Fund, TIKKUN, and others to educate a wider spectrum of the Jewish and general community on issues of peace, Israeli democracy, and Jewish Arab co-existence.

The second major cause of burnout is backsliding, a term that describes the nasty tendency of legal, social, and economic progress to follow a zig-zag pattern, lurching two steps forward and one step back. After years spent working to change a policy, pass a law, or win a case, some people can't stand the fact that victories never stay won, and problems never stay solved. Such people, well-meaning though they are, drop out of the struggle because they cannot accept the frustration of refighting the same battles over and over again in one lifetime.

Progress and backsliding are the Siamese twins of dialectical politics. We've never had one without the other, and unless we program cycles of regression and redeployment into our plans, we are doomed to despair. But then, the same is true in reverse for our opponents: Our victories are their defeats and cause for *their* mobilization and retrenchment, which is all the more reason why we cannot afford to sustain losses in our ranks.

When our enemies are in charge, we can fight retrogression with an all-out attack. But what do we do when we find ourselves backsliding or standing still and it is our friends who are at the helm?

A case in point: After the 1992 elections in the United States and Israel, American Jews who had spent twelve years in opposition to the right-wing governments of Reagan, Bush, Begin, Shamir and company, suddenly faced a new challenge: We were grateful for the new leadership in both countries but almost immediately, both Bill Clinton and Yitzhak Rabin fell short of our expectations.

Some purists threw up their hands and called it quits. Others of us believed this was our moment of truth. We helped elect this Democratic president, however moderate, and this Democratically controlled Congress; and our counterpart groups in Israel helped elect the Labor coalition. Now we must step up to the plate and play our proper role—as innovator, lobbyist, conscience, goad—for now, as opposed to *then*, there is a realistic possibility that our influence will be heeded. This is no time for purists to drop out. When we witness backsliding among our own, our challenge is to criticize policies with which we disagree without destroying the people who espouse them.

We are the cutting edge; we are most useful to society when we push the envelope at the left end of the spectrum, so there is more safe space for the center to move in our direction. While conventional centrists hop on the bandwagon of those in power, grateful to be liberated from Republicans or Likudniks, happy to get some relief from the likes of Pat Robertson or Geulah Cohen, it is our job to remind elected officials of their campaign promises and to impose accountability upon the politics of friendship.

I learned to expect the lacerations of backsliding early in the game. When I first discovered feminism and read its Ur-texts—its original position papers, which were printed on mimeograph machines and circulated hand to hand—I was bowled over by the sheer logic of their arguments. It was 1969 and I was a publishing executive at the time. If the radical "women's libbers" could convert me from a relatively comfortable token woman into a proselytizing feminist, surely this call for gender justice would be answered quickly by millions of others and the world would change...say by 1972, or 1975 at the latest. All we had to do, I thought, was spread the word so that it reaches every oppressed woman and reasonable man in America.

Of course, 1972 and 1975 came and went, and the years rolled on. We won a few big sex discrimination lawsuits, then lost the Equal Rights Amendment, won some seats in the Congress and state legislatures, then lost our first major party vice-presidential nominee. We won some sexual harassment cases, then lost the fight against Clarence Thomas. I can only be grateful that somewhere along the way, I realized that I would be in this struggle for the rest of my life.

Tikkun olam is not a finite job like fixing a leaky faucet. It is not something we finish once and for all, like reading a novel or giving birth. *Tikkun olam* is something we work at day after day, year after year, regardless of our win/loss record. We do it because we are human, and our purpose in this life is to perfect the social order, and yes, repair the world.

By repair, I mean help fix what is broken but also re-*pair* that which has been torn asunder; to heal divisions, to reconnect people to their environment, to their own spiritual selves, to each other. The work of re-pairing the world creates harmony where there was conflict, belonging where there was alienation. It re-unites the disparate, the opposite, the Other; it re-*pairs* male and female, body and soul, prayer and acts, humanity and God.

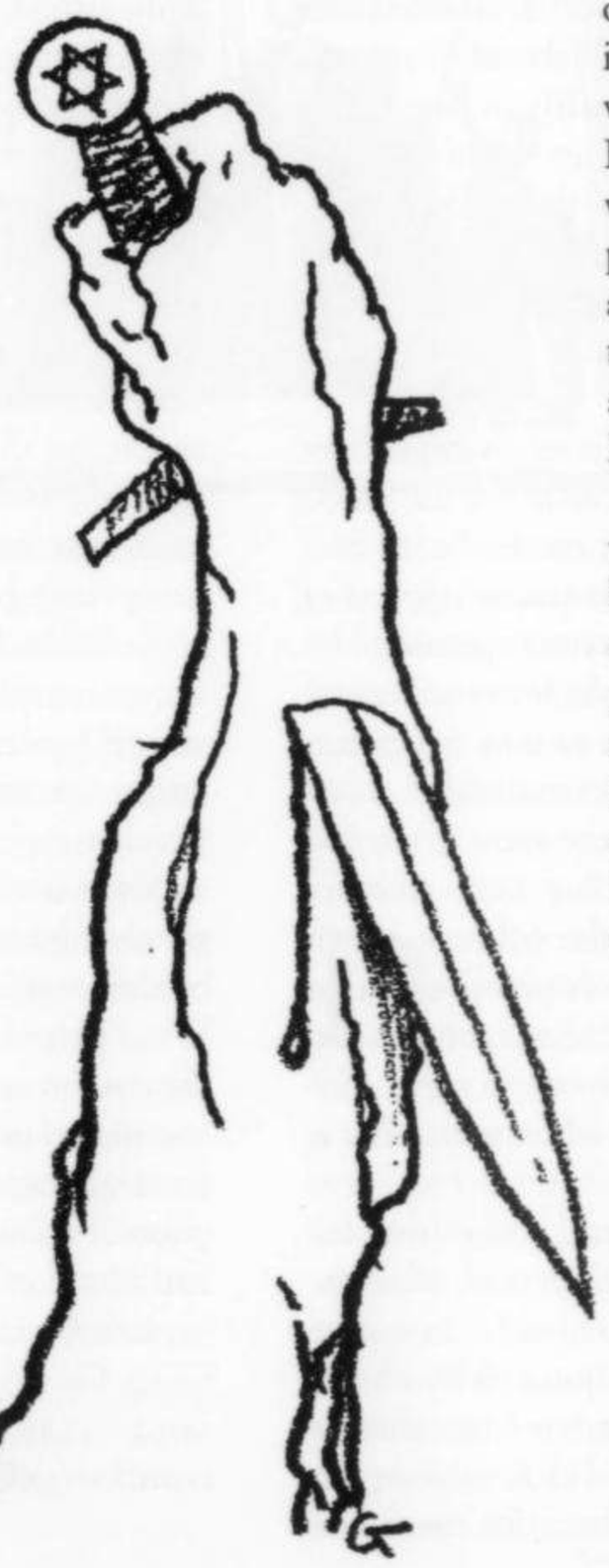
The endlessness of this work is the most predictable thing about it. Which is why we must make the

(Continued on p. 80)

Blood Libels and Blood Vengeance

David Biale

In Israel, historical controversies and their interpretations often form the stuff of contemporary popular debate. What would typically be confined to esoteric journals in the United States frequently spills into the pages of Israel's daily Hebrew papers, engaging a wide public outside of the academy. One of the most fascinating of these controversies emerged into public view in the summer of 1993, when an article published in *Zion*, the quarterly journal of the Israel Historical Association became just such a cause célèbre. The article, written by Yisrael Yuval, a scholar of medieval Jewish history, was provocatively titled "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations."



Yuval's article stems from a reexamination of the well-known Hebrew *Chronicles* of the First Crusade (1096). In these texts, we learn that the Jews of the Rhineland chose to kill their children and then commit suicide rather than either convert to Christianity or be killed. Although these Jews were celebrated as martyrs for the faith by centuries of tradition, as well as by Jewish historians, Yuval points out how unusual and shocking their behavior actually was. There were, of course, certain precedents for this version of *kiddush ha-shem* and other forms of martyrdom, but generally Jewish halakhic authorities regarded suicide, let alone infanticide, with the greatest hostility. It is particularly striking that later Orthodox Jews, including those in the time of the Holocaust, almost never imitated these Ashkenazic Jews of the Middle Ages.

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What could have spurred these Jews to take such an extreme action, a medieval equivalent of the mass suicide by the members of the People's Temple in Jonestown? Yuval shows that the medieval Rhineland Jews believed that the blood of the martyrs would reach the divine throne, where it would stain God's coat and act as a magical agent to cause Him to avenge his slaughtered children. The *Sefer Hasidim*, an early thirteenth-century pietistic text, decrees that the owner of a house in which someone has been martyred and blood has been spilled on the wall should not plaster over the blood: "As long as the blood is not covered, God will take vengeance and when it is covered, He will not hurry to avenge." God's vengeance was in turn understood as part of an eschatological scheme according to which the slaughter of the Jews' Christian enemies would be a prelude to the coming of the Messiah.

This theology was responsible, writes Yuval, for the extraordinary behavior of the Ashkenazic Jews during the Crusader pogroms, prompting some Jews to undertake self-martyrdom. The Jewish chroniclers portrayed these acts of mass suicide as ritual sacrifices that would bring about God's vengeance. Thus wrote one of the chroniclers:

> He who spoke and the world came into being—he will avenge the blood of his servants that has been spilled...May the blood of his pious ones serve for us as merit and atonement for succeeding generations and for all our descendants forever like the binding of our ancestor Isaac, when our ancestor Abraham bound him on the altar. These pious ones... said:

"Let us spill our blood on the ground like... water..." May their virtue and their saintliness and their piety and their purity and their sacrifice serve us as an intercessor and as an advocate before the Almighty. May he deliver us from this exile under wicked Edom speedily in our days. May our true messiah arrive.

The motif of an act of self-sacrifice that serves as an atonement for all generations was something unprecedented in Jewish sources and suggests the influence of the Christian idea of Jesus's death as a sacrifice that atoned for the sins of all humanity.

Yuval argues that the Christians knew about the Jews' suicidal acts and were particularly shocked at the way Jews killed their children. From this he speculates that the blood libel (the belief that Jews kill Christian children in order to make ritual use of their blood) may well have had its origins in the belief that the Jews were willing to kill children—Jewish or Christian—in order to bring about their redemption. In fact, the first blood libel (or, more precisely, ritual murder) accusation was made in the 1140s, shortly after the Hebrew *Chronicles* of the First Crusade were probably written. By connecting the Crusader *Chronicles* with the first appearance of ritual murder libels in the Middle Ages, Yuval claims to have solved one of the great mysteries in the history of this gruesome mythology: Why did these libels appear when and where they did?

The suggestion that the Jews themselves might have been responsible, even if indirectly, for the blood libel fell like a clap of thunder on the Israeli academic community. With the "understatement" typical of cultural disputes in Israel, Yuval's opponents accused him of anti-Semitism and attempted to block his university promotion. Yet, beyond the question of who is right in this debate, the sociology of the disputation itself is fascinating. In general, Yuval's opponents came from the older generation of academics, including some who are Holocaust survivors. These intellectuals could not accept Yuval's implicit assumption that Jewish practices might have some influence, no matter how indirect, on the formation of anti-Semitism. According to their view, anti-Semitism is a set of irrational, paranoid fantasies that is utterly disconnected from the Jews.

Yuval's supporters, on the other hand, came from his own generation of Israelis—those who grew up after the creation of the State of Israel and who have far less stake in what they might regard as a Diaspora debate over anti-Semitism. These Israelis find it hard to affirm a traditional definition of martyrdom which might even involve the killing of one's own children; for them, the Holocaust has caused a radical questioning of traditional Jewish behavior. Moreover, the willingness of these younger intellectuals to consider such a controversial thesis as Yuval's demonstrates Gershom Scholem's famous claim that Zionism would free Jewish historians from the need for any apologetics. Whether or not one agrees with Yuval, his argument implicitly projects the Zionist desire to take control of Jewish fate into the past: Jews, he intimates, always bore some responsibility for what happened to them and were never only passive victims of the Gentiles.

Beyond the hidden ideological agendas behind the Yuval controversy, there is much in his thesis that demands our attention. Yuval has demonstrated convincingly that the medieval Ashkenazic Jews, whom scholars had previously considered devoid of a strong messianic tendency in contrast to their counterparts in Spain, were in fact driven by a radical eschatology. Moreover, far from passively accepting their fate at the hands of the Crusaders, their suicidal actions were born of a powerful desire for vengeance: These Jews were not only armed, but in many cases used their arms against their Gentile enemies, only turning them on themselves when all hope was lost. They were thus very different from the prevalent, mythical image of anemic yeshiva students cowering in the face of pogromists.

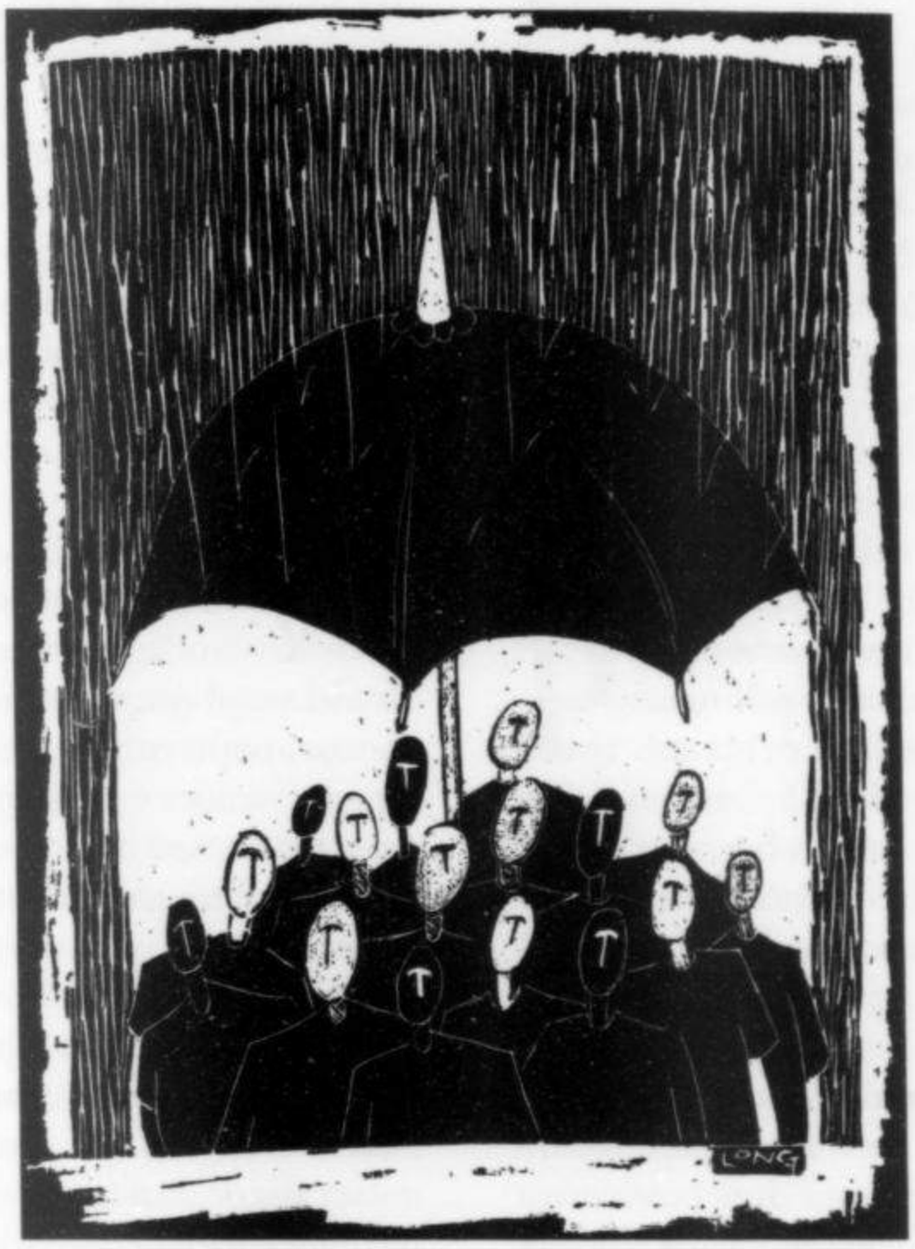
In the Hebrew *Chronicles* of the Crusades (available in several English editions), the vituperative language used against the Jews' enemies is striking. The authors revile Jesus as the "bastard son of a menstruous woman" (meaning that Mary not only conceived Jesus out of wedlock, but did so during her menstrual period, which made her act doubly forbidden). The texts also revel in grisly descriptions of the death of the martyrs, portraying their bloody deaths in gruesome detail. Yuval's reconstruction of the Ashkenazic theology of blood vengeance explains why these texts are constructed around an aesthetic of violence that seems so foreign to what we typically think of as Jewish tradition.

Yet it is too one-dimensional to view this theology as purely a Jewish invention. The Ashkenazic Jews were part of the larger medieval universe of discourse, in which blood played a central role as an agent of redemption. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, increasing emphasis was placed on the eucharist in Christian theology and the feast of *corpus christi* (the body of Christ) became a popular vehicle for celebrating the mystery of the body and blood of Christ. The suffering of Jesus, depicted in explicit Christian iconography, increasingly became the focus for popular piety, and Christians regarded the saints' martyrdom as a way of identifying with the crucified god. At the same time, the very theology of the

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Making a Meaningful Labor Movement

Dan Cornfield



Late this spring, in its much-anticipated report on labor-management cooperation and productivity, the Commission on the Future of Worker-Management Relations—known as the Dunlop Commission—called for an overhaul of the legal framework of U.S. employment relations. Proclaiming a participatory high-performance economy as its goal, the presidential commission declared in its preliminary June 1994 report that "employee participation, rights freely to exercise or refrain from [union] representation, and dispute resolution are a seamless whole for the future of worker-management relations." (The commission's full recommendations are due to appear by the end of the year). Labor unions are central to the participatory, high-performance economy envisioned by the Dunlop Commission. According to the commission's preliminary report, a trusting and open work environment "where a union is present" maximizes the productive value of participatory employment practices, such as self-managed teams and quality circles. The commission found, however, that anachronistic labor laws allow corporations to trample on workers who dare to exercise their rights to unionize and promote an adversarial rather than cooperative labor-management relationship.

Despite the laudable objectives of the Dunlop Commission's initial recommendations, overhauling the legal framework of employment falls short of the ultimate goals of labor reform because it fails to make the labor movement meaningful to workers. Even if employers were restrained from violating worker rights, most workers would be disinclined to unionize because of their disdain for unions and their perception that organized labor is irrelevant to their needs. White-collar workers in the large corporations that now drive the U.S. economy are especially disdainful of unions, which they consider to be corrupt, destructive and, at best, suitable only for blue-collar

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workers who labor in grueling work environments. Thus, the future vitality of the U.S. labor movement hinges upon labor's ability to move into new roles that serve the needs of the late-twentieth-century work force, increasingly composed of large-corporate workers who labor in participatory, professionalized, post-industrial workplaces.

Since the turn of the century, the significance of unions in the lives of workers has diminished dramatically. Writing in 1921 during the heyday of craft unionism and the American Federation of Labor, labor analyst Frank Tannenbaum extolled the broad meaning of unions for workers:

> The labor movement has a profound spiritual influence upon the workers...It has that influence, primarily, because it is a struggle that compels unity, solidarity, suffering, trust, and good fellowship. It forces the workers to achieve self-determination by acquiring a sense of group consciousness, self-reliance, and willingness to assert one's self in the interests of the group...[T]he union...becomes a...means for expressing and satisfying three characteristic values, the material, the social and the spiritual...Friendship, love and family are closely bound up with the activities of the union.

Similarly, labor historian David Montgomery claims that organized craft workers in the late nineteenth century exercised substantial control over production stemming from their "functional autonomy on the job, from the group ethical code that they developed around their work relations, and from the organizations they created for themselves in order to protect their interests and values."

The decline of union meaning becomes apparent when these historical sketches are contrasted with more recent ethnographic accounts. By 1960, psychologist Theodore Purcell could write of unionized workers' prevalent, "dual allegiance" to union and employer. In the early 1980s, sociologist David Halle reported that although unionized workers feel that "unions are necessary because they provide security and protection," many also feel that unions are corrupt, make excessive demands that lead to plant shutdowns, stifle upward career mobility, and protect the jobs of incompetent workers.

Labor movement revitalization depends on the meaningfulness of the movement to workers. This is not to deny the important place of progressive labor-law reform and international trade initiatives in a broad strategy for revitalizing organized labor. As it stands, however, only about one-third of non-union workers favor the unionization of their workplaces. It is the non-union, socio-economically disadvantaged workers in the economic periphery—low-wage workers, ethnic-racial minorities, and women—who are the most pro-union and would benefit from traditional union advocacy on their behalf. For the sizable group of non-union, higher-wage, large-corporate workers, in contrast, the labor movement is often perceived to be corrupt and untrustworthy, as well as antithetical to their interests in ascending individualistically a corporate career ladder. Furthermore, non-union large-corporate workers often harbor an ideology of professionalism which they feel is incompatible with an ideology of adversarial trade unionism.

What should unions do to become meaningful to the post-industrial, large-corporate worker? Any union innovation must be able to withstand corporate preemptive strikes. Throughout the twentieth century, non-union corporations have preempted unions by aggressively taking over functions once performed by unions themselves or which unions achieved through collective bargaining with other employers.

The meaningful craft union loomed large in workers' lives in the early years of this century because it performed social welfare and labor-supply functions that were vital to workers' livelihoods. Union-controlled and union-financed unemployment insurance and retirement programs and burial funds, apprenticeship programs, and hiring halls were lifelines for workers and their families. These union functions were absorbed by the state and corporation as a consequence of the Great Depression of the 1930s, which wiped out many union social welfare programs. The dramatic expansion of the New Deal national welfare state and the advent of a post-World War II economy dominated by large, bureaucratic corporations continued this diminution of the unions' social welfare and labor-supply roles. Since the late 1940s, large non-union corporations have preempted unions by mimicking, if not surpassing, the wage scales and fringe benefits which unions achieved through collective bargaining. Moreover, climbing a corporate career ladder as an organization man or woman has replaced entrepreneurialism as the chief means of upward social mobility in the contemporary corporate economy.

Stripped of their vital functions, unions today assume the narrower role of "advocate," rather than the broader "provider" role they once performed in

Tannenbaum's era. The narrowing of the union role over the twentieth century also has made unions less meaningful to large-corporate workers. Consequently, unions have been virtually unable to make membership inroads in the large corporate sector of the economy, contributing to union decline.

Michael Lerner's call for "compassionate unions" in his book, *Surplus Powerlessness*, addresses the question of what unions ought to do to make themselves meaningful to contemporary workers. He urges unions to respond to the work-family nexus of psychological strains and stresses that workers commonly experience. There is substantial evidence, Lerner argues, that union-conducted "Occupational Stress and Family Support Groups"—therapeutic small-group sessions for addressing worker psychological problems and empowering workers—can effectively address spiritual and emotional issues that are important in workers' lives. Compassionate unionism has the advantage of dealing with the real problems on workers' agendas, rather than those on the corporate agenda of improving productivity. Moreover, union-sponsored worker support groups are less likely to result in invasions of workers' privacy, or in coercive responses than are corporate-sponsored support groups, which often make employment conditional on successful recovery from a counseling, therapeutic, or rehabilitation program. Compassionate unionism, however, runs the risk of corporate preemption. Already, the provision of family-friendly human-resource policies and programs has become de rigueur among enlightened corporate managements. Indeed, The *Wall Street Journal*, no apologist for labor, recently ran a special supplement on family-friendly human-resource management which hailed its business and humanistic advantages, chastised corporate managements for their insensitivity to work-family problems, and urged more corporations to develop family-friendly programs.

To become more meaningful to large-corporate workers, unions must address their professionalism and careerism: their desire to engage in self-supervised, self-directed work, high performance of which generates promotions. This is a formidable task for unions, one that continues to stymie labor despite the fact that the problem has existed for decades. In his 1953 work, *White Collar*, sociologist C. Wright Mills, at the dawn of the post-industrial era, attributed white-collar anti-unionism to the "technological and educational similarity of white-collar work to the work of the boss; the physical nearness to him; the prestige borrowed from him; the rejection of wage-worker types of organizations for prestige reasons; the greater privileges and securities; the hope of ascent—all these...predispose the white-collar employee to identify with the boss." As a result of their anti-unionism, white-collar workers, among the fastest growing employment sectors, have not been attracted to traditional union advocacy. They remain the unorganized bastion of the labor force.

Compassionate unionism has the advantage of dealing with the real problems on workers' agendas, rather than those on the corporate agenda of improving productivity.

Profound changes in corporate workplace governance have occurred since the early twentieth century. After World War I—almost immediately after Frederick Winslow Taylor and his efficiency experts took out their stop-watches to discover, codify, and vest in management the knowledge of the one best way to perform each of hundreds of production tasks—participatory management models were proffered to counter Taylorism's autocratic, sweatshop ways. Elton Mayo's "human relations management" is the chief ancestor of contemporary participatory workplace governance models. Human relations management called on corporate managements to harness workers' productive potential by fashioning quasi-autonomous work groups that would furnish workers with the "big picture" of production, allow them to solve their existential problems of anomie in the rapidly changing, emerging industrial social order, and thereby become loyal to and productive for the corporation. After decades of research that demonstrates the productivity gains achieved through participatory management, many large-corporate factories and offices have adopted participatory governance schemes. Psychologist J. Richard Hackman's model of "self-management" offers a way for unions to involve themselves in participatory workplace governance and thereby appeal to worker professionalism. Self-management, according to Hackman, exists in varying degrees, the most autonomous consisting of a work unit that self-executes, self-monitors, self-designs, and self-directs. Hackman argues that several facilitating conditions must exist in the larger organizational context for the self-managed work unit to maximize its effectiveness: a reward system which recognizes and rewards unit performance; consultation which provides

the unit with technical knowledge; coaching the unit to solve interpersonal problems and implementing appropriate micro-organizational group processes; and, a supply of adequate material resources.

Through collective bargaining, unions can institutionalize their participation in each of these facilitating conditions of self-management. For example, they could bargain for new contract language on rewarding unit performance; maintain a pool of consultants and coaches for helping self-managed work units solve their technical, interpersonal, and organizational problems; and bargain and pressure management to ensure adequacy in the supply of material resources for the work unit.

By collaborating with self-managed work groups, unions will transform their role as "advocate" into a broader one that includes "facilitator" of self-management. In the bureaucratic setting of the postindustrial corporation, such unions could enable workers to have control of production reminiscent of late nineteenth-century skilled craft workers.

The facilitating union would function especially well for workers in large-corporate workplaces in which corporate managements have already installed participatory governance schemes. (Such schemes have not diffused widely in the low-wage, economic periphery of small businesses that retain traditional workplace hierarchies.) Frequent interaction between a local union and a work team on issues that are vital to workers who feel professionalism and careerism intensely would go a long way toward casting unions in a new light for such segments of the workforce as autonomous teams of high-skill production and machine-maintenance workers in heavily capitalized manufacturers and non-supervisory white-collar workers charged with creative work responsibilities.

The facilitating union runs little risk of corporate preemption. The inherently hierarchical nature of corporations prevents management from providing professional workers with the autonomy they seek for solving their own production problems. Placed in this relatively powerless position, work groups may not want to air their own dirty, interpersonal-and-organizational laundry in front of the boss as they attempt to improve their performance. The facilitating union would provide workers with the safe space they need to manage their work.

Even "post-hierarchical," participatory U.S. corporations, are likely to vigorously resist the extension of unions' role into the realm of production decision-making as an infringement on "management rights." American unions might look to the Swedish labor movement for inspiration in this struggle. In Sweden, unions participate in "project groups," which exist in almost 90 percent of the workplaces. Established through union-management negotiations, project groups usually consist of a small number of union and management representatives. Their typical functions include selecting new technologies, calculating financial and employment costs of technological change, reorganizing work, and devising training programs. The Swedish labor movement is decidedly stronger than its American counterpart, but U.S. unions can begin their transformation by bargaining for innovations in those participatory corporations that have already been organized. Bargaining innovations would constitute part of the performance track-record unions would deploy subsequently in their outreach to non-union large-corporate workers.

Long on the wane, organized labor will strengthen itself by expanding its role to facilitate worker self-management. It would be a terrible loss to organized labor and American workers alike if unions fail to accommodate themselves to the transformations of the work world and the concomitant changes in workers' lives in order to reclaim their dignifying and democratizing influence in the workplace and society. □

COURAGE, CHAIRMAN ARAFAT

(The following is excerpted from a letter sent by The Givat Haviva Educational Foundation to Chairman Arafat.)

.....The signing of the May 4th peace accord has rightly won the admiration of a world weary of bloodshed and strife. And yet, in your own words, it is merely "a beginning."

A lasting peace will surely hinge on economic factors that contribute to Palestinians' quality of life. But there is another important dimension – the relationship between our peoples. Will Palestinian self-rule be characterized by still more bloodletting between Arabs and Jews, or will a softer, more humane vision prevail?

We recognize, as do the extremists, the haters, the killers on both sides, that this is a critical, historical moment. And so it is not surprising when the terrorists, Jew and Arab, intensify their obscene attacks in a desperate effort to influence the path of history to their own dark vision.

Pragmatically, we understand the political difficulty that you face in forcefully condemning the recent terrorist attacks carried out by Hamas against innocent Jewish life. And yet, in the logic of the moment, your wavering, ambivalent responses give strength to extremists on both sides.

If there is to be peace, a real peace, it will be incumbent upon you, Chairman Arafat, to rise to greatness, to raise your voice in horror and outrage against Arab terrorism, to match in word and deed the fervor of Prime Minister Rabin and President Weizman in their condemnation of Jewish terrorism.

Anything less compromises you in the world's eyes and ultimately destroys the dream of true peace that now lies within our grasp.

GIVAT HAVIVA, an oasis of sanity and hope, has been dedicated to building understanding and peace between Jews and Arabs since 1949. Our award-winning educational programs have been acclaimed both in Israel and around the world. Our work has become a vital component in the developing peace process in the Middle East.

Your help is needed. Please contact us for more information.
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Who is Markus Wolf?

Jeffrey Herf and Markus Wolf debate

The following exchange between Jeffrey Herf and Markus Wolf sheds light on two important issues: First, East Germany's repression in the early 1950s of Jewish communists and communists who stressed solidarity with the survivors of the Holocaust and with the state of Israel; and second, the subsequent course of East German foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict. Both phenomena have received insufficient attention in the debates about Germany and its many-sided struggle with the past. Markus Wolf was the director of the foreign intelligence branch of East Germany's Ministry of State Security, or the Stasi, as it was known. He was the model for John Le Carre's The Spy Who Came in From the Cold.

After the fall of East Germany in 1989, he was arrested and charged with treason. Wolf's father, Friedrich Wolf, was an important communist intellectual in the Weimar Republic and a highly regarded playwright. During World War II he waited out the war in the Soviet Union. Markus grew up there and went to East Germany as a young man to help build the first (and last) communist state on German soil. He was intimately involved with the making of foreign policy in East Germany, in particular in regard to spy activities in West Germany.

Although the Middle East was not his political specialty, he was certainly aware of the direction that East German foreign policy was taking as Israel and its Arab neighbors clashed diplomatically and militarily after 1948. In every vote of the United Nations, the GDR (German Democratic Republic) sided with those states who opposed Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. The GDR also openly supported Iraq, Syria, and Egypt in their fight against Israel.

Although Wolf insists that the contacts between the Stasi foreign intelligence service and the PLO were minimal and were intended to moderate PLO terrorism, he does admit that there were contacts between the East German intelligence services and the Palestinian secret services in regard to training Palestinians for the "armed struggle." Wolf's comments make it clear that the East Germans were aware that helping train the Palestinians would make them accomplices to terrorist attacks on Israel, as well as bombings and hijackings in other parts of the world.

The issue that Herf and Wolf debate is to what extent the East German commitment to the political and military struggle of the Palestinians stood in contradiction to the proclaimed stance of East Germany as an anti-fascist state that kept alive the memory of the Holocaust and fought to serve justice to the surviving Jews of the world. In the following exchange, these and other important issues are presented from two very different perspectives, one the historical actor who had to struggle with difficult choices from a particular standpoint, the other a historian who seeks to understand the intersection of politics and the Jewish question in both German states after 1945.

I leave it to the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

—Elliot Neaman

Elliot Neaman is assistant professor of history at the University of San Francisco.

A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing?

Jeffrey Herf

In the course of writing a history of politics and memory in the two Germanies after 1945, I have been working in the archives of the East German Communist or Socialist Unity Party, using materials from the Stasi archives dealing with secret political trials, and reading the public record. So it was with great interest that I read Tikkun's interview with Markus Wolf (January/February 1994.) I was especially struck that the editors were impressed with his "absolute refusal to repudiate socialist ideas." I was also impressed with his ability to pull the wool over your eyes and make you look very foolish. He probably recognized your interviewer as an easy mark.

It may be that Markus Wolf joined the Stasi to hunt down former Nazis. In fact, as Wolf must know, in the 1950s, the Stasi spent much of its time hunting "counterrevolutionary" and "extremely right-wing" groups of Social Democrats, many of whom had

entered the Socialist Unity Party in the late 1940s with the illusion that it was going to build a German *Democratic* Republic. Nothing was more devastating in postwar East Germany than to be labeled a "Nazi" or a "fascist," and many democratic socialist opponents of the East German regime were dispatched to prison in just this way.

For a journal devoted to Jewish concerns, your interviewers display a distressing lack of knowledge of the anti-Semitic purges within East Germany in the 1950s, and the suppression of communists, Jews and non-Jews, who thought East Germany should be a friend to Israel and extend its emotional and financial support to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. That Wolf tells you that "in retrospect" he can now see that anti-Semitism did exist in the Communist Party is grotesque. Government-encouraged anti-Semitism was apparent to Jews and non-Jews, at the latest, in the winter of 1952-1953. The denunciation and arrest of Paul Merker, a veteran communist and non-Jewish leading member of the SED Central Committee who spoke out on behalf of Jewish concerns, *was a matter of public record at that time*. Wolf did not mention the SED's campaign against Merker as an American, Zionist, and international Jewish agent that was featured in the pages of *Neues Deutschland*, or the flight of leading Jewish communists from the DDR in early 1953, especially Leo Zuckermann, the head of the office of East German President Wilhelm Pieck, and Julius Meyer, the leader of the Jewish community in East Berlin.

This former Stasi general also did not mention the Stasi interrogations of Merker, and the secret political trial waged against him in the East German Supreme Court in March of 1955 which resulted in a sentence for eight more years in prison on charges of being an agent of the Americans, the Israelis, and international Jewish organizations. Does Wolf think Stasi interrogators were fighting Nazism when in March 1953 they asked Merker, a life-long communist, if he "was now or had been a member of any Jewish or Zionist organizations" and when they denounced him as the "king of the Jews" and an agent of "Zionist monopoly capitalists" because during World War II he had written in support of reparations payments to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust?

By the time of Merker's arrest, and Zuckermann and Meyer's flight in January 1953, it was clear to all of the leading Jewish communists in East Germany, including presumably Markus Wolf, that the entry ticket for Jews to the political elite in the DDR was to keep your mouth shut about the Holocaust, never say a good word about Israel, and to lead in the campaign of denouncing Nazis *in West Germany*. How could the editors of a Jewish magazine sympathetic to socialist ideas be so abysmally ignorant of the East German suppression of communists, Jews and non-Jews, who spoke up for Jewish interests?

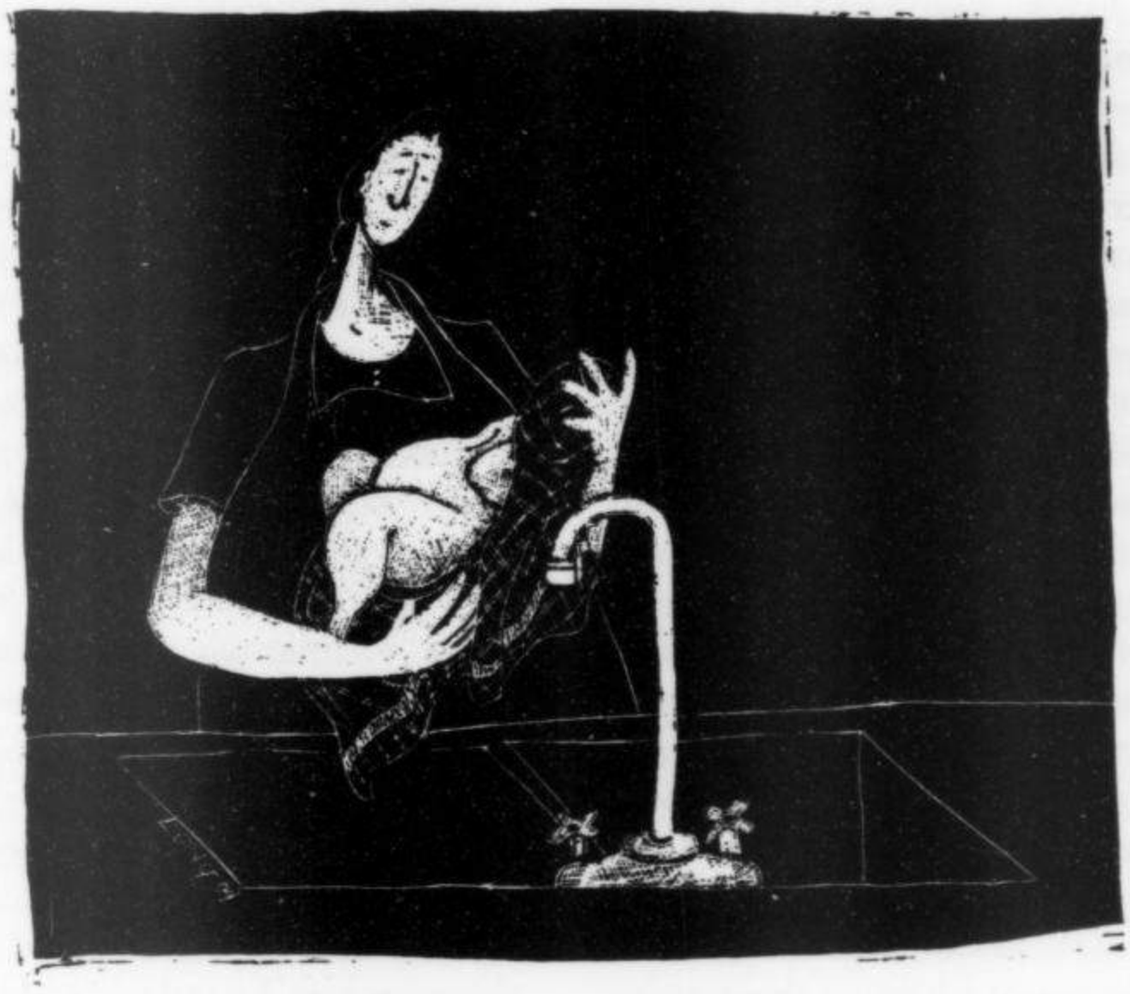
In time, we will see if Wolf was telling the truth when he said that "our East German intelligence operation never operated against Israel or targeted Israeli intelligence." The Stasi archives are there and historians will get at them—unless Stasi officials succeeded in shredding and burning them in the last hectic days of the DDR regime. Many documents were, in fact, destroyed. Given the well-documented involvement of the Stasi with West German terrorists, and the long-standing close ties between the East German government and Israel's most radical and violent enemies at any given time—Nasser's Egypt, the PLO, PFLP, Syria, Iraq, Sudan—Wolf's claim must be taken with more than a grain of salt. The PLO had an office in East Berlin from the 1960s on. Presumably PLO representatives were not there primarily to read Marx and Engels in the original German. There were persistent reports, the validity of which we will be better able to judge after archival research, of financial support and weapons training by the East German military of Palestinian and Arab terrorists. If, as he claims, the Stasi intelligence services were not engaged in these activities, does Wolf really want to say that all of that was "not in my department?" Why didn't your interviewer press Wolf to discuss what he knew about the anti-Israeli campaigns of the East German defense and foreign ministries?

A great deal of such activities, however, are not new discoveries. For anyone who can read German, the East German diplomatic campaign against Israel is a matter of public record. The editors of a Jewish magazine should be familiar with the already public documents of East German foreign policy from the 1950s to the 1980s. Those documents depict an unending, unwavering, and fierce hatred for Israel and Zionism, and a no less consistent public, diplomatic support for every anti-Israeli resolution to come before the United Nations. Why is it that editors of a Jewish magazine did not ask the former intelligence chief of the Stasi how he, now a Jewish-identified communist, could justify this virulent campaign against Israel? You might have asked him what would he have done if the policies of the government he loyally served had succeeded in their goal and the PLO, in its most radical and terrorist phase, had been able to translate diplomatic triumphs in the UN into tangible victories on the ground? Would he have sent his Stasi agents to the rescue? You might have asked him what business a German communist

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If Only I'd Been Born a Kosher Chicken

Jyl Lynn Felman



The problem with my mother's dying is not so much that she died, but that she died without telling me how to make a chicken. If I could make a chicken, the way my mother did, I could have her with me always, or so I imagine. In my fantasy, whenever I want to talk to my mother, I go to the kosher butcher or buy Empire frozen if I'm in a hurry, and I cook that chicken until my mother appears alive and well before me. So strong is the smell of the roasting chicken in my mind that I feel my mother coming into the room this very minute. Before sitting down, without even looking, her right arm automatically reaches toward the table that I have set so carefully. She rearranges the silverware slightly—moving the napkin away from the fork. And then she sits upright and healthy at my own kitchen table. So vivid is the picture that I am smiling, full of our shared presence. As though my mother and I had just spent the afternoon together, talking as we always did. And searching for a way into each other's lives.

Fortunately, both my mother and the roasted kosher chicken live now in my imagination. But I simply cannot cook. I broil. I grill. I set the table nicely. But I cannot cook at all. Instead, I search everywhere for the perfectly cooked, tender and moist, crisp but not dry, roasted chicken. Yet the fantasy is important to me.

How could I let my mother die without learning how to cook her chicken? It seems improbable that the thought never occurred to me before she died a year ago. Didn't I know that I would miss her most through the food I eat and the food she cooked? It seems so obvious that I do not know how to cook because I gave up at an early age. I felt for sure that I had to make a choice about my Jewish female future before my future was made for me. Only now, at age forty, my mother gone from me forever by a year, and my Jewish female future made, do I understand how large a mistake I made, and how much of the mistake was a product of both my mother's story and my own. For it is in poultry, legs and thighs, breasts and wings, that my mother and I mapped out the fragile borders of our femaleness and made whole the permanent expression of our Jewishness.

My mother washed us both in the same kitchen sink. Only I don't know who came first, the baby or the bird. First I am on the counter watching, then I am in the sink splashing. My mother washes me the way she washes her kosher *Shabbas* chicken breasts. Slow and methodical, as though praying, she lifts my small right arm; she lifts the wings of the chicken; and scrubs all the way up to where she cannot scrub any more, to where the wing is attached to the body, the arm to the shoulder. Plucking feathers from the freshly slaughtered bird, she washes in between my fingers; toe by toe. Gently she returns my short stubby arms to the side of my plump body, which remains

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propped upright in the large kitchen sink. I am unusually silent throughout the duration of this ancient cleansing ritual. Automatically my arms extend outward, eternally and forever reaching for her.

The cold wet chicken, washed and scrubbed, sits next to us on the counter. I weigh more than the chicken but as far as I'm concerned we're identical, the chicken and I. Except for our heads and the feathers. The chicken has no head and I have no feathers. But I will have hair. Lots of body hair on this nice Jewish girl that my mother will religiously teach to pluck and to shave until my adolescent body resembles a perfectly plucked, pale young bird waiting to be cooked to a hot, crisp, golden brown and served on the same sacred platter as my mother herself was before me.

At thirteen I stand on the *bimah* waiting to address the entire congregation. I am also upstairs in the bathroom, alone in the terrifying wilderness of my adolescent femaleness. But I stand on the *bimah* and prepare to chant. On my head is a white, silk *yarmulke,* held in place by two invisible bobby pins. For the first time in my life, I prepare my female self the exact same way she taught me in her kosher kitchen sink. *Borakhu et Adonai hamivorakh.* I look out at the congregation of Beit Avraham. My mother is crying. I look in the mirror; I inspect my face, my eyebrows are dark brown and very thick. *Barukh atah Adonai hamivorach l'olam vo'ed.* I place the tweezers as close to the skin as possible to catch the root, so the hair won't ever grow back. *Barukh atah Adonai, Elohaynu melekh ha'olam...* My parents are holding hands as I recite the third blessing in honor of being called to the Torah. And then I begin. Although my *haftarah* portion is long and difficult, I want it to last forever because I love the sonorous sounds of the mystical Hebrew letters. But I am surprised at how much it hurts to pull out a single hair, one at a time out from under my pale young skin. When I reach the closing blessings my voice is strong and full and I do not want to stop.

The rabbi asks my parents to stand. They are kissing me, their youngest baby girl. But I am surprised at how much it hurts to shape my thick Ashkenazi eyebrows into small, elegant, Anglo female arches. Then I remember the ice cubes that she soaks the chickens in, to keep them fresh and cold before the plucking, and how I used to watch her pluck out a long, hard, particularly difficult feather without a single break. She had special *fleishech* tweezers, for use in the kitchen only. The congregation sings, *Mi chamocha boalim Adonai.* I return to the kitchen for ice cubes wrapped in terry cloth that I hold diligently up to my adolescent brow. *Mi chamocha Adonai nadar bakodesh... Who is like unto thee, Oh most High, revered and praised, doing wonders?* I have no feeling above my eyes, but the frozen skin is finally ready for plucking.

These first female rituals have no prayers, as I stand before the rabbi utterly proud of what I have accomplished. He places his hands above my head, *Yivorech et Adonai...* He blesses my youthful passage into the adult community of Jews. Alone in the bathroom my eyes water as I watch the furrowed brow of my beloved ancestors disappear from my face forever. At the exact same moment that I become a Bat Mitzvah I begin the complex process of preparing myself for rebirth into gentility. I complete these first female rites in silence, without the comfort of my mother or a single Hebrew *bracha*. The congregation rises; together we say, *Yiskadal, V'yiskadash sh'may rabo.* Today I am permitted to mourn publicly. I have become a beloved daughter of the covenant, only the covenant is confusing. *Shema Yisrael Adonai echad,* I love my people Israel, but I loathe my female self. Is this what my mother wanted for me? On the occasion of my Bat Mitzvah, my body splits apart and my head becomes severed from the rest of my body, a chicken without a head, a head without a body.

I am balanced precariously between the sink, the toilet, and the cold tile floor. I use my father's shaving cream to hide all traces of the hair growing up and down my legs. I stand in a wide V and smother my right leg in white foam. My left leg supports my young body while my right leg straddles the sink. Slow and methodical, I scrape the hair off each leg. I have to concentrate very hard so I don't cut myself. Every two minutes I stop to rinse out the thick tufts of hair stuck in the razor's edge. Then I inspect the quality of my work. The finished skin has to be completely smooth, as though there never was any thick brown hair covering my body. Convinced that the right leg is smooth enough, I lower it to the floor. When I am finished shaving the lower half of my body I raise my right arm and stare into the mirror. The hair under my arms is soft and there isn't very much there. At thirteen, I do not understand why I have to remove this hair too. As I glide the razor back and forth, I am aware of how tender my skin is and how raw it feels once all the hair is removed. Rinsing off the now-clean space, I notice that the skin is turning red. And when I roll on the sticky, sweet-scented deodorant, it burns. But I lower my right arm, lift my left one, and begin again until I am fully plucked and have become my mother's chicken.

She shows me how to remove all traces of blood from the body. After soaking there is salting. But the blood of the chicken accumulates under the wings and does not drain out, into her spotless kosher sink. She roasts each

chicken for hours, turning the thighs over and over, checking for unclean spots that do not disappear even in the stifling oven heat. With a single stroke of the hand and a silver spoon, she removes a spot of blood from the yolk of an imperfect egg. First she cracks each one separately into a glass bowl; if the yolk is clear, luminous, she adds it to another bowl. But whenever the blood spreads like tiny veins into the center of the bright yellow ball, she throws out the whole egg.

For my turn, I roll the egg slowly in between my palms; I learn to feel the blood pulsating right inside the center so I don't ever have to break it open. I learn that the sight of red blood on the food Jews eat is disgusting. Red juice from an undercooked chicken always makes me gag. I stop eating red meat. I eat all my food cooked well done. I do not tell her when I start to bleed. Instinctively I keep my femaleness to myself. I watch her throw out a dozen eggs, one at a time, crying at the waste. To spill a drop of blood is to waste an entire life.

When I start to bleed, I keep my femaleness to myself. When she finds out, she is furious. How long? I cannot remember. She is hurt. When was the first time? I do not remember. She is almost hysterical but I cannot remember. I remember only that all signs of blood on the body must be removed. I do not tell my mother when I begin to bleed. Instead I wrap wads of cotton in toilet paper so thick that no one will ever guess what's inside. I clean myself the exact same way she cleans blood from the chickens in her sink. I soak and I salt. I soak and I salt. For hours at a time. For years I will away my own femaleness. I do not spill for months in a row and then, when I do, it's just a spot, a small speck, easily removed like the red spot floating in my mother's yolk.

Before I am born I float in my mother's yolk and I am never hungry. Soon after I am born the hunger begins. By seventeen I am so hungry I do not know what to do with myself. All I can think about is food and how I cannot get enough.

At seventeen I leave the States for Israel. I have to leave. When I arrive *b'eretz* I cannot stop eating. I stuff myself the way my mother stuffs her kosher *Shabbas* chicken breasts. I stuff myself with grilled lamb shaved right off a hot, rotating skewer stuffed into warm, fresh pita filled with sauteed onions and lemon juice. In Jerusalem I cannot stop eating, waiting for the bus to take me to the Turkish Bath House where I crouch in the corner on a low stool, sip steaming turkish coffee, suck on floating orange peels, and stare at all the naked bodies.

I cannot stop eating halvah laced with green pistachios while Mizrachi women with olive skin soak in pools of turquoise water. Slowly as though praying, they unbraid each other's long thick dark hair. Standing in water up to their waists, they comb out the knots. They knead their scalps and foreheads gently, washing their hair in the juice of fresh squeezed lemons. The women soak in silence. Large round bodies move from pool to sacred pool; hot then cold, tepid and cool. Back and forth. Tall and thin. Brown skin. Torsos dip and soak in swirls of foaming water. Surrounded by the scent of eucalyptus, they soak their feet in burning crystals. Bodies in water float through steam.

I want to take my clothes off, but I cannot stop eating whole figs with date jam spread on fresh Syrian bread while Sephardic women lie on heated marble slabs and close their eyes. Their breasts sag; sunlight doesn't filter in. Bodies in steam float through air. But I am never full. They drink chilled yellow papaya juice from thin paper cups while cooling their sweating foreheads. I want to take my clothes off, but I cannot stop eating. Wings and thighs. Breasts and legs. They soak and they salt in pools of blue water. With avocado soap they wash each other's spines and massage their aching muscles. Jewish women bathe in ancient cleansing waters. Wrapped in soft terry cloth they climb the steps to the roof and begin to eat: plates of humus lined with purple olives, smooth baba ghanouj, and almond macaroons. I can almost touch the sky, sitting on the roof; the Jerusalem sun is hot and strong.

Down below I see the streets of Mea Shearim. Narrow sidewalks and small shops. Women concealed within their bodies. Safely covered from head to toe. Orthodox men in black. Praying as they walk. Their eyes never meet. On the street. Their hands never touch. On the street. Women are covered from head to toe.

On the rooftop women eat, naked in the sun; mothers and daughters; sisters. They lounge on cement slabs, laugh among themselves, and feed each other grape leaves. But I cannot stop eating, staring at the street below. Women with children; live chickens squawking. Preparing for Shabbat. Men in black hats. Long beards. Everything ordered and prearranged. *Ani Adonai Elochechah.* I am the Lord thy God. The Torah is absolute. I love my People Israel. (I loathe my female self.) I cannot stop eating, caught between the roof and the street below. I dream that I am falling, falling to the ground. But I never land. I stay caught forever, hanging limb by limb. Caught forever limb by limb. The Jerusalem sun is hot and strong. Burning me at seventeen. Suspended as I am. Between my people and myself.

The suspension makes me crazy as I wander the biblical streets. Where do I belong? The suspension is intolerable. I have no place to go. Every week I visit Mea Shearim. Searching not just for my head but my

body too. Every Friday I stay with an Orthodox family and light *Shabbas* candles as the sun sets. When I'm in my head my body disappears, and then I cannot find my Jewish female self. At night, I wander back alone from the center of the city to where I live on *Har Hatzofim*. I search as I walk, staring in the dark, peering into windows, looking for my soul.

In the States, I'm in my body, but I cannot find my head. At home *b'eretz* I eat my way through the city, longing to be whole. With my bus fare I buy a kilo of jelly cookies. I eat as I walk in the dark through villages and urban streets. All I do in Israel at seventeen is eat. I tap a hunger so wide that I do not know what to do. I know that I will have to leave the country. There is no one to tell how hungry I have become because a hunger like this is forbidden.

I have no place to go. I do not know it yet completely. But I fall in love with Israel the way I will fall in love with a woman for the first time. With all my heart and with all my soul. I want to return to the land forever. To live in Mea Shearim. That will save me from my hunger, or so I think and pray. At seventeen, I wander the streets of Jerusalem, terrified at what I know I will grow up to be. But there is no one to tell how hungry I have become because a hunger like this is forbidden. I swallow my passion whole; my body swells until I am so enormous that I have to leave the land I love.

Alone, my mother flies to rescue me on an El Al jumbo jet. But I do not say a word. I have become a *knaydelach*, a dumpling, floating in the soup: a nice Jewish girl who doesn't say a word. But stuffed inside my mother's dumpling, swimming just below the surface is a *vilde chaye*, a wild beast waiting to get out. My mother takes the window seat staring hard at me, her fat baby girl, drowning in the soup.

Flying back together, I know that I have failed. She doesn't ask and I cannot tell her, what exactly happened. That I fell in love. With Sarah and Hagar, and Lot's wife the moment she looked back. She doesn't ask and I can not tell her, what exactly happened. That I tapped a hunger I did not know I had. I have watched my mother eat and never gain a pound. She can eat and eat and eat; devour anything in sight, but I never see her body change. I never know what happens to all the food that she consumes. Mine shows on my body, right outside for everyone to see; but the food that she consumes disappears and is impossible to see. My hunger is outside; hers is never seen. Yes, the country's beautiful... I did not ever want to leave. And I do not want to cry. Even though I know right inside her dreams for me we can no longer speak.

When we arrive in the States, our covenant begins to break; mother to daughter; daughter to mother. We do not speak the words; but they float between us growing larger day by day. Right after Pesach, like the first signs of spring, I start to grow all my body hair back again. *A vilde chaye.* She is mortified. It is so soft. She is horrified. I can't believe I ever shaved it off. A wild beast. I run my hands up and down my legs. And when I lift my arms, she turns her head away. She tells me that my body is disgusting. Not a nice Jewish girl, never seen or heard, who does not say a word. I thought my body was my own. More than her *knaydelach* floating in the soup.

The covenant is broken; I've claimed my body as my own. But the silence floats between us growing larger day by day. What my mother always feared is true. I grow up to be a stunning, raging, wild, forbidden *vilde chaye*. I did not ever want to leave my mother's *Shabbas* table; but in my twenties, she cannot set a place for me. I learn to close my eyes, light the candles, say the *Kiddush* and the *Motzi* by myself. But I cannot cook her chicken so I cannot bring her home to me. And without my mother present, I cannot bear to eat her food.

I become a vegetarian even though the food tastes strange and never smells the same. With other *vilde chayes*, I make a *Seder* of my own. We become the red beets sprouting green leaves, sitting where the shank bones belong. We wash each other's hands as we pass the bowl around. But we cannot taste our mothers in the soup. and in their absence we grow lame. How can I have my mother and myself? For years we barely speak, and in her absence I grow tame. Only later do I know that her silence is her shame that she gave birth to me, who let my hair grow back. But I did not ever want to choose my mother or myself. And when we, *d'vilde chayes*, call forth our mothers' names: *ematanu, Sarah, Rivka, Rachel v' Leah*, it is the first time I say my mother's name out loud.

We know that we have been cast out; that our hunger is the shame of both our mothers and our people. Our grief is overwhelming that we have no place to go. Either we are heard among the women but never fully seen. Or we are seen among our people but never ever heard. There is no language we can speak as we shake our heads in sorrow that we are not counted too.

But I continue to look back, to remember who I am. *Im eshcahac yerushalayim, t'shchah y'menie.* If I forget (Thee O) Jerusalem, may my right hand lose it cunning. I know my mother's waiting and looking back herself. Through her silence she is praying that I reappear. Through my silence, I am praying for my mother to appear. But to reappear is difficult, not knowing what

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Education for Democracy

Michael S. Roth

Over the last several years, debates about the politics of education in the United States have claimed widespread attention.

Debates about the canon (or canons), about diversity, and about freedom of inquiry and expression, however, have not been responses to the so-called politicization of the university but attempts to steer education in particular political directions. Who should be served by the university and how? In these debates, the words "political education" are used to mean a politicized or ideological education, one based more on prejudice than on reason or facts.

It is unfortunate for our polity and for our educational institutions that this discourse about the university is blind to the necessity and desirability of political education. Citizens are not born, they are made, and education in being political is crucial for a healthy democracy. But how are we to think about the impact of our forms of education on the creation of responsible, energetic citizens?

This is, of course, too large a question to answer in the pages of a magazine. We can recognize, however, that progressive politics depends on citizens who desire freedom and justice in the world (not just satisfaction from it) and who are willing to work together to help create such a world. Education should better enable people to do such work, and given the myriad problems confronting us, help us to determine where to begin. But how do people working for change devote their attention to one or another variety of oppression? In other words, how do we commit to care?

As a teacher, and as a historian, this is a question that arises repeatedly for me. For example, for some time now, I have been trying to bring to my students' attention the fascist violence of Serbia against the Muslim population of Bosnia. They have learned about it, have even been revolted by it, but they have not taken it on; they have not allowed these atrocities to enter their circle of care so that they feel forced to take some kind of action. The wars in the Balkans remain distant, something that they can watch but not something for which they are responsible, that they must take on.

When do we "take something on" as we come to build (or break) our political coalitions? How many times do Jews have to read about the racist aggression of the extreme right-wing settlers on the West Bank before we speak out against them? Or do we have to wait for a massacre? How much hatred and violence are people willing to tolerate in a community because it is theirs, and because to break ranks is to open themselves up to more oppression from the outside? When do we feel safe enough to take on someone else's pain and capable enough to do something about that suffering?

If our education is to prepare us to participate in a democracy, we must confront these sorts of questions in our schools. In our liberal tradition, one usually responds to them in the language of interest: We act to help someone else when it is in our own interest to do so. This is the language of realism, which means it is the language of power—of those who get to define what counts as real. It is, as Jack Miles pointed out in a recent issue of TIKKUN ("Auschwitz and Sarajevo," March/April 1994) the language the Clinton administration uses to talk about the atrocities in Bosnia.

But our response to violence is not based solely on a calculus of personal or national gain. The language of interest is not adequate to describe why people sometimes take on one another's burdens, why they act to transform their environment into a meaningful world in which they want to live together. We may have our interests, but how do we learn (and how can we teach) the care that enables broad-based democratic change?

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These questions have acquired a new urgency because of the prominence of "identity politics" over the last several years.

While apparently rejecting the liberal language of "interests," identity politics urges that you care about those people with whom you identify, those people who are like you. And "like you" for many people has come to mean, especially in the crudest forms of multiculturalism, those who look like you—share your race, ethnicity, your fundamental identity. This vulgar version of identity politics should be anathema to those working for progressive change because it achieves solidarity at the expense of democratic coalition-building. Identity politics would solve the problem of care and of political education by making it automatic: You only need to know who you are in order to know what is to be done. This would make politics a function of an unchanging particular identity, not the expression of a desire to create a common world of greater meaning and justice.

In our country, the movement for gay and lesbian rights can teach us much about how the effort to create a world of freedom and equality requires us to expand our circles of care, not just "to discover who we really are." As Michael Nava and Robert Dawidoff show in *Created Equal: Why Gay Rights Matter to America*, the struggle against homophobia and for equality before the law for gay men and lesbians emerges out of the deepest resources of our common political culture. There is nothing parochial about the demand for civil rights, no matter who is doing the demanding. After all, there is no great virtue in demanding rights for one's friends or for people who share one's experiences and traditions. We do this out of affection for those whose rights are denied, or out of fear that our own lives will be at risk without the protection of law. We might say that these kinds of demands are made on the basis of our interests, or in the language of multiculturalism, our identity.

But gay and lesbian rights in our polity must be achieved for the basic political reason that in the effort to become a democracy we must care for the equality and freedom of our citizenry; we join in the struggle for gay and lesbian rights because we share a world, and for that world to make sense, to be meaningful, there must be equality before the law. Similarly, we cannot align ourselves with those who would deny gay men and lesbians their rights because they undermine the meaningfulness of our lives in common. Not only might the homophobes be in conflict with our short or long-term interests or our private and public identities and passions, they contribute to the poisoning of our political culture. They must be disavowed and combatted.

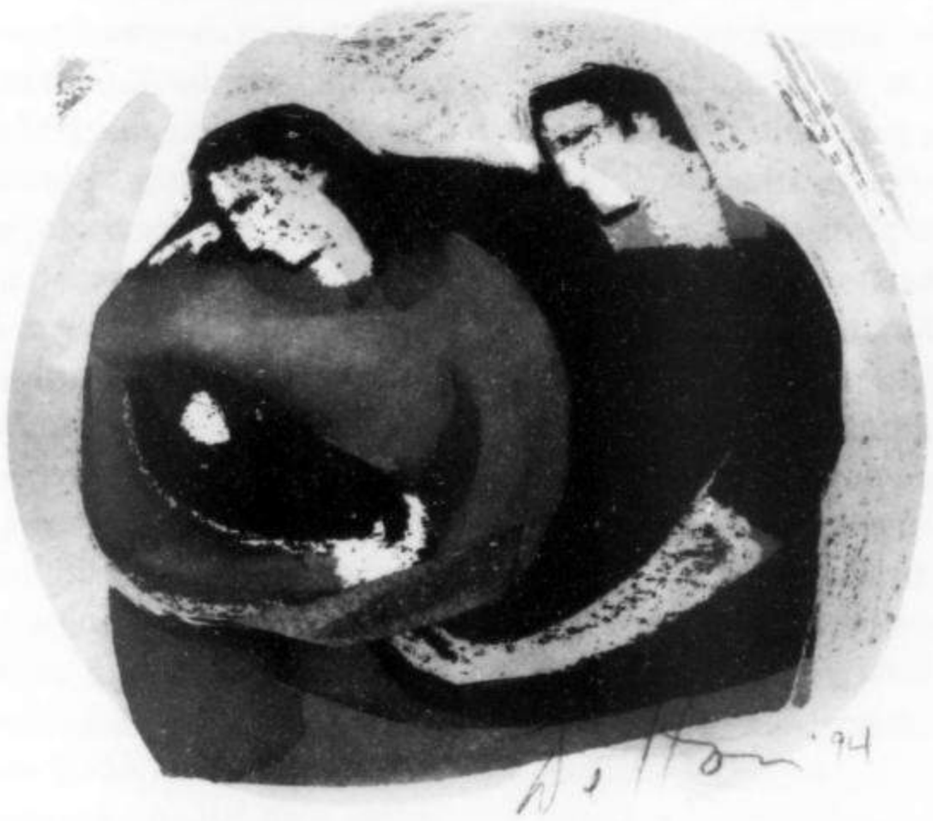
Cornel West has recently reminded us in the pages of this magazine ("America's Three-fold Crisis," March/April 1994) that a democratic sensibility is one that is capable of understanding and identifying with the ordinary or the common, and that means with the ordinary lives of those people who we commonly regard as foreign if not inferior to ourselves. There are powerful anti-democratic ideologies in our world that urge Jews and Palestinians, Blacks and Jews, and straights and gays to regard one another as inferior: as unworthy of care or of the freedom to pursue an ordinary life. We must publicly and firmly oppose those forces that seek power or vengeance without any regard for democracy and the care among citizens that makes it possible, whether or not we are said to share a racial, ethnic, or religious identity with them. These discourses of hate and the violence they engender, whether they come from racist elements of the Jewish community or anti-Semitic elements in the African-American community, demean our life in common. Our opposition to them will not always be in accord with what some will take to be the interests of the group (ethnic, racial, religious) with which we are supposed to identify. But this opposition is essential to cultivating the circles of care without which a democratic sensibility has no chance of flourishing.

In developing a democratic culture we learn to take on, to care for the equality and the freedom of those with whom we share a world. Our educational institutions must create programs that allow students to grasp how we share a world as well as how we can change the world we share. In the graduate cultural studies program we are developing at Claremont, we are creating programs for "community-based scholarship" which will enable students to understand the problems of those working for cultural change in the region around the campus. As our academic studies enable us to expand our circles of care both chronologically and geographically, we hope to anchor these circles within the changing communities in which we live and work.

Political education in a democracy is not only about understanding interests and identities, and the commitment to care it engenders must be clearly separated from propaganda and indoctrination. Political education in universities, in schools, and in our culture generally should give us the capacity to recognize the world that we have in common with its conflicts and possibilities, and it should help us develop the tools to combat pervasive cynicism and violence to make that world a more meaningful place in which to live. □

Homosexuality and Family-Centered Judaism

Reuven Kimelman



The debate on homosexuality in the Jewish community has created two distinct camps. Opponents of homosexual behavior and especially homosexual commitment rites often rely on scripture and the norms of religious law to substantiate their position. Proponents, for their part, frequently underscore the right of choice, the importance of "live and let live," and the plight of the homosexual. Unless common ground can be found, the debate threatens to be as divisive as the abortion issue, with both sides yelling over a chasm of deafness about their fundamental rights.

If some common ground is to emerge, it is more likely to emerge out of considerations of public policy than those of private morality. More people are likely to agree on the need to encourage and sustain the centrality of the family than on the impermissiblity of homosexual activities. Many opposed to any infringement of the private rights of the homosexual are still willing to encourage a policy of shoring up the status of the family. The policy question with regard to homosexuality is whether it in general and commitment rites in particular threaten the primacy of the normative family. The answer to this is significantly dependent upon the degree to which a laissez-faire position on human sexuality threatens the cohesiveness and privileged position of the family in religious life. If so, the right of choice, which rings so well to the democratic ear, might not ring as well for the future of family life.

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The emphasis on choice is frequently at odds with law-based ethics since it tends to reduce ethical norms to preferences. It assumes that choice takes precedence over moral claims. Normative ethics, for its part, assumes that moral claims are prior to choice. Thus the good is to be chosen, rather than the chosen becoming good. Neither the authenticity of the intention nor the depth of the self transforms an act into a good, rather it is its alignment with the good independent of human choice. Since the inner depths of the self can as readily choose evil as good, no moral authority can be attributed to the promptings of the self alone. Indeed, more often than not it is through transcending the promptings of the self and the denial of its claims that the good is achieved.

In periods of ethical relativism, ethical issues tend to be reduced to other categories. A powerful tactic in the arsenal of ethical relativism is the displacement of the language of ethics by the language of medicine, aesthetics, and especially psychology. Evil becomes unhealthy, wrong becomes distasteful. The ultimate in the relativizing or trivializing of the ethical is its psychologization. The result of this reductionism is the categorization of ethical issues as matters of health and ethical objections as phobias.

Framing the issue of homosexuality more in terms of public policy than private morality means asking whether there is a Gresham's law of sexuality which would argue that as bad coinage drives out good coinage, so bad sex drives out good sex. Ascertaining whether valorizing homosexuality is at all detrimental to family-producing sexuality is at the heart of a public

policy analysis. If it is, then the approval of a priori non-procreative marriages as a class could tend to devalue the type of sexuality that leads to procreation.

The devaluation of procreative sex is not inconsequential. Without commitments of time, money, and emotions, there will be no family to speak of. The creation of families is a major investment. Because of the toil, anguish, and expense of raising children, societies concerned with their biological future extend special inducements for those assuming such responsibility. Within the larger polity, there are economic inducements such as tax deductions, tax-supported public education, tax write-offs, and tax deductions for interest on mortgage loans. Jewishly, the inducements include the reward of doing a mitzvah, genetic and cultural continuity, family and social expectations, and that joy of raising children called *nachas*.

It is clear that Jewish continuity is already threatened by too many singles not marrying and too many couples declining to invest in the future by replenishing themselves. It is precisely because of the hassles of real-life interactions that we must invest so much in order to sustain a family-focused culture. Contemporary mores militate against families thriving on their own.

The Jewish meaning of marriage is broader than the notion of human intimacy. By contributing to an ethos that sees the relationship as the sole end of marriage, we undermine efforts to persuade couples to assume their responsibility for the type of investment in the future that childbearing entails. Our credibility is compromised when we promote childbearing families while sanctifying relationships which are inherently childless. The Jewish community has a vested interest in getting people to deal with their sexuality in a manner that is supportive of family and children. Indeed, its success is dependent upon persuading its members to define their self-interest as including responsibility for others starting with spouse and children. In order that this message be received unambiguously, the community must be wary of any factor that adds to the process of relativizing the social and moral status of heterosexuality and the family. The alternative is a mixed message with all its attendant ambiguities.

Childless marriages are different from those with children in their impact on the partners and on society. It is the birth of a child that most fully validates sexual partnership as a means of continuity. As the Talmud *Yevamot* (64a) notes, a childless marriage brings about a withdrawal of the divine presence (*shekhina*) from Israel, as it says, "to be a God to you and to your seed after you" (Genesis 17:7); "Whenever your seed is after you, the *shekhina* dwells, [whenever] there is no seed after you, upon whom will the *shekhina* dwell, on wood and stones?" Apparently, there is a special divine concern for those who invest in progeny. We rabbis are acutely aware of the impact of children from our involvements in divorce cases. When there are children the sense of tragedy is qualitatively different. The presence of children intensifies the feeling that marriage break-up frays the social fabric of community. There is of course a considerable difference in having compassion for a couple who cannot have children as opposed to one that biologically was not meant to.

Contemporary technology and mores have widened the gap between sex and love, childbearing and parenting. In specific cases this may accrue to the benefit of all involved. Sundering these links for a whole class of people, however, undermines the centrality of the family as the locus of love, sex, childbearing, and parenting. Judaism would be false to its own best insights were it to become a partner to the dissolution of the family, its major contribution to the civilization of humanity.

The building blocks of family are male and female. A man without a wife, according to the Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* (17:2 and parallels), lacks blessing, bliss, well-being, protection, and atonement. There is even the opinion there that a single male, unable to realize his full humanity, cannot be called *adam*. Male-female interaction contributes to the stabilizing of gender identity along with the flowering of masculinity and femininity. Although they share much, the differences between the two should not be underestimated. Masculine and feminine love are not identical. Besides the obvious differences, feminine love possesses a futurity that cannot easily be duplicated by masculine love. Anatomically and psychologically, feminine love is more bound up in creating a future than its masculine counterpart.

It is through commitment to the female that male sexuality lays claim to the future. As George Guilder writes in his book *Sexual Suicide*, a man's "participation in the chain of nature, his access to social immortality, the very meaning of his potency, of his life energy, are all profoundly" bound up with a woman's durable love. Traditionally, women have leveraged the male sexual drive into domestication. Without channeling the sexual drive into family-making we could become totally enmeshed in "nowness" with little thought of the future. It is precisely the link with the future inherent in heterosexual relations that allows glimmers of the transcendent to be refracted through human sexuality.

When the Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* (9:7) notes that "were it not for the evil impulse, a man would not build a house, marry a wife, and produce children," it is expressing appreciation for the divine cunning in the use of our physical sensations to enhance our concerns for building a better tomorrow.

It is no wonder that the rabbis saw in a loving husband-wife relationship a fitting dwelling place for the divine presence. The Kabbalah went one step further by picturing the husband-wife relationship as capable of completing the circuit of divine electricity, as it were, that charges all of life. Since the unity of husband and wife is a source of special blessing, there is a linkage with the divine made possible through marriage. Indeed, it is precisely in the complementarity of husband and wife that humanity realizes the fullness of the divine image. Kabbalists described marriage as making possible a kind of connection to the Infinite. As such, it entitles one to don the mantle of infinity, the *tallit* (prayer shawl).

Family in contemporary Judaism serves to promote the ideal of monogamy. The multiple encirclings of the groom by the bride under the marriage chuppah can be understood as seeking to weld man's polymorphic sexuality to his wife. For civilization to succeed, male sexual impulses and psychology need to be subordinated to the long-term horizons of female psychology and biology. Through love of wife, husbands can achieve a futurity that many women are graced with biologically. This helps explain the fact that so many happily married men deep down believe, however they may loath to admit it, that marriage has had a domesticating and civilizing effect on them. We males frequently become nurturers through our wives and in return extend their nurturing capabilities. Just contrast the statistics of the leisure activities and acts of violence of single men with their married counterparts. Thus despite the fragility of the contemporary husband-wife bond, it remains the most stable and lasting of chosen, nonbiological relationships. It is no wonder that Judaism has found no better civilizers than the life of Torah and a good family.

Marriage is more than the ratification of love between two people. It is the transformation of the love into a biological and social continuity and community that transcends the participants. Married love is an investment of faith in the future of the family, society, and humanity. For a couple, love for each other and children properly nurtured can lead to care for the community that supports them and to a willingness to work for a future to house them. Thus family involvement can lead to the expansion of both horizontal and vertical horizons. Horizontally, concern for the immediate family can lead to concern for community and ultimately for the extended human family. The mutual helpfulness that takes place within the family can set the pattern for such throughout society. Vertically, continuity is epitomized through having children. Anybody who has counselled a barren couple knows how much the absence of children can undermine the professed motives of marriage. Marriage both institutionalizes the desire for continuity and spurs it on.

At least since the first paschal offering upon the redemption from Egypt, biblical religion has invested in the family as its central vehicle of education and continuity. Ever since, this holiday of redemption has become the quintessential family holiday. It is clear that a religion committed to a multi-generational covenant to bring about the redemption will be inclined to invest in that agency that is intrinsically multi-generational. As no other biological community can so easily become a historical community as the family, so no other institution has the wherewithal to stretch from the first to the final redemption.

The two themes of redemption and family are linked, according to the Talmud *Sabbath* (31a), on the day of judgment. At that time, we are asked about trying to have children right before we are asked about awaiting the redemption. The sequence and juxtaposition of the two highlights their relationship and commonality. Both attest to long-term commitments. Indeed, the extended vision produced through having children can enhance the capacity for the long-term envisioning required for redemption. A perspective that limits itself to the self and its indulgences will tend to exclude both. Family, for its part, forces us to see ourselves in a larger context of meaning both within a generation of humanity and throughout the generations. Any effort that serves to undermine, whether intentionally or not, the primacy of the family is *eo ipso* inimical to the interests of religion and its vision of redemption. This may explain why the Talmud *Pesahim* (88b) cites the verse from Isaiah "He did not create it a waste, but formed it for habitation," in support of the idea of *tikkun olam*. This weave of family, religion, and redemption stands behind the proclamation of the psalmist:

> He established a testimony in Jacob
> and appointed a law in Israel
> which He commanded our fathers
> to teach to their children;
> that the next generation might know them,
> the children yet unborn,
> and arise to tell them to their children,

so that they should set their hope in God.
(Psalm 78:4-7)

The focus on the family as the agent of continuity and therefore of redemption accounts for its centrality already in Genesis. Genesis is more than a series of episodes organized along chronological lines. On the level of ideas, it is unified by a sense that history is going somewhere and that its consequential participants are those that share this sense and express it in covenantal terms. On the level of roles, it is unified not only by the presence of God, but also by that of the family.

The sense of family as expressed in biblical law and narrative underscores the bonds between husband and wife and parents and children. Much of the prohibited sexual activity serves to maintain and enhance these links by focusing on the exclusivity of these relationships. In addition to undermining the primacy of the family, same-sex activity has the potential of undermining the idea of sexual prohibitions. The fear is that the legitimation of loving homosexual relations is the first step to the legitimation of "loving" incestuous, pedophiliac, and adulterous relationships. Such is the slippery slope in today's sexual climate as it was apparently in antiquity. Accordingly, Rabbi Akiba in Talmud *Sanhedrin* (58a) derives the prohibition of incest, homosexuality, adultery, and bestiality all from different parts of the same verse, Genesis 2:24. To note that Torah is a reflection of culture without underscoring how often it was and remains a protest against the ethos of the day is to do a disservice to the biblical impact on human culture. In the same vein, Jewish political thought from Albo to Luzzatto opposed utopian schemes of social organization from Plato to Thomas Moore precisely on the issue of the inviolability of the family unit. The biblical sexual ethos with all its prohibitions is but the flip side of its commitment to the sanctity of the family unit.

Sociologically speaking, deviations from the norm come in clusters. One could easily imagine somebody contending that he is sexually functional only with other married women or his own daughters. There are now support groups for men with sexual appetites for children, of course only consenting (sic) children. Once feelings are accepted as the criterion for overturning a prohibition, every leak in the dike can become a flood. Moreover, if there is a market for promoting incestuous relations and the like, there will always be some health expert ready to publish a book on how loving, stable, incestuous relations are healthy for the participants. They are already appearing on television talk shows. Books that tout the benefits of extra-marital relations for "healthy" marriages are readily available. Capitalistic cultures are most effective in producing suppliers for demands.

Those who advocate an abolition of the norms of the Torah frequently argue that the prohibition against homosexuality was based on health considerations and on the assumption that homosexuality was voluntary, neither of which any longer obtain. (The theory that the prohibition is due to an association with the pagan cult has been consigned to the dustbin of outdated scholarly theories.) Whatever the health status of homosexuality or its etiology, it bears little on the issue of maintaining the privileged position of the normative family in Jewish life. Its impact is independent of its origin. Moreover, we lack the evidence to assess whether health considerations played any role in the Torah's prohibition. Those who claim to know have already made up their mind on the validity of the prohibition as those who ruled against the validity of kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) a century ago had made up their mind on the Torah's assessment of health factors. There is also no evidence to suggest that homosexual behavior was condemned on the basis of choice. Indeed, the Talmud Sanhedrin (75a) roundly prohibits even for curative purposes a sexually sick man from having relations with a women who is otherwise prohibited to him. Note that it is not the sexual orientation, which may or may not be of one's choosing, that is subject to opprobrium, but its expression in behavior.

It is precisely the chosenness of the behavior that argues against any analogy with the *mamzer* (child born outside of marriage). If an analogy is in order, kleptomania may be an instructive one. Feeling that what is their own cannot have much worth, kleptomaniacs take things precisely because they belong to others. Notwithstanding our compassion for the low self-esteem that generates the characterological problem of kleptomania, we still cannot condone the stealing. In both cases, compassion for a person's orientation however involuntary does not entail approval of behavior. Moreover, even if judgments are to be mitigated because of duress, psychological pressure is still not the mitigating factor that physical coercion is.

Whatever the truth of the genetic origin of homosexuality, it is evident that social conditions enhance its expression, especially for borderline cases. Even the advocates of a neurobiological etiology are unable to identify those genes which carry, as it were, a homosexual code. The most that can be affirmed is that it is polygenic. Even those that argue for polygeny concede that biology is only part, however great, of the case. It is still not possible to achieve total correlation

between genes or chromosomes and behavior in healthy people. Indeed, were it otherwise the spiritual dignity of humankind would be seriously questioned, for human beings would be nothing more than automatons of the body. Since no single factor accounts for its existence (all the more so for its expression), homosexuality is clearly multifactorial.

Gender distinctions are not absolute. Male and female represent the neurobiological and psychological poles of a continuum. Whereas moving from one pole to the other is rare, sliding along the continuum is more common, especially among the young, whose gender identity is still in formation. Such sliding may be as much a product of nurture as nature. Latent tendencies properly cultivated can become overt. Frequently all that is needed are role-models and supportive surroundings. Much of the content of sexual roles results from observation and imitation of others. Certain environments encourage the expression of one predisposition over another. It is precisely because we understand our social codes to be the result of nature and design, human and divine, that we should see to it that Jewish life fosters environments that encourage optimal Jewish behavior.

Some people have considered leaving more liberal denominations for more conservative ones when the former legitimate homosexuality. To call this "homophobia" sheds no more light on the phenomenon than calling its alternative "heterophobia." People frequently join synagogues in search of a community of shared values in order to provide themselves and their children with a haven from the general culture. Common values are predicated on shared convictions about what is right and what is wrong, what is decent and what is obscene. Otherwise, there is no communal bonding. For a religious community to bond, it must also share a sense of what is noble and what is base, what is sacred and what is profane.

There are those who would prohibit rabbis from performing commitment ceremonies for homosexuals, but allow them to be present. Rabbinic presence at alternative lifestyle ceremonies, however, is not harmless if it serves to validate the lifestyle. The nonverbal message is that one lifestyle is as good as another. Prohibiting rabbis from the performance of such ceremonies while permitting their presence qua rabbi is disingenuous, since it connotes condonation if not approval.

Religious legitimation of extra-normative sexual relationships threatens to undermine the privileged position of normative marriage. Such legitimation tends to equalize the status of the two, especially in the eyes of children. Instead of being a social ideal, family-centered marriage would become simply another alternative. Already a besieged institution, it is questionable whether its protective walls can withstand much more battering. Thus, Jewish family advocates should reserve sanctification ceremonies for rites of marriage between men and women. □

Family Values
A Reply to Reuven Kimelman

Yaakov Levado



The image of the family as an institution in distress has become one of the most successful rhetorical tools used against gays. The claim is simple: Gay people, their relationships, and especially their committed relationships pose a deadly threat to the normative family. Reuven Kimelman, writing in this issue of TIKKUN, has marshalled the symbolic power of the family for American Jews to encourage the continuing rejection of gay people and their relationships within the Jewish mainstream.

Kimelman wants to shape an anti-gay public policy across denominational lines, something that a halachic opinion could not accomplish. Thus he avoids any direct reference to the sexual prohibitions in the book of Leviticus that might hamper his efforts to appeal to a liberal conscience. With the family at risk, many

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Jewish liberals can be counted on to join the opposition to gay rights in America and within the Jewish community.

The family-values argument reveals a preoccupation with the family that has itself become dangerous to Jewish continuity. As important as family is to the historic enterprise of the Jewish people, it is after all not the goal of our efforts but a means of accomplishing it. It is a potent but imperfect and sometimes unwieldy tool employed in the service of the covenant. The goals of the Torah are wide and deep, universal and particular, public and private. Many of these goals cannot be accomplished exclusively in or through the family, and some can be in tension with it.

Family as a goal in itself directs our attention away from the widow and the orphan, the unmarried and the divorced. The inappropriate preoccupation with family encourages parents to funnel the lion's share of their Jewish energy into their children and to ignore their own Jewishness.

Kimelman's narrow conception of Judaism helps him portray any challenge to the normative family as a grave danger to Judaism. Instead, he employs a number of inaccurate analogies and confusing metaphors to support his case. For example, he fails to demonstrate, how the acceptance of homosexual commitments endangers heterosexual marriage. Kimelman claims that a "Gresham's Law" operates in relation to sex. Non-procreative, or as he calls it, "bad" sex, would tend to drive "good" sex out of the social system.

This boggles the mind. First, non-procreative sex is not bad sex—not for Jews, anyway. While procreation is clearly an important value, sexual pleasure does not lose its legitimacy in non-procreative settings. For Jews, sexual expression is not merely an appetite, but a central means to affirm and celebrate each other as images of God. Sex as a communication of loving has enormous power to affirm human dignity.

Second, what does Gresham's Law have to do with sex? Will easy access to one kind of sex really drive the other out of circulation? Kimelman argues that homosexual sex is less demanding and easier to enjoy because it has no generative consequences. Kimelman apparently believes that lazy heterosexuals might find gay life more comfortable, more hassle-free. Does he think that straight people who don't want the bother of having or raising children would prefer to try homosexuality rather than use a condom? Sexual desire alone no longer imposes marriage or family upon us. With birth control widely available childbearing is increasingly—and among Jews almost exclusively—an act of choice.

Parents raise their children, despite the difficulties, amid great love and satisfaction. My friends and relatives who have become fathers and mothers talk of the births of their children as the most incredible moments of their lives, a joy that connects them to the mystery of life itself. Professor Kimelman does not know the pain most gay people experience in the routine exclusion from this chapter of life.

Most straight people underestimate this loss for gay people: "If it is so important to be a father, then get married." When we respond that it is just not possible, we are again misunderstood. "Oh, that's because sex is too important to you." No again! For most of us, the contortion is too great. We know that we will not be adequate mates for spouses of the opposite sex, not because we cannot function sexually, but because we are not able to love and be loved in a way that is fully mutual and deep. We will constantly disappoint and be disappointed. Everyone wants sexual fulfillment, but many, if not most, people live in good relationships with much less sexual fulfillment than they might like. What couples need to feel, whether or not the sex is great, is that they belong in each other's arms.

Although it is surely politically incorrect, in at least one way I see gayness as a handicap, and not only in regard to the social milieu. For those who want to raise a family, gayness is a sterility of sorts, experienced in some similar ways as a bodily impediment to making a family. Heterosexuals are blessed with a loving that is ordinarily generative. Being gay, then, is a problematic quirk of fate in regard to family that challenges me to make it work anyway. In the tradition, life always finds a way.

In ancient Israel, the desire for life was so strong that sexual taboos were put aside for the sake of life. Sexual relations between a brother and sister-in-law were strictly forbidden in ordinary circumstances. But if a cruel fate took a young man's life before the birth of even one child, his brother was asked to marry his widow and raise children in the deceased brother's name.

The levirate duty supersedes the law in Leviticus. What was prohibited becomes obligatory. The power of life and memory overcomes both the prohibition and the punishment: Barrenness is turned into hope. If only symbolically, a wife and brother reverse the fate of their husband and brother by becoming agents of new life. This is indeed not a normative family, yet death is conquered and new life born.

There are numerous biblical examples of this principle. Lot's daughters, at the edge of the maelstrom, thought the world had ended with the destruction of

Sodom, and that life itself would cease with them. The Torah relates that they made their father drunk and then, on successive nights, slept with him to sustain life. Moab is born of one of these incestuous encounters. Ruth is a Moabite woman, returning from Moab with her mother-in-law Naomi to Israel. Both are widows and childless. Ruth discovers a relative of Naomi, an older man who might redeem them both from poverty and even childlessness. She steals into his chamber at night and uncovers his legs, or perhaps his genitals. He awakes to find her at his feet. Why does the tradition praise Ruth for this seduction? Because she wished to sustain life against the odds.

Tamar is widowed and childless. Her brother-in-law, Onan, marries her but defies the intent of the levirate duty. He sleeps with Tamar, but not wanting to sire children in his brother's name, spills his seed on the ground. Onan dies childless and Tamar is now left waiting for her father-in-law, Judah, to arrange for his third son, Shela, to complete the levirate duty. Time passes, Judah's wife dies, and Tamar decides she must take matters into her own hands. She veils herself and waits by the roadside where Judah will pass. Judah takes her as a roadside prostitute, sleeps with her, and leaves her with pieces of his memory and identity, his signet ring, cord, and staff. Later, when she becomes pregnant, she is accused of adultery, being betrothed, as it were, to Shelah. At first, it seems she has violated a sexual taboo and must die. By the end we learn that it is Judah and his sons who have selfishly violated taboos. Tamar is vindicated because only she is truly dedicated to life and to memory.

The family lines in the Bible are interrupted by death and contorted by the intricacies of sexual mores and desire. Lot's daughter, Tamar and Ruth all carry and renew life in this crazy, unpredictable world. Through them the king messiah, David is born. David is the symbol of the final redemption, which is like David himself, just a shred of life, fragile and flawed, finding its way to Jerusalem.

Many gay people today have found ways to create families despite the physical challenges and social barriers. In San Francisco's outreach synagogue to gays and lesbians, Sha'ar Zahav, there have been six babies born within the last six months. One of the proud fathers is a good friend who for many years has wanted to become a father. Two years ago he met a wonderful lesbian woman who shared his desire for parenthood. After a number of months they developed an agreement that spelled out all the details of their family arrangement, including a large section on the Jewish upbringing of their child. Elijah David was born two months ago.

In a nearby community, a Jewish family struggled to accept their two gay sons. The younger one was lost to AIDS five years ago. The older brother recently adopted a baby boy, and I helped to arrange for a *brit milah* (circumcision ceremony). As this man held his child and pronounced the name he chose for his son—the name of his brother—there was not a dry eye to be found. Is this not life finding a way, Professor Kimelman? Isn't this what families do?

Although there is little if any justification to support the family-values argument, the images of gay threat to the family are used effectively, if uncritically, as a key element in anti-gay rhetoric. The gay sub-culture unfortunately provides an ample supply of shocking counter-cultural images to whet the appetite of any conservative defender of the family and douse the flames of the most ardent liberal.

But the truth is that the gay subculture is not descriptive of the vast majority of gay people. Homosexuality defines no single lifestyle. It carries with it no set of behaviors or habits, no specific mannerisms or political views, no religious outlooks or sexual mores. Most homosexuals want what anyone would want: a comfortable place to live, a rewarding occupation, lasting friendships, a committed love, a community, and even a family.

In his recent book, *A Place at the Table,* Bruce Bawer, a gay journalist, lambastes the highly vocal and visible minority of gays who equate gayness with promiscuity, political correctness, and exhibitionism. He claims that they seriously misrepresent gay life. This is true partly because most gays who lead mainstream, often closeted, lives have kept out of the public eye and the debate. After two decades of the gay liberation movement, we have not even begun to communicate who we are.

The great majority of homosexuals have no desire to destroy institutions. We just want to be part of them. And it is no different in the Jewish community. The majority of gay Jews, even after much rejection, want to be part of Jewish families, Jewish communities.

Kimelman and the others who share his fears have shaped a set of demands that work as a double-bind. Family-values advocates attribute the rejection of gays to gay promiscuity, exhibitionism, and a vague array of counter-cultural values that threaten the normative family. Ironically, when gay people wish to join synagogues as couples, celebrate committed relationships, and build families there is even a greater public outcry. Professor Kimelman seems to suggest that gay people who establish committed relationships and make

families are a deeper threat to family values than the gays whose lifestyle he condemns.

Rabbis and communal leaders need to understand that the young gay person is terribly confused. The gay sub-culture offers a hyper-sexual and/or hyper-political identity which in either case revolves around sexual desire. Gay sexual desire in itself is not a moral problem, but a life focused around sex is. If our communal and religious institutions ignore the gay youth, lock him out, push her away, these young people will have no haven but the one available in the gay subculture.

Indeed, if the Jewish community were truly family oriented, gay people would be offered communal services to aid them in family making. The Jewish community provides family services that help sterile heterosexual couples adopt children. Why not offer the same service to gay couples who are committed to each other and to raising Jewish children? If the Jewish community is invested in making Jewish singles into Jewish families, why not make gay couples into Jewish families in just the same or similar ways? Instead we are told, "Live in the closet or in the Village, but not among us."

While the family-values argument fails logically, it succeeds emotionally. What the argument conveys faithfully are the fears people harbor in regard to gayness in general, and gay visibility in particular. And because its central image is family, it speaks to parents whose fears in regard to their children are magnified.

Gayness is frightening to parents because they do not want their children to have to face the hardships that gay people must face today: the hatred, the exclusion, the struggle to find love. Worst of all, parents are powerless to protect their children from being gay. It is easier to feign control than to admit vulnerability. Thinking of gayness as a sickness that one can catch, or a taste that one can acquire rather than a given aspect of identity is comforting. But such a perception casts gay people either as infected lepers, or as missionaries seeking converts. In either case, we are safer kept away, out of sight, and out of the reach of young and impressionable children.

Beyond the generalized worry parents have for their kids, there are two kinds of sexual fear our public presence seems to generate. What we threaten, I think, is not the family per se, but the great certainties associated with the "world of the family." Families tend to keep the lines that divide men and women neat and clean. As a conservative institution, the family helps us to order and limit what otherwise might be a chaotic array of possibilities. It makes us comfortable to know what to expect of ourselves and others. For many heterosexuals, that world is made volatile and unpredictable by the intrusion of same-sex desire. We speak of children being in the "spitting image" of their parents. When families construct belonging in limited ways, it is easy for the mirror to break; for many parents, the news of their child's gayness shatters the mirror of parent-child resemblance.

Gay people are fearsome in one other important way. Somehow we have come to represent to white middle-class America the boundary-smashing power of sexuality. Having taken our sexual otherness into the streets, we have come to symbolize or even to embody sex itself. This is why frightened heterosexuals want to keep us in the closet. Our public presence seems to raise old, hitherto settled questions about how to manage the power of sexuality, how to attend to it, or to turn away from it.

Being outside the norms has some benefit for thinking through the moral and emotional intricacies of sexuality. The view from outside the heterosexual world reveals, among other things, the imbalance of power between the sexes that needs to be healed.

But being outside the norms means that we have none. We possess a sexuality that is essentially culturally unfettered. Gay liberation has expanded the human repertoire for loving, but having thrown off oppressive sexual mores gay people have been hesitant to accept any standards of sexual propriety. Too often, the gay community has condoned and even celebrated an obsessive preoccupation with the sexual. We have neither accepted straight norms, nor have we fully shaped our own.

Every society makes rules and patterns of behavior to domesticate the sex drive. We are just beginning to develop the cultural, spiritual, and intellectual frameworks to manage a different sexuality. In part, it is the lack of these institutional frameworks, so available to heterosexuals, that makes gay desire so fearsome. Family is just one of those institutional frameworks that we can now employ to move from freedom to holiness.

The family is always a subset of a world. And since the Jewish people has traversed many worlds, we have constructed many kinds of families. The biblical family and many of the models of Jewish family throughout history have varied greatly from the narrow institution called the modern nuclear family. Gay and lesbian families thus signal a return to a more expansive understanding of family which enhances rather than undermines family's most important lesson: We all become better human beings inside of dependable, loving relationships. □

Reflections on Hannah's Prayer

Marcia Falk



Every year, on the first day of the year—the first day of Rosh Hashanah—the synagogue readings feature the poignant story of Hannah's prayer, as told in I Samuel 1:1 - 2:10:

> There was a man from the highlands of Ephraim named Elkanah. . . .He had two wives, one named Hannah and the other named Peninnah. Peninnah had children but Hannah was childless. . . . Her husband Elkanah would ask her, "Hannah, why do you weep, and why do you not eat, and why is your heart so heavy? Am I not more good to you than ten sons?"
>
> Once Hannah rose after eating and drinking at Shiloh while Eli the priest was sitting at the entrance to the temple of God. Her spirit was greatly pained and she prayed to God, weeping profusely. She vowed a vow, saying: "O God of Hosts, if you will look upon and see the plight of your servant, if You will not forget but remember your servant and give your servant a son, then I will dedicate him to God for all the days of his life, and no razor shall ever touch his head" [that is to say, she would enter him into the Nazarite service of God].
>
> As she continued praying to God, Eli watched her mouth. Hannah spoke in her heart; her lips moved, but she uttered no sound; and Eli took her for a drunkard. Eli said to her: "How long will you go on behaving like a drunkard! Put away your wine!"
>
> Then Hannah replied, saying: "No, my lord, I am a woman in anguish, and I have had neither wine nor hard liquor, but have been pouring my heart out before God. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking all this time out of the greatness of my concern and out of my vexation."
>
> Then Eli answered, saying: "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant the petition you have asked of Him." She said: "May your humble handmaid find favor in your eyes." The woman went on her way, and ate, and her face was no longer sad.
>
> Early in the morning they arose, worshiped before God, and returned to their home in Ramah. And Elkanah had sexual relations with his wife, and God remembered her. And in due time Hannah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Samuel (*Shemu'el*) because she asked him (*she'iltiv*) of God.
>
> When Elkanah went on a pilgrimage with his household to make the yearly sacrifice to God and to fulfill his vow, Hannah did not go, but said to her

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husband: "Not until the boy is weaned. Then I will bring him to appear before God, and he will stay there forever. . . ." So the woman stayed, and she nursed her son, until she weaned him. When he was weaned, she took him with her. . .and brought him to the house of God in Shiloh. And the boy was still young. They slaughtered the sacrificial bull and brought the boy to Eli.

And she said: "O my lord, as surely as your soul lives, my lord, I am the woman who stood here next to you praying to God. For this child I prayed, and God gave him to me, God gave me what I asked (*she'elati asher sha'alti*). And so I too will lend him (*hish'iltihu*) to God, all his days he will be lent (*sha'ul*) to God."

And they worshiped God there. And Hannah prayed. . . .

Hannah has long been a character close to my heart—for many reasons, but perhaps above all because she is a woman misunderstood. In this story, she is misunderstood twice: as she weeps—in her sorrow—by Elkanah, her husband; as she prays—in her yearning—by Eli, the high priest. Yet Hannah has a voice; she means to be heard.

Hannah's husband, Elkanah, asks her why she weeps: "Am I not more good to you than ten sons?" And Hannah doesn't answer, because she knows from the way he puts the question that he has not understood. He, after all, already has sons and daughters (not to mention two wives). And although Elkanah loves Hannah, and gives her double portions of his sacrifice, and speaks to her not without tenderness, he is far removed from her pain. As a father, with all the benefits that fatherhood bestows on him in that patriarchal world, he is in no position to suggest that Hannah should be satisfied without children; is he promising to provide for her, as children did for parents, in her old age? And it is outright presumptuous of Elkanah to expect his spousal love to fulfill Hannah's yearning to be a mother. Elkanah reveals with his question—"Am I not more good to you than ten sons?"—how different his view of relationships is from that of his wife. For Hannah cannot think of the love that she is ready to give her child as replaceable by the love she has for her spouse—or indeed for anyone else. She doesn't answer Elkanah's question because she knows that even if she did, he still would not understand.

Trying to understand Hannah, I think of two other biblical stories that touch on the relations between parents and children. I think first of King David and his rebellious son Absalom. When Absalom is killed by David's own army, David is rent and cries out, "My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would that I had died in your place, Absalom, my son, my son" (II Samuel 19: 1). His grief is inconsolable, undiminished by his ties to others: Presumably none of his eleven wives, nor any of his more than a score of offspring, can compensate for the loss of his Absalom—his son, his one and only Absalom.

The other example I think of is the story of the binding of Isaac (which, as it happens—surely not by coincidence—is read in synagogue on the second day of Rosh Hashanah). When God decides to test Abraham's faith by commanding him to sacrifice Isaac, this is what God says: "Take your son, your only one, the one whom you love, Isaac, and go to Moriah and offer him up on a hill that I will point out to you" (Genesis: 22:2). There is a problem—what medieval commentators call a "difficulty"—in this verse: Why does God say "take. . .your only one"? What about Ishmael? Abraham had *two* sons, and this seeming inconsistency in the text has for centuries afforded translators and commentators opportunities to speculate and excuses to amend. But I think there is in fact no inconsistency here; the language of this command is perfect in its emotional truth. For in this terrible context—at the singular and absolute moment when Isaac's life is threatened—the storyteller knows that Isaac *is* to Abraham an *only*—absolutely, singularly *only*.

We don't hear Abraham's answer: What could he possibly say at such a time? And we hear nothing at all of Sarah. What must she have felt that morning as she watched Abraham take Isaac up the hill, Abraham carrying wood and a knife and no sacrificial lamb with him? What did Sarah see in the eyes of her son, her only son, the beloved child of her old age, for whom she, like Hannah, must have wept and for whom she finally laughed?

As the mother of an only child—a much wished-for child of my middle (if not old) age—I live all the time with the unspoken and unspeakable terror of Abraham and Sarah, the *ordinary* unspeakable vulnerability known as parenthood. I used to think that my vulnerability was worse than that of some others because I have only one child and, at my age, will probably not have more. But a friend, the mother of two grown sons, said to me, "More doesn't help, doesn't matter. I don't have two children: I have two ones, two onlys."

What my friend knew (what perhaps all parents know) was that in the context of loss, each child is an only to her or his parents. Human relationships do not fill in for, do not substitute for, do not replace each other. So when Elkanah asks Hannah why she weeps, when he asks if he can't substitute for the child she so desires, he may be trying to help—but he's missing the point.

But you are perhaps wondering how I got from Hannah's *longing* for a child to David's inconsolable *grief* over the loss of a child, to Abraham's and Sarah's *terror* in the face of such loss? Because Hannah is not yet a mother,

you may assume that she cannot possibly know parental grief or terror. You may, perhaps, even find her a bit greedy: after all, she has a devoted husband; why isn't she satisified? Indeed, if one has not experienced Hannah's longing, it may at first be difficult to understand that Hannah's sorrow *is* a kind of grief, that her yearning is a kind of terror—-the fear that what one so desperately desires—what one, in a way, already loves—will be forever denied.

Difficult as it often is to grasp someone else's pain, it is easy to judge another's behavior. So Eli the priest doesn't hear Hannah's silent prayer; he sees her lips moving and calls her a drunk. And Hannah does not seem surprised by Eli's reaction. Perhaps she expects it. Respectfully, employing the language deemed appropriate to her social station and to his, she tells him that she is deeply distressed and that she has been praying, and she asks him not to judge her harshly. He, after all, is an authority who has, at the very least, the moral power to judge and to condemn. She, in contrast (and in her own words), is a mere "servant."

The social politics of this situation are at once ordinary and extraordinary. A seemingly ordinary woman, a woman immersed in longing, Hannah prays from the depths of her heart, silently, privately. In this behavior, she follows no convention—and she becomes extraordinary. At this moment, talking to God, she does something entirely her own: She stands at the sanctuary—the sanctuary where priests officiate as men offer up their sacrifices—and she prays, using her own words and her own voice, without intermediaries. Her act is all the more extraordinary in that, by all accounts, she is the first woman—indeed, the first "ordinary" person—to pray in any sanctuary, at this point in time before institutionalized prayer has replaced sacrifice as the means of public worship.[1] In so acting, Hannah stands poised to become a symbol for rabbinic Judaism, providing for the early rabbis—the Amoraim—a model of authentic prayer, which is to say, "the prayer of the heart"—although all Hannah has meant to do is to speak her *own* heart and to be heard. We may call her intentions spiritual, but the result of her action is both spiritual and political. Hannah discovers her own voice and legitimates that voice.

And the high priest—no ordinary man but a man of spiritual authority, which is of course also political authority in that time—sees her, rebukes her, and deems her out of line, out of her mind. This, alas, is the predictable part of the story—the disturbingly ordinary part.

Hannah's response to Eli combines both the ordinary and the extraordinary. Though she speaks deferentially, respecting convention and the social order, the fact that she speaks at all, that she asserts herself and *explains* herself to Eli, is surely an act of courage. Hannah has self-respect, and she means to be heard. Her protest—do not condemn a person until you have stood in her place, until you are sure she is guilty—is a political act. From it the rabbis will later devise the ruling that one must not let a false charge to oneself go uncorrected: One must defend oneself and not be apathetic to what others think (*Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot* 31b).

So impressed were the rabbis with Hannah's prayer *and* with her defense of it to Eli that they interpolated the following words into those of the Bible story: "Hannah said to him [Eli]: You are no person of authority in this matter, and the Spirit of Holiness is not upon you, since you have been suspicious of me in this matter," and further, "You are no person of authority, nor is the Divine Presence or the Spirit of Holiness with you, since you have presumed me guilty rather than innocent. Are you not aware that I am a woman in anguish?" (*Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Berakhot* 31b).

This bit of Talmudic midrash, which imputes to Hannah somewhat more chutzpah than the biblical author allows her, invites us, too, to enter into the story with our imaginations; once there, it is hard not to speculate about other changes we might like to see. For example, we might wonder how the story would have looked if Hannah's prayer had been met with a different reaction from Eli the priest. What would it have been like if instead of automatically assuming that this woman talking to herself was a drunk, Eli had paused to listen to Hannah, bearing witness to her spiritual expression? Might he have learned, from the woman who called herself his servant, about the prayer of the heart? Might the meaning of spiritual authority have been altered at that moment?

Indeed, the rabbis of the Talmud seem to suggest that Hannah's response to Eli appropriately raises the whole question of spiritual authority. Yet, tragically, the rabbis did not go on to revise the social order. On the contrary, the bitter irony is that these very rabbis, in creating communal prayer, neglected to give Hannah's daughters—the women of Israel—a place in it.

And, we might further speculate, what would it have been like if Hannah's grief had been met with a different response from her husband? What if instead of attempting to talk her out of her feelings, Elkanah had simply respected them? Might the meaning of comfort, of empathy—of relationship itself—have changed in that moment? Had Elkanah ceased patronizing and begun listening, might he have begun to glimpse the possibility of reciprocity in marriage? Might Hannah have become Elkanah's equal in his eyes at the moment when he stopped condescending to her pain and began instead to

respect it? Might Hannah have become Elkanah's teacher in matters of the heart?

And what would it have been like if centuries of interpreters and commentators had taken Hannah seriously, on her own terms—as the rabbis of the Talmud began, but ultimately failed, to do? How differently might the tradition have been shaped if, over the millennia, Hannah's voice had clearly and consistently been heard within it? What turns of plot might the midrashic narratives have taken, what concerns might have been addressed in the legal debates, what images might have emerged in the evolving liturgy? The thought of what has been lost in the silencing of Hannah's daughters is overwhelming—the cause of genuine despair.

We might, then, choose to reframe these questions in a more hopeful way. Instead of lamenting, we might take it upon ourselves to pick up where the rabbis left off. We could begin by asking what it might mean for us—as individuals and as communities—to hear Hannah's voice today. We might also ask what it would be like to create a community of empathy, where silent pain is given a voice. What, indeed, would it be like to have a truly inclusive spiritual community, a community of equals, where all could pray together in the language of the heart? What might communal prayer sound like if it included everyone's voice?

The recitation of Hannah's story, with its triumphant ending, can turn the festival of Rosh Hashanah into an excruciating experience for Jews who—like Hannah—suffer the grief of infertility but whose prayers—unlike Hannah's—go unanswered. And the synagogue can be a painful place for Jews who—like Hannah—need to pray from their hearts, in words that are an honest expression of the heart.

For many Jews today—and especially many Jewish women—the traditional Hebrew liturgy, constructed by male authorities and entrenched over time by male usage, does not express the language of the heart. In particular, in its address to an exclusively male divinity, this liturgy denies Jewish women their full humanity—that humanity which is created in the image of the divine. And in its dearth of meaningful imagery that speaks to their reality, this liturgy often leaves both women and men feeling unrepresented and unfulfilled. Yet these Jews count themselves as members of *klal Yisra'el*, the community of Israel; they want, like Hannah, to be heard. Hannah is a woman misunderstood, misheard—and she lives here among us today.

But those at the borders are *often* misheard, at least by those standing at the front and center. How do we begin to hear the muffled voices? In the words of the feminist theologian Nelle Morton, we need "to hear each other into speech," so that listening becomes the stimulus for expression instead of (as we are more accustomed to having it) speech being the stimulus for our hearing. We begin, in other words, by reversing our expectations and our norms.

Indeed, reversals are what so poignantly mark the biblical narrative of Hannah's prayer. Not the least of these comes at the end of the story, when Hannah the petitioner becomes Hannah the benefactor, who approaches even her relationship to God with self-respect and with the assumption of reciprocity. The Hebrew author emphasizes this reciprocity with a play on words: Hannah will lend Samuel to God because God has, as it were, lent ear to her voice and granted her request.

And reversals are what Hannah explicitly celebrates in her second prayer, the public one that comes at the end of the story (and that was, undoubtedly, added to the story at a later date, but that nonetheless fits there beautifully). In this prayer, said aloud for the whole community to hear, Hannah unfurls a vision of a world in which the arrogant are humbled and the mighty fall, while the weak are strengthened, the hungry are sated, and the disempowered gain access to places of honor. The voice of Hannah, misunderstood by the men of her day, has been fully heard by God and strengthened by Hannah's own experience; with great power it moves outward, extending the meaning—and the politics—of the story into broader realms, and into the future:

> The bows of the mighty men are broken and those who stumble are girded with strength. Those who had plenty to eat now have to go to work to earn their wages, and the hungry are no longer hungry. . . .God raises the poor up out of the dust, and lifts the beggar up from the gutter to be set beside princes, so that they will inherit the throne of glory.

This is truly a story of reversals—a story that Hannah enters as an ordinary woman desiring to be a mother and leaves as an extraordinary woman, a prophet seeking a new world order. She has tested her inner voice, allowed it to pour out, and it has ultimately been heard (and even answered!). No wonder, perhaps, that her legacy has been silenced; and no wonder that it should persist in being heard.

[1] We know from the biblical texts that priests gave the priestly blessing in sanctuaries and that King Solomon prayed at the Jerusalem sanctuary (the First Temple); the Bible also records multiple instances of prayers said by individuals in other settings. But Hannah's prayer is a unique instance in the Bible of an ordinary person's prayer offered in the cultic setting—the sanctuary in which sacrifices were offered. As such, Hannah's prayer was a historical point of nexus for the rabbis, who sought to replace sacrifice altogether with "the prayer of the heart." In our terms, her act is noteworthy as a personal, spiritual action which, *in context*, implicitly challenges the hierarchized social and religious order. □

BOOK REVIEW

Mother Knew Best

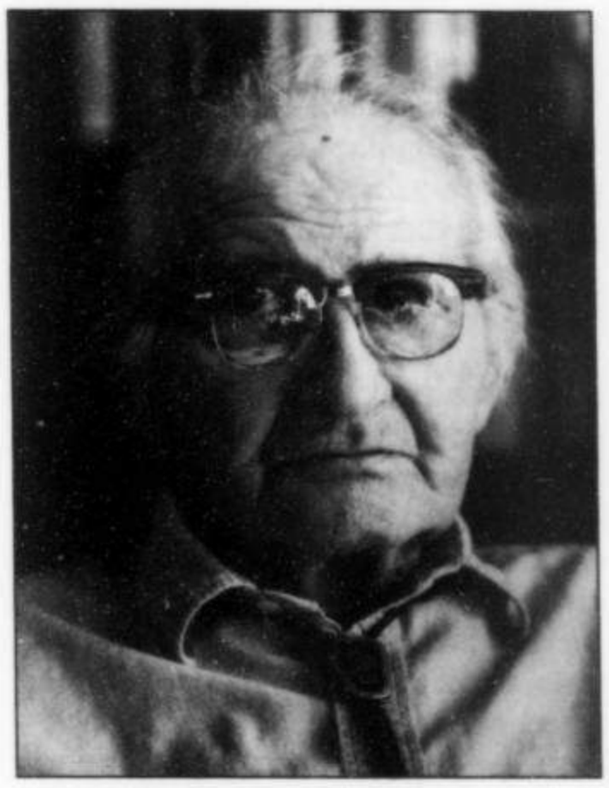
Robert Cohen

Mercy of a Rude Stream: A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park, by Henry Roth, St. Martin's Press, 285 pp., 1994.

These are not exactly salad days for American letters. Publishing houses, after a decade of corporate annexation, are suddenly folding like stage-flats on all sides. So long, Summit. Bon voyage, Poseidon. Adieu, Atheneum. All this bottom-line divestment means, among other things, that a number of very good editors are home spending quality time with the kids. Even the elite houses now rely upon a steady diet of sex and murder, and that's in their literary novels—a distinction which admittedly, at this point in the culture, begins to seem almost quaint.

Under these depressed conditions, then, who can be blamed for seizing on a story as fantastically rich and improbably hopeful as the third coming of Henry Roth?

Roth's now-classic first novel, *Call It Sleep*, was published in 1934. He was twenty-eight. This makes him roughly a contemporary of John Steinbeck and James T. Farrell; or, to put it another way, within easy generational hailing distance of such modernist titans as Hemingway, Faulkner, and Joyce. A second novel was signed up by Maxwell Perkins and then abandoned in the late 1930s. The sixty-year publication gap that followed is one of those otherworldly statistics, like DiMaggio's hitting streak, which looms at the outer reaches of possibility, dwarfing all comers in shadow. Even J.D. Salinger (thirty-four years) seems, by comparison, merely coy, after all. Everyone



Henry Roth

knows he's alive. But who knew Henry Roth was alive, and still writing, until his reappearance this past year?

Incredibly, this has all happened to Roth before.

Thirty years ago, utterly blocked, he was living in Maine with his family and working as, of all things, a waterfowl farmer, when *Call It Sleep* made an astonishing resurrection. Out of print for decades, the book—a coming of age story set among the Yiddish-speaking immigrants of lower Manhattan—was roused from slumbering obscurity by an enterprising young editor, dusted off and given new life as a mass market paperback. The results were, literally, phenomenal. Irving Howe, on the front page of The *New York Times Book Review*, called it "one of the few genuinely distinguished novels written by a 20th century American." Hundreds of thousands of copies were sold.

An entire new generation of readers, perhaps two, discovered the squalid, noisy beauty of Roth's Lower East Side, and entered the labyrinth of longing, rage, and incomprehension through which seven-year-old David Schearl—mother-haunted, father-plagued—wanders in search of a self:

> Eagerly he glanced up at the transom above his door. It was unlit—stained only by indigo twilight. His heart sank. Then she was out—his mother was out—and only his father was there, asleep probably. He stopped irresolutely, hemmed in by two fears, the dark and his father.... He tiptoed into a blue room, aware of a blue washboard on a blue washtub, aware of his father's throaty breathing in the further bedroom. He sheered away from it—where was she?—and entered the frontroom. She was sitting beside the window, her dark face in outline against the frosty blue of the pane. His heart leapt.

The power here—and the novel is crammed to bursting with such passages—resides not only in the heightened sensory receptivity, the tingly super-consciousness of David's vision, but in the thematic contrast that underlies it: dark male rage versus the light of maternal refuge. This Oedipal struggle and its attendant longing, confusion, and alienation, are often more— but never less—than a psychic analogue for the immigrant parents' efforts to make a home for themselves in the New World. The novel begins, appropriately enough, with dashed expectations ("You're thin. Ach! Then here in the new land is the same old poverty"), as the immigrant ship, "drifting slowly and with cancelled momentum as if reluctant" nears the dock. That "reluc-

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tant" is apt. Scene after scene goes on to catalogue, in exquisite and often tortuous detail, the humiliations and apprehensions of displacement.

Roth's much celebrated dialogue reinforces this theme. One has only to compare the bumpy musical poetry of the Yiddish ("And now I'm so weary," David's aunt complains, "my breast seems empty of its heart") with the harsh pidgin English David is forced to speak outside the home ("Ow! Kencha see wea yuh goin?") to get an idea of how desperate and schizoid his predicament might seem to him, how urgently he might wish to forge a new identity as a means of escape, and how the vehicle for that identity might be language itself. And how that effort might culminate in an extraordinary, haunting novel.

I go on like this about *Call It Sleep* because I am so grateful to have just re-read it — which one had better do before approaching Roth's 3,000-page, six-volume new work, *Mercy of a Rude Stream*, of which *A Star Shines Over Mt. Morris Park* is the first volume. It also helps if one has at least some acquaintance with the author's life story: his David Schearlish childhood; his failed "proletarian novel" of the thirties, his enduring writers block (or, as he prefers to call it, "counterdrive"); his half-century marriage to Muriel Parker; his move to New Mexico; his ill health. These inform the new work in ways both obvious and subtle; indeed, the web of their interconnections is its subject.

The family of *Mercy*, though altered in a number of ways, is still recognizably that of *Call It Sleep*, and the novel's precipitating action—their move from a predominantly Jewish world (the Lower East Side) to an alien, heterogenous one (Harlem); a second and in some ways even more alienating exodus—is again taken more or less directly from Roth's own experience. Seven-year-old David Schearl has metamorphosed into fourteen-year-old Ira Stigman. The raging father, somewhat defanged, has lit out for St. Louis to earn his fortune. Mother is being wooed by Uncle Louis the mailman. The names and ages have changed, but the difficulties of adjustment and confusions of identity remain. As does the Oedipal struggle. Ira's powerlessness and passivity, his tangled sexual synapses, are evidenced over and over in his encounters with older men—his father, a tramp in the park, a teacher at school—and with the bullying Irish kids who are his new neighbors. "Don't be like your father," his mother admonishes, not untypically. "Don't quail so before a goy."

Mother still exerts her own gravitational pull. Waiting at home, wryly stoical in her loneliness and disappointment, she remains for Ira the repository of hidden knowledge, of life's sexual secrets:

> "He could see Mom still on the screen of closed eyelids, but he was falling asleep...
>
> And awoke—to his horror! He was playing bad against Mom's naked legs, lying on his side and pushing, rubbing, squeezing his stiff peg between Mom's thighs. She woke up.
>
> 'I didn't mean it," Ira wailed in his shame. I was dreaming—'
>
> She laughed indulgently. 'Go back to sleep.'"

Indeed, why should she be surprised? Since the beginning of *Call It Sleep*, Mother has been refuge, advocate, angel of mercy, soulmate; she has been everything. At fourteen, however, the strain of having one's mother be everything is beginning to show. What Ira could use, of course, is a good shrink. But this is 1917, so that's out. A different neighborhood, or a different father to model himself upon—Uncle Louis, say—might offer some hope, but Mom won't go along. What he needs is a new organizing principle. But where to find it?

One place he won't look, apparently, is religion:

> Bar Mitzvah brought realization into sharp focus, not of the parting of his ways from Jewishness, but of never wanting to return. Vitiated for him, repugnant virtually all aspects of what he was to learn in time bore the name Diaspora. He knew it then only as Jewishness, detested it, was held to it, to the extent that he was held by a single bond: his attachment to Mom, his love for her...

In the odd shorthand of passages like this, we are aware of Roth reaching backwards across the span of a century, straining to recapture, reinterpret, revise his formative experiences—trying, one feels, to get it right. This is an attempt, perhaps, to unearth the source, discover the root causes, of all the *tsouris* that followed. Certainly there are overt intimations, in scenes like the one quoted above, of a shameful incestuous burden his first book could only hint at — one which Roth (who not long after leaving his own mother's house was deeply involved with and dependent upon an older woman, Eda Lou Walton, to whom he dedicated *Call It Sleep*) takes to be defining. "Devoted Mama," he writes, in the retrospective voice that punctuates, annotates, and sometimes enervates the new novel. "If there were a crowbar that one could drive under the boulder of the psyche, and tumble the boulder out of the way, I would."

But there are other boulders as well, lined up behind her. If *Sleep*'s David Schearl is portrayed as a kind of baffled innocent, Roth, these many painful years later, seems to have exhausted all sympathy for his early self. Ira's sensitivity, his weakness, his "passivity and gelatinous mentality" derive, he suggests, not merely from the matrix of a raging father and a too-loving mother; that sort of blame is too easy. Nature and nurture are intermingled. Thus the choices Ira does make—and Roth laments that they are invariably the wrong ones—emerge as doomed, self-defeating, and wholly his own:

> They viewed a dark, frenetic movie, dark and frenetic as the makeup under the Cabalist rabbi's eyes, as he pronounced, with sound effects from the musicians in the pit, the awesome tetragrammaton that brought the image of clay to life. But unforgettable, the sorcerer-rabbi's swiftness in snatching from the newly animate figure the little plug in his bosom, where life resided...

Ira/Roth too, it seems, attempted to snatch out a plug, and in the passage that follows the elderly writer, reflecting, gives it back its name: "Jewishness... Odd. And when he tried to pluck it out...creative inanition followed."

Here too we must return to the details of Roth's own story: specifically, his struggle with an earlier form of political correctness. Roth has conceded

in interviews that his attempt to become a socialist realist writer, to please the Communist Party who found his first book too "introspective," perhaps cost him the particularism that was his true subject. Then too, his marriage to Muriel Parker, yet another maternal figure (and a gentile as well), posed, at least at the beginning, another challenge to his own brand of Motherized Jewishness. It is a test which Roth seems now to believe he may have failed, at the cost of his creativity. Presumably the volumes that follow will explore some of these matters at length; here, we must content ourselves with a handful of cryptic references.

There is, of course, something almost ludicrously personal about a project like this: a settling of accounts, an ultimate reckoning with what the author refers to, rather bitterly, as "my golden opportunities." No doubt it is this obsessional quality, this prodigious breadth of purpose, which accounts for the book's unique, often clumsily hybrid form. Part fictional reconstruction, part self-analysis, part loose essayistic rumination upon matters large and small, public (the Mideast peace process) and private (love for his wife, difficulties with his children, the pain of rheumatoid arthritis, computer troubles)—Roth's *Mercy* is simultaneously wide-open and maddeningly hermetic, an enveloping, self-referential system which the casual reader may well decide is not worth the entry. Not that this is a bad thing, necessarily. Sixty years, after all, is a pretty uncasual length of time. Why should Roth care?

Still, prose style is a delicate instrument; one would hesitate to put down a violin and take it up again a half-century later. As a piece of writing—which is all, strictly speaking, a novel is—*Mercy* often feels somewhat sketchy and rushed, even at times perfunctory ("1920. Summer was near. Things were happening, simultaneously, integrally"); only occasionally does it recall the fervid, muscular beauty of *Call It Sleep*. There are, however, several rousing set-pieces, such as the final section, a long, Dantesque descent into the bowels of a gourmet grocery store, which offer considerable evidence of Roth's by-no-means-exhausted talent. In so doing, they provide a clue to what we already know will be the means of Ira's escape. "Oh, stories told you everything...you were more in their world than in the Jewish world...and now that he was what he was and couldn't break away from their world and didn't want to, maybe some day he'd find a way out of his Jewish slum world into their world."

Ultimately that search, like all searches, will prove a circular one, taking him out and then depositing him back in. But that is a long story, a life's story, and we will have to wait for subsequent volumes to read it whole.

In any era, the life of a writer is bumpy at best. Henry Roth has suffered more bumpiness over a longer time than most. But he has endured. More important, his art has endured, and with it, the questions that propel art forward and give it life:

> "And he passes below the hill on Mt. Morris Park in autumn twilight, with the evening star in the west in limpid sky above the wooden bell tower. And so beautiful it was: a rapture to behold. It set him a problem he never dreamed anyone set himself. How do you say it? Before the pale blue twilight left your eyes you had to say it, use words that said it: blue, indigo, blue, indigo...A star shines over Mt. Morris Park hill. And it's getting dark, and it's getting chill..." □

BOOK REVIEW

Up from the Streets

Jacqueline Jones

The Homeless, by Christopher Jencks. Harvard University Press, 1994, 162 pages.

Each generation of privileged Americans reinvents the problem of "homelessness." In early New England, the Puritan fathers and mothers "warned out"—that is, turned away—"strangers," newcomers who presumably had no legitimate claim on a tight-knit community's resources or goodwill. In the South, colonial elites believed that Indians who migrated seasonally were unfit for sedentary field work—hence, by their very nature, hardly worth "civilizing." Cotton planters in the Reconstruction era condemned as "roving" and "shiftless" those freed Black men and women who resisted gang labor on the plantations of their former slave masters. In the late nineteenth century, middle-class urban reformers beheld in the wretched faces of foreign-born street urchins and beggars the baneful effects of bad genes and evil companions.

At the end of the twentieth century, most Americans regard homeless people primarily as an aesthetic problem—more a blight on the social landscape than an irritating reminder of the profound inequalities in post-industrial society. We are willing to tolerate the coexistence of fabulously wealthy neighborhoods and impoverished neighborhoods located within a single

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metropolitan region, and we are accustomed to seeing slums juxtaposed with skyscrapers. But we have little patience for the intrusion of poor people into public places—sidewalks, doorways, and railroad stations—and we protest the construction of shelters for them in our backyard. A hallmark of contemporary America is residential segregation by class and race; therefore, the greatest crime committed by the homeless is their unwillingness to tuck themselves out of our sight, their refusal to "know their place," in contrast to other groups of poor folks who somehow find a way to accommodate our aesthetic sensibilities.

In *The Homeless*, Christopher Jencks defines the problem of homelessness just this way; he writes about a group he calls the "visible homeless"—people whose presence on the streets upsets the more prosperous classes. He includes in this definition "everyone who slept in a public place or a shelter during a given week." In keeping with this theme of "visibility," he focuses primarily on the homeless in the largest cities on either coast, and chooses not to discuss homelessness in rural areas at all.

Jencks, professor of sociology and urban affairs at Northwestern University, has good reasons—though he does not make them explicit—for concentrating on what he acknowledges to be a rather narrow manifestation of the problem. First, it is the "visible" homeless who constitute a political issue today; when homeless families and individuals "double up" with kin and neighbors they tastefully take themselves out of the public eye and refrain from flaunting the fact that they might be a burden to taxpayers. Second, the "visible homeless" are much easier to study, and to count; they represent a finite, identifiable group and so lend themselves to social-scientific scrutiny. And finally, a more expansive definition of homelessness would require that we examine the problem not just as a discrete, compact issue, but rather as part of a continuum of social distress. The "visible homeless" are thus a convenient group, manageable for scholarly purposes.

This volume consists of a discussion of data relevant to the problem. Jencks is most concerned with pinpointing the causes of ("visible") homelessness and accounting for its increase during the 1980s. He considers several factors—the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, "the crack epidemic," joblessness, urban renewal, "social skills and family ties," the housing market and rent control, and shelters themselves. This last chapter ("Do Shelters Cause Homelessness?") is only three pages long. Indeed, the author's mad dash through a wealth of statistics and studies alerts the reader to the fact that the book is actually an expanded review essay (a two-part series published in April 1994 issues of the *New York Review of Books*).

The book has several strengths. It is refreshing to read a study that acknowledges the disproportionate effects of poverty on Blacks (in the late 1980s, Jencks estimates, they comprised about 45 percent of all homeless adults in large cities) but avoids blaming these effects on something called "Black culture." He has no partisan axe to grind and exposes what he considers the misguided approaches of both liberal Democrats and conservative Republicans. For example, he charges that the mid-'70s policy of emptying the wards of many mental hospitals without giving the ill men and women the support services they needed resulted from "the insidious combination of liberal policies aimed at increasing personal liberty with conservative policies aimed at reducing government spending." Here Jencks is at his best—revealing the shortsightedness of both Republicans and Democrats, a failure that continues to affect more than a quarter of the visibly homeless today.

But too often, Jencks's search for the causes of homelessness leads him into a social-scientific labyrinth where cause and effect are conflated; where common sense withers under the attack of statistical "evidence"; and where inflated generalizations mask the weaknesses of the narrow, poorly designed studies upon which they are based. For example: Jencks ridicules widespread fears of violent crime in the late 1980s by suggesting that, throughout the decade, "victimization rates declined for Blacks as well as whites." He blames the journalistic equivalent of smoke and mirrors; "improved reporting and record-keeping plus highly selective news reporting...helped convince the public that their neighborhoods are more dangerous." In the late 1980s, Jencks writes, some people made an effort to move to safer neighborhoods "even though their own chances of being raped, robbed, or murdered were falling." But this neglects the fact that, spurred by the availability of semi-automatic weapons, violent crime did shoot up in certain neighborhoods during the decade. A broad generalization based on national statistics thus masks wrenching changes that have occurred in poor communities over the last two decades. The variable of place plays little role in Jencks's analysis.

He also straddles the contentious question of how much the poor victimize themselves. Jencks does manage to distance himself from policymakers and politicians who rail about the alleged character flaws of the poor. He notes that "if America had a safety net comparable to Sweden or Germany, homelessness would be rare." At the same time, he also advances the dubious proposition that "If no one drank, took drugs, lost contact with reality, or messed up at work," there would be no need for a safety net at all. And he ends the book with a quotation from a homeless woman named Shirley (profiled in Elliot Liebow's recent book, *Tell Them Who I Am: The Lives of Homeless Women*): "I'm 53 years old," Shirley says. "I failed at two marriages and I failed at every job I ever had. Is that any reason I have to live on the street?" Jencks writes, "No government program is very likely to solve Shirley's marital or employment problems. But we can keep her off the street. Because we can, we should."

But how? Jencks offers a bundle of suggestions. Cheaper housing that is also better housing would appeal to people who want to avoid dilapidated dwellings in crime-ridden neighborhoods at all costs. Safer, cleaner shelters would provide a viable alternative to sleeping on the sidewalks (though anti-social types might prefer a park bench to adhering to the strict code of behavior required in such places). Increased public expenditures, including an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit program, plentiful rent subsidies, the construction of shelters that respect individual privacy (with individual cubicles), and higher cash benefits provided for poor families, would pay off in the long run. But such ideas are politically unfeasible.

Jencks correctly points out that the much-maligned Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program actually represents a real bargain for taxpayers. The alternative cost of

providing job training for single mothers, helping them find jobs (or creating jobs for them), and then paying them enough to afford reliable transportation, health insurance, and childcare would far outstrip the price of the current welfare system. He further suggests that a day-labor market could ease able-bodied adults into gainful employment on a permanent basis. And he believes that adequate outpatient care, combined with rent vouchers and monthly welfare checks, would enable the mentally ill to live on their own.

But for all of Jencks's sophistication and sympathy, he often misses the long-range forest for the statistical trees. *The Homeless* dwells almost exclusively on the proximate causes of "visible" homelessness and ignores the structural roots of the problem. America has been settled and resettled by successive waves of displaced and dispersed peoples, a process abetted by both the state and private business. Today, historic transformations in the economy—global as well as national—shape the social contours of homelessness.

Jencks shares with other social scientists the misguided assumption that national prosperity should correlate directly with high rates of employment. "One would expect homelessness to have declined by the end of the 1980s," he writes, "since unemployment was at its lowest level in twenty years." He believes the "puzzling increase" that occurred may have been caused by the rising popularity of illegal drugs, especially crack cocaine, during those years. But the iron laws of classical economics are a brittle guide to reality. Poverty rates are climbing while unemployment rates remain low, because men, women, and children are working longer hours for less pay. Within a nationally depressed wage economy (especially for low-skilled workers), the comfortable single-breadwinner family is fading from view.

The precise relation between mental illness and socio-economic distress remains in question (though Jencks recognizes that we, as a society, could easily provide the mentally ill with decent medical care and housing). Nevertheless, the dramatic changes in our economy suggest that drug abuse, family breakdown, and long-term unemployment among men are symptoms, rather than causes, of the problem of the homeless.

Jencks notes in passing the decreased "demand for day laborers" but fails to consider the larger social consequences of an economy that renders increasing numbers of people superfluous. His argument that recent immigrants are willing to take ill-paid temporary jobs that their "choosier" native-born counterparts reject misses the point. Distressed communities around the country are multiplying, as people without much in the way of formal education or job skills find themselves unable to support their families with service-sector wages. These communities suffer from a host of ills; homelessness is only the most visible of them.

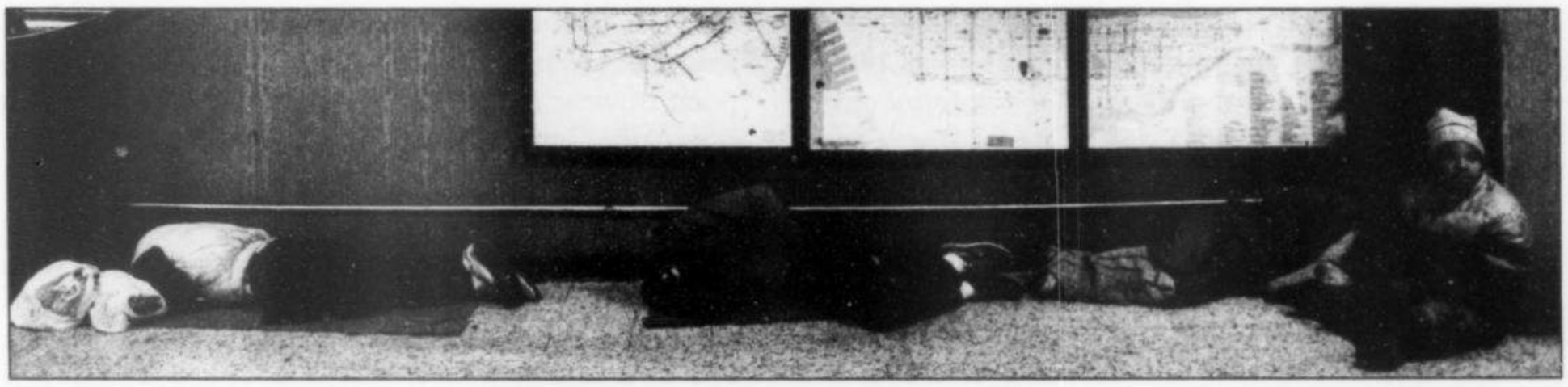
The sober historical truth is that, even with more generous government benefits and cleaner shelters, the problem of the homeless will endure as long as chronic poverty does. Jencks acknowledges that the "labor-market flexibility" glorified in the annals of American capitalism "has a dark side: it guarantees that some workers will never find steady employment." But he takes this state of affairs for granted; "In a competitive labor market, someone always has to be the last hired and the first fired. Training schemes can rearrange the queue, but they cannot eliminate it. That means that we must try to make life at the end of the queue more endurable rather than just helping people change places."

This observation, despite its implied complacency, goes to the heart of much of the social and political turmoil evident in the United States today. Debates over affirmative action are actually debates over which groups must go to the end of the unemployment line. Historically, Black folks have occupied that unenviable position, and now it is apparent that there is plenty of room there for white folks too. Not that this has lessened the desire of most whites to keep Blacks in their "place."

We need to raise larger questions about the American future. How do we decide collectively who is worthy of the good life in a comfortable neighborhood? How do we define economic citizenship for women, for immigrants, for the poor, for people in economically strapped rural areas as well as the inner cities?

Even to ask such questions means confronting the reality of America today. Depressingly, the United States is fast becoming a post-modern aristocratic society. The wealthy pass on advantages to their children—education in the best public and private schools, the finest medical care, social and political entitlements of all kinds. In contrast, faced with skyrocketing housing and health-care costs, more and more families will continue to subsist on the thin edge of distress—just a hospital stay or a pink slip away from sleeping on a street or underneath a bridge. And as employers continue to streamline and consolidate their operations, to introduce robotics and other forms of advanced technology, the number of good jobs will continue to decline. Indeed, the notion of the "living wage" has a quaint ring to it today, as more people labor longer hours for less pay and fewer benefits.

We might have the political will to care for the visible homeless overnight by packing them off to shelters, but the ranks of the "invisible homeless" will continue to grow. And the ensuing damage wrought upon the body politic will be considerably more unpleasant to behold than the sight of a man sleeping in a doorway. □



WHO IS MARKUS WOLF?

(Continued from p. 46)

government had attacking a Jewish state after the Holocaust? What did attacking Israel and refusing to talk about the Holocaust have to do with socialist ideas? But you let the opportunity slip by.

Markus Wolf presents himself as unfamiliar with East German history, and perhaps assumes his interviewer to be equally unfamiliar with it, when he says that he "began to recognize that there was something wrong in the Stasi only in the 1970s when repression was directed against intellectuals, writers, actors, and dissidents." The repression against those sorts of people—as well as perks for the politically correct—defined the regime from the outset. Jews were especially vulnerable to the dreaded accusation of "cosmopolitanism." Any communist, Jew and non-Jew, whose commitment to socialist ideas included a focus on the Jewish catastrophe and support for the young Jewish state knew that he or she had to reckon with the surveillance of the Stasi. It strains credulity that a man such as Markus Wolf did not know this—and was not influenced by it.

The "anti-fascism" of the East German dictatorship, Markus Wolf's discovery of his Jewish identity notwithstanding, went hand in hand with anti-Semitism in the guise of anti-Zionism. Thank goodness it is gone, and thank goodness the Stasi apparatus of terror, blackmail, and character assassination is gone with it. The government Markus Wolf served so loyally never faced up to the Holocaust. Living in some political dream world and acting as if it was not composed of Germans, the DDR regime made a major contribution to the Soviet and Arab international campaign of defamation of the Jewish state—long before Likud came to power.

Though there were some Jewish communists in leading positions in the Central and East European communist governments after World War II, they were few in number and by no means a dominant political force. The image of the avenging Jew as communist secret policeman was a staple of anti-Semitism in post-1945 Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. For anti-Semites of the Right it confirmed the Nazi image of "Jewish Bolshevism." For Stalinist anti-Semites, it was an effective means of dispensing with political rivals and diverting popular anger toward the regimes onto familiar hate objects. In fact, in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe the security services were filled with tough, working-class, overwhelmingly non-Jewish, old-line Stalinists. (On the small percentage of Jews in the communist security services, see statements by Michael Checinski and Daniel Goldhagen in the "Correspondence" section of The *New Republic*, February 14, 1994). In East Germany, during the Merker affair, the Stasi was the loyal handmaiden of the SED's purge against that minority of communists who thought "socialist ideas" were incompatible with continued hostility toward Jews and toward Israel.

It is humanly understandable that, in your words, some "communists and Jews thought that Germany needed some heavy-handed cleansing in the decades after the Holocaust." They were wrong. Between 1933 and 1945, Germany had given the world more than enough heavy-handed cleansing. Germany needed to restore the rule of law and liberal justice, not "heavy-handed cleansing" through Stalinist political justice, conducted in public and in secret. Since the 1950s West German historians, journalists, intellectuals, and politicians, without the assistance of the Stasi, detailed the shortcomings—and some accomplishments—of West Germany's legal efforts to prosecute those accused of Nazi war crimes, and to root ex-Nazis out of prominent positions. Given the DDR's history, Markus Wolf should be asked to look more critically at his own house before throwing stones at the West Germans. Your effort to turn Markus Wolf into a persecuted victim betrays a depressingly familiar reluctance to face the dark side of the really existing communist regimes of postwar Europe. What is that if not, in your words, a product of "Cold War sloganeering?"

I Fought the Revival of Nazism

Markus Wolf's Reply

translated by Elliot Neaman

The answer to Mr. Herf's letter has caused me several difficulties, but not because of his factual objections. I am very well-acquainted with objections like these from talks and interviews, although they are complex and complicated. I have never shied away from responding, and thereby laying out, from my point of view, the darker side of the politics and practices of the German Democratic Republic. My responses to these issues have been interpreted in a number of political directions by the Israeli press. But nobody has yet claimed that I have avoided facing the facts. It is of course difficult to debate with someone who has, a priori, already categorized his opponent as part of the evil

part of the evil empire and doesn't believe a word you say. In getting to the truth it is an important supposition for both sides to be tolerant and prepared to see the other's point of view.

I have followed the question of the Merker case, and of others who were persecuted, to the degree that published material in both parts of Germany was available. I am interested in this issue, not only because history should judge all those who carried responsibility in the GDR at the time, but also because I have very personal connections to this circle.

Mr. Herf, who has profound knowledge of the material, certainly has not missed the fact that my father, who died in 1953, was in a French concentration camp with Paul Merker, Franz Dahlem, and Walter Janka. My brother Konrad and I were friendly with Dahlem and Janka, who were both persecuted and defamed in the 1950s. Neither of these men would have ever had the idea of accusing a member of our family of being indifferent to anti-Semitism.

I now must put up with being asked, indeed must ask myself the question, why I only later became cognizant of the anti-Semitic nature of those trials, and why so many communists have driven from their memories the repression and darker sides of Stalinism. Those aspects of Stalinism stood in too dark a contradiction to our ideals, which we thought would be realized in a Germany freed from fascism. Have you ever, Mr. Herf, asked yourself the question why men like Paul Merker, Leo Zuckermann, Bruno Goldhammer, and my father believed that the part of Germany liberated by the Soviet army would be the place where their goals could be realized, although they must have been aware of the purges of the 1930s?

Your assertion that I "joined the Stasi" and had something to do with the interrogations and political trial of Paul Merker is just plain wrong. I was called to work in the foreign intelligence service, which later the government decided to make an independent agency. When you concede, parenthetically, that this agency could have been created for the purpose of prosecuting former Nazis, well that wasn't just a minor operation! My entire activity was directed toward the West German state and the remilitarization that was being initiated there. My entire energy and attention was taken up with the construction, from ground zero, of an effective intelligence service.

In the west, the secret service was run by the former Nazi general Reinhard Gehlen, which had been practically left unchanged since the Third Reich and which was protected by the United States. The activities of the service were supervised by the closest aid to Chancellor Adenauer, Hans Globke, who as you know helped write the Nuremberg Laws of 1935.

No, the main goal of my activity was and remains the fight against the revival of Nazism in West Germany and neo-Nazism in United Germany. One only has to recall the many former Nazis, generals, judges, and lawyers, who had high positions in the years after West Germany was founded. It is not in East Germany, but rather in West Germany that thirty army barracks carry the names of important military men of the Hitler years. Just several days ago a television program reminded us of the anti-Semitic writings of the Nazi General Ernst Rodenwaldt. His name is written large on the entrance door of the Institute for Sanitation of the Bundeswehr. Traditions like that weren't cultivated in the German Democratic Republic. Instead, in West Germany the names of anti-fascists on street signs and schools are currently being removed.

Where does Mr. Herf get the idea that the "entry tickets for Jews into the political elite of the GDR" was based on never mentioning the Holocaust? The fate of my family, the work of my father and my brother, also my very activity in the intelligence service all prove that the Holocaust was always present in our minds and that we tried to make our people aware of its causes and consequences. In Cannes, Konrad Wolf won the first prize ever given to a film made in the GDR; this film, *Stars*, was dedicated to the Holocaust. In his role as president of the Academy of the Arts, he emphasized the Holocaust.

It shouldn't be difficult for Mr. Herf to put together a long list of the important works of artists and writers of the GDR who dedicated themselves to the fate of the Jews. The novel that by far had the highest circulation in the GDR was by Bruno Apitz (himself an inmate of Buchenwald), *Naked among the Wolves*, which describes how a young Jewish boy is protected by the solidarity of the prisoners. My friends, the writers Rosemarie Schuder and Rudolf Hirsch, have described in detail European and in particular German anti-Semitism in their best-selling novel, *The Yellow Stain*. I'm sure Mr. Herf also knows the name and work of GDR historians such as Professor Kurt Paetzold of the Humboldt University, and the studies concerning the persecution of Jews in Germany. Philosophers and literary critics have also dealt with this topic more profoundly than occurred in the west.

It was precisely these scholars who were hurt badly and have been critical, in hindsight, of the obstacles that were put in their way by the political leadership of the GDR. When I said in my interview in TIKKUN that the leaders of the GDR underestimated and neglected the task of enlightening the East German people about

the Holocaust, this doesn't mean that nothing was done in the GDR, as one might suppose from Mr. Herf's letter. It is certainly no coincidence that the American Jewish Committee has determined, on the basis of new representative polls, that anti-Semitism has increased in Germany since the fall of the GDR.

The reservations of West Germans against Jews turns out to be significantly stronger than on the part of East Germans. More than half of those polled said they would like to see a final line drawn on the German past; 37 percent said that the Holocaust no longer had any significance, because "it happened almost fifty years ago." In comparison to a similar study done in 1990, the situation has gotten worse. Why is that?

The history of the GDR cannot be glossed over. In court I said:

> The system to which it belonged proved unproductive; in its name crimes were committed; it has failed because the people who lived in it refused to sustain it any longer. Yet not everything that happened in its forty-year history was bad and should be erased, just as not everything that happened in the west was good and true. The idea of a historical break on the basis of the cliche of a Legal State on the one hand and an Illegal State on the other, just won't do.

It certainly doesn't behoove a scholar who is working in the archives on the question of the development of both German states to look one-sidedly at complex events that can only be understood in context.

It is difficult for me to comprehend the mixed bag of assertions that Mr. Herf makes about my purported activities against Israel. He even talks about the "attack of a communist state" against the "Jewish state." Who attacked whom and when?

The professor doubts the statements I made in TIKKUN about Israel and claims that I will be contradicted by evidence in the archives. Such evidence does not exist. If Mr. Herf wasn't looking at the story with a blindfold over one eye, his gaze would have to go in the direction of the archives in West Germany. In contrast to the archives in the East, however, the West German archives remain closed to outsiders. If this were not the case, he would find some surprising comparisons in regard to the attitudes of both German states and their intelligence agencies toward the adversaries in the Near and Middle East. He might get an impression of this by looking at the reports on the talks between the former head of the West German Intelligence Service, Klaus Kinkel, with the head of Sadam Hussein's secret service in regard to the training of officers of the Iraqi secret service in West Germany.

It is conspicuous that during my trial my defense lawyer was not allowed to ask about the relations between the PLO and other Arab connection to Klaus Kinkel, who had been invited to testify about the Guillaume affair. I would also like to comment on the global accusations made about my office and its relations to Arab states, in particular to the PLO. I was sometimes shocked to conclude that not only the one-sided U.S. media, but also serious political scientists and historians attempt to reduce the complex question of the Palestinians to one of its manifestations, terrorism.

In the meantime, the pictures that went around the world of Arafat and Rabin, Shamir and Clinton shaking hands in front of the White House and elsewhere should also make possible a more objective view of this side of our activities. The relations with the PLO and the Arab states were embedded in the overall politics of the Warsaw Pact under the conditions made by the Cold War.

Moscow also gave the orders in regard to the Near East. From today's perspective, many of the policies and their practical effects deserve criticism, but this is true for all involved.

I would never accuse an Israeli general or officer of responsibility for the crazy deed of a Baruch Goldstein in Hebron, or for the 1982 massacre of Palestinian quarters in Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon.

In 1972, at the request of Arafat and after a directive by Erich Honecker, the first contact between a leading officer of my service and the head of the secret service of the PLO, Abu Ayad, was established. This occurred shortly after the terrorist attack on the Israeli team during the Olympic Games in Munich.

Our officer was instructed to condemn the terrorist attack and to make an end of such attacks a condition of future working relations. This happened at the time that the Palestinian people were granted sole representation under international law in the form of observer status by the United Nations. Although the

PLO was sought after by many secret service agencies in the East and the West, mainly because of its world wide connections, the establishment of contact between us and them fulfilled a political directive of the GDR leadership. This happened in the same manner that relations were established with the security and intelligence services of other states, on the basis of political decisions.

At no time did any member of my service unconditionally accept the thesis, widely circulated among the Arabs, that the state of Israel must be destroyed. We left no doubt that the GDR supported the return of the territories occupied since 1967 on the basis of U.N. Resolution 743. But, in contrast to our PLO partners, we considered it indispensable that the existence of all states of the region be secured, including Israel's, with international guarantees for ensuring peace.

The Palestinians quickly realized that they were not going to get us to help them with actions against Israel or get any information about Israel from us. Thus their interests were concentrated on training members of their service for the armed struggle. This was granted in the same way that similar agreements had been made with other states of the Third World.

Inside the Ministry of State Security, in the framework of responsibilities, our service had only a limited amount to do with this.

That was the problematic aspect of working together with the Palestinians. One had to assume that the officers we trained would pass on the information they had learned, that they would organize terrorist commandos or themselves take part in such operations. We left no doubts about our objections to such practices. During meetings with Arafat and other leading members, we pressed for the termination of bomb attacks and airplane hijackings. But of course there was no guarantee they would do what we wanted. We couldn't even be sure that they would keep their promise never to run any terrorist operations from the territory of the GDR. A special unit of the Ministry of State Security, directly responsible to the minister, was created to try keep a check on this problem. How difficult, in the end illusory this attempt was, became clear when we investigated a series of terrorist attacks.

As willing as I am to be self-critical in regard to all these matters, I absolutely refuse to let my person be brought into connection with any acts of violence. In this merciless struggle, blood has been shed on all sides, much too much blood. Without determining personal responsibility, I would never accuse an Israeli general or officer of responsibility for the crazy deed of a Baruch Goldstein in Hebron, or for the 1982 massacre of Palestinian quarters in Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon. One of our workers who was in Lebanon at the time reported the events in dismay to me. But he also reported to me about the refusal of the famous commander of the Israeli tank brigade, Eli Gewa, to set his troops upon the population of Beirut. Already at the time, members of the peace groups like Shalom Achshav and *Yesh Gvul* were showing more perspicacity than many of the politicians on both sides who were sticking to their guns.

I do not deny that in regard to Israel and its politics, many of my colleagues were influenced by idea that a socialist state should take the side of the Arabs, and were very uninformed about the long and tragic history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This was true to a certain extent also for myself. In the meantime I have begun to fill in the gaps in my knowledge. I have many friends in Israel and I would like to visit the country, if the many limits to my freedom of movement were removed.

Thus allow me, in conclusion, to make a last observation about the fundamentally different points of view set out in my interview in TIKKUN and the letter from Mr. Herf. He writes as a historian who can dedicate himself to the individual events of the time. One can envy him for that. As I was interviewed in TIKKUN, there was something else on my mind. I had just been condemned to six years of prison for betraying the nation. I was not accused of human rights violations and all the other things for which Mr. Herf thinks I should be condemned. These weren't at issue. Rather, the charge was betrayal of my country! That was absurd and ridiculous: Which country was I supposed to have betrayed?

I am supposed to go to jail because I was a successful secret agent. This job brings honor to men in Israel; one man who did it became president of the United States and a German today who did it represents United Germany as our foreign minister. In the German and international press, the judgment against me has been unanimously declared a serious violation of human rights and constitutional law. Can you understand that at the time of the interview the background of this judgment, which had much to do with my anti-fascist past and the traditions of the judges who condemned me, occupied me more than the questions that Professor Herf has raised? In the commentary that you quoted from The *New York Times* of December 8, 1993, the same questions about the background to this judgment have been raised. Unfortunately Mr. Herf has nothing to say about this current perversion of the course of justice in Germany. □

German Neo-fascism

(Continued from p. 12)

performance of the major conservative and social democratic parties. The ruling Christian Democrats appear to have run out of ideas, but they will employ a free-market and anti-crime rhetoric. The Social Democrats, who promise to relieve the growing social inequality, are doing increasingly well in the polls. Still, while they might promise more jobs, there is nothing in their program which promises identity or meaning, unless it is a more or less unreflected tradition of social democratic solidarity.

European societies like Germany still strive for prosperity for all. But there are persistent, if vague, longings for immaterial forms of security. Young men are drawn by the numbing ideology of fascism, which relieves the individual of responsibility and provides a racist explanation for the lack of solidarity in the larger society. Fascist ideology is well-packaged as a kind of male adventure, bestowing a strong national identity, perforce racial and mystical—fascist activists rarely have more knowledge of German culture than their recruits. Neo-fascists celebrate pagan equinox rituals, substituting a primitive choreography for cultural uncertainty. This ritual identity is especially important for those who have lost the highly ritualized life they had under the authoritarian eastern regime. Finally, fascism fosters a cult of physical prowess in young men who can no longer depend on selling their bodily strength to industry.

To the extent that skinheads feel themselves to have a social function, it is as self-appointed champions of the German people. Skins pride themselves on militantly waging public battles, such as the opposition to the country's liberal refugee law, which many Germans viewed as over-generous. But skins reflect even more of the larger society than they themselves may realize. In beating up on the disabled, the old, and those without citizenship, they are reflecting the new and widespread unwillingness to share economic resources with the weak.

In contemporary European political discourse, one often reads about walls, the age-old European solution which kept problems beyond city gates. Men like Zhirinovsky want to build walls around troubled areas of the former Soviet Union. A poet from the east German town of Leipzig recently wrote in the newsmagazine *Spiegel* that he felt his apartment no longer had walls, that the residents of his block were simply confronted with the dust and uncertainty of the street. Was it perhaps the Wall itself which he wanted returned, that awkwardly literal solution of an unsophisticated communist regime to the problems posed by the existence of the outside world?

If the social problems of recent years continue to be aggravated by government policies after 1994, it is the barriers of ethnicity which are likely to create the new, postmodern European form of wall. It is not likely that Europe, with its corporate and fascist traditions, will simply spawn an unorganized mass of poor people like that of America, divided by race, geography, and individualist aspirations. If fascist leaders in the old world develop detailed solutions to the crisis of unemployment, if they focus less on nostalgic memories and more precisely and credibly play upon the fears of the times, they are likely to gain a solid foothold in national politics.

It is not true, as Jay suggests, that early twentieth-century fascism was simply a rejection of the modern. Hitler embraced modernity, campaigning in a helicopter and mastering the mass media. What if fascism again found a leader in Germany who knew how to manage the discourse about a unified Europe, the free market, or welfare cheats? Already a network of fascist groups in Austria and Germany is using sophisticated communications technologies to organize demonstrations, spy on the police, and carry out assassination plots such as the recent letter-bombings in Vienna.

The sense of ethnicity such a leader would use is frighteningly modern. There is much evidence that ethnicity and racism are more central to the ideology of skinheads today than they were to NSDAP voters in the thirties. Ethnicity reduces culture to its most primitive elements, giving individuals a sense of legitimation regardless of economic function. The new ethnic man, unlike *homo oeconomicus*, is his own reason for being, and throws himself not into productive cooperation with other individuals, but into dramatic and violent competition with other ethnicities. And the neo-Nazis, who murder refugees fleeing ethnic wars, represent an ideology of anarchic ethnicity in which self-appointed leaders of the tribe, in place of the state, claim to protect the interests of the nation.

The first wall of European ideology was the "limes," the border by which the Romans separated themselves from northern barbarians, in order to preserve institutions and internal cohesion. If, for similar reasons, contemporary Europeans start to build walls between and within nations, if they start to erect private security of the kind in Los Angeles, to cultivate an enforced or self-imposed segregation, then the hour of fascism will have struck. Poor Europeans will seize upon ethnic identity, the identity for want of any other. The people locked out by the walls will be the new dangerous classes, those behind the river border between Germany and Poland, the European Rio-Grande, and those behind the *Kotzgrenze*, the "limes" of the skins. □

Blood Libels

(Continued from p. 40)

Crusades, in which the rhetoric of military conquest and martyrdom were intertwined, gave legitimacy to a new kind of religious violence.

As we have already seen in the idea of the atoning blood of the martyrs, the Hebrew *Chronicles*, as well as other Jewish liturgical writing (such as the *piyyutim*) from the period, reflect this religious worldview. The Jews may have seen their martyrs as the true "Crusaders," defending their holy communities with the sword, even unto death. The medieval Jewish language of redemptive blood, although it had a long history in early *midrashim*, may also owe something to the growing Christian emphasis on the sacrificial blood of Jesus. Thus, explaining the language of blood vengeance and the suicidal practices of the Rhineland Jews as exclusively internal Jewish phenomena ignores the Jews' larger cultural context. The same weakness inheres in Yuval's claim about the origins of the blood libel. This most controversial of his arguments appears the least convincing on two grounds. First, the evidence of Christian knowledge of Jewish practices seems meager and inconclusive at best. In addition, there are other possible explanations for the emergence of ritual murder and blood libel accusations in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, quite apart from Jewish behavior during the Crusades. In recent years, a variety of such explanations have been advanced, some of them psychoanalytic and others theological. What all of these explanations have in common is the argument that Christians project onto Jews something that they themselves do: eat the flesh and blood of an innocent sacrificial victim, namely Jesus. Why did this "projective inversion" (a term coined by the folklorist Alan Dundes) take place? The answer usually given is that it is a way for Christians to allay doubts or feelings of guilt about the eucharist. These explanations, however, are no more convincing thatYuval's. There is little evidence that ordinary Christians (as distinct from a few theologians) experienced any doubt about the presence of Jesus in the eucharist, or suffered from any guilt about eating their god.

It is more likely that the intensification of belief in the eucharist in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries accounts for the simultaneous emergence of the blood libel: The Jews were accused of profaning the host (that is, the eucharistic bread) and of murdering Christian children for the ritual use of their blood. All of these accusations assumed that the Jews believed as strongly as the Christians in the efficacy of the Christian rituals; but the Jews, whom Christian theology increasingly associated with the Devil, turned these rituals to nefarious uses. Perhaps the intensified belief in the mystery and power of the eucharist required the delineation of clear boundaries between those who worshiped it correctly and those who sought to defile it. In light of the hoary accusation of deicide, the Jews were the obvious candidates to play the "dark shadow" in this eucharistic drama.

Moreover, in many of the blood libels, the purpose of the narrative is not only to defame the Jews, but also to create a Christian saint whose death at the hands of the Jews mirrors that of Christ. The narratives frequently relate how the bodies of these dead "saints" refused to decompose and instead gave off sweet odors; the bodies also became the sites for a variety of miraculous occurrences. Thus, the blood libels and ritual murder accusations served to create a sense that the suffering and death of Jesus were not finite historical events, but rather were repeated in a timeless way in the present. The Jews were necessary agents for the emergence of the sacred in profane time; they had, after all, played the same role on the opening night of the Christian drama more than a thousand years earlier. Thus, the blood libel became an integral part of the larger panorama of popular piety in the late Middle Ages. Jewish behavior during the Crusades probably played a very minor role, if any, in the formation of these new accusations that led, so often, to the torture and death of Jews.

If there was a causal connection, the influence probably flowed from Christian concepts of popular piety and martyrdom to the Jews: The strange practice of killing one's own children as an act of piety, although not attested to in Christianity of the period, surely owed much to concepts of blood and redemption that circulated widely in Christian Europe.

Yet Yuval may be right that a vestige of Jewish behavior lay behind some of the accusations against the Jews. In some of the libels, the Jews are accused of needing Christian blood to cure the wound of circumcision and, in woodcuts depicting the alleged ritual torture of Simon of Trent in the fifteenth century, the Jews are shown drawing blood from the boy's genitals. In these cases, the blood libel may have originated, at least in part, in a very distorted Christian interpretation of Jewish circumcision rites, which were, in fact, the source of much anti-Jewish Christian polemic.

In the wake of the Holocaust, it has become increasingly difficult to accept the traditional, medieval ideal of martyrdom. Yuval has done a great service by underscoring how alien and puzzling the behavior of the Rhineland Jews was at the time of the Crusades, and by demonstrating the importance of trying to understand them in their own historical context. For many Jews today, the true meaning of *kiddush ha-shem* (the sanctification of God's name) lies not in death but in *kiddush ha-hayyim* (the sanctification of life). □

MUSSOLINI'S GHOST

(Continued from p. 16)

into their ever-growing electoral constituencies. As a result, it is the neo-fascists and the far Right who have to a great extent been setting the political agenda in these countries. For without their incitement to racial paranoia, it is hard to believe that the immigration question would have attained its current status as the single most important issue in contemporary European politics.

What is especially significant about the Italian case is that it establishes a precedent for—and thereby risks making acceptable—an option that, heretofore, had remained taboo for traditional European conservatives: inviting far-right parties to join in a coalition government. By virtue of this strategy, the conservatives are able to keep the electoral prospects of the left-wing parties at bay. This was in fact one of the main factors that motivated Berlusconi to establish Forza Italia last December. At the same time, they manage to confer a crucial measure of democratic respectability on the extreme Right parties, a prize the latter have been desperately seeking for some time. As an Italian parliamentary deputy recently remarked: "Certainly no one really thinks that we are on the eve of a return to fascism; but what's happened in Italy constitutes a precedent for other European countries. It risks reinforcing Le Pen in France, the extreme right in Germany, etc."

Why has a politics of neo-racism been able to re-impose itself on the European political scene? And why hasn't the Left been able to prevent it from happening?

A closer look at the constituencies of the far-right parties in the countries under discussion provides some answers. The adherents of the far-right parties come from the ranks of the lower-middle classes, smallholders, and unemployed—people whose social position has, in recent decades, been undermined by successive waves of technological modernization.

Supporters of the far-right parties realize that, in the new postindustrial age, there will be little need for the underskilled and undereducated. They rightly fear being consigned to the status of vocational supernumeraries in a technocratically geared European Community. Thus far, the major justifications for European unity have revolved around economic, trade, and currency benefits. For these strata of the population, however, the prospect of being ruled by a mega-bureaucracy in Brussels holds few attractions—hence their strong resistance to the concept of European Union, which, from their perspective, will only hasten their own collective obsolescence.

Conversely, the supporters of the far right parties cling all the more firmly to the traditional values that have in the past provided their lives with meaning, continuity, and security: authority, family, religion, nation, region, as well as a veneration of ethnicity for its own sake. These are the values they fear are being eclipsed in a post-Maastricht Europe, and to which the extreme-right political parties have successfully appealed.

From the perspective of the European underclasses, the established political parties—on both the Right and the Left—have been wholly insensitive to their pressing existential and material needs. Thus, if one examines the "modernizing" ideological realignments of the major European social democratic parties in recent years, such as the abandonment of the traditional union constituencies in favor of a new technological "pragmatism," it is easy to see how the parties of the extreme Right have been able to step in to fill the void.

The traditional litany of social mores just cited, in Europe and elsewhere, typically excludes the values of otherness or difference. Especially in times of crisis—Europe in the 1930s, for example—the valorization of ethnicity has resulted in xenophobia, racism, and persecution. The far-right parties have tapped into this fear of otherness in a highly dishonest and destructive way. In most cases, foreign residents in Western Europe are law-abiding, upstanding individuals willing to accept menial jobs that native inhabitants shun. Often (as in the reconstruction of post-war Germany) their social function has proved indispensable, to scapegoat and anathematize them might assuage the fears of social groups that are economically vulnerable, but in the end it will do very little to solve the real material or existential problems these groups are facing.

It is imperative that the Left seize the high moral ground in the European political debate, by unmasking a politics of hatred for what it is. The contemporary crisis (at least in Western Europe) is not analogous to the pre-World War II period. It is, however, characterized by endemic structural unemployment which in France, for example, has hovered around 10 percent for much of the last decade. Unless the Left takes such problems seriously and attempts to redress them through job-retraining programs, improved social services, and, more fundamentally, a political vision that is less technocratically oriented and more geared toward the restoration of community and the duties of collective citizenship, one can expect the political specter of neo-fascism to persist for some time. □

Troop Reversals

(Continued from p. 23)

what he bargained for.

On the subject of Arafat, Rabin is especially forceful: Arafat's speech violates the Declaration of Principles and can put the future of the West Bank and the whole peace process into jeopardy, Rabin says. As Rabin speaks, I recall that officials in the government press office had confirmed rumors that Arafat makes the Israeli leaders sick.

They have a lot of company. Arafat's timing enrages the Israeli street, giving the right wing in Israel "proof" that he is dangerous, putting the Israeli peace camp in the hard position of defending a man everyone finds disturbing. His speech for Jihad has reawakened in every Israeli the doubts and fears he has long elicited.

But then there's something else that rises in me and hovers about me in this fading sunlight, in this summer season, in the midst of politics and roses, in the midst of the latest outrage, the latest breakthrough.

We are, in our own middle eastern way, creating conditions for peace, and no one knows how it will look, no one knows what lies ahead. Yet we have left Gaza, we have left Jericho, we are legally committed to leaving the West Bank. We are coming back to the best in our ethical roots and this Jewish renewal in Israel, however nascent and fragile, is touching all of us. Against great odds and terribly late, after so many unnecessary deaths on both sides, healing has begun, work is being done. Israelis and Palestinians are moving forward into we don't know what future, and despite everything that's unfair and doubtful and ambiguous, for the first moment all month I have a pure feeling of hope.

Later that night I go with a group of friends to a concert, sponsored every May by the Israel Festival, a month-long assortment of music, art, sculpture, circus, theater. Every night all around Jerusalem the festival draws crowds. Tonight I'm with a diverse group of friends and acquaintances: several Moroccan Arab painters—the first Arabs to display their work at the festival—join with Jewish painters, writers, and one Moroccan Arab woman who, before we head out in our caravan of cars, after sitting awkwardly in a corner of a friend's apartment for an hour, stands up unannounced and breaks into an impassioned song, twenty unforgettable minutes of an intricate Arabic melody in praise of peace.

Now we join the crowds listening to jazz outside the Jerusalem Theater. It's after midnight when an African-American woman takes the stage and begins to sing the blues in a powerful voice. The crowds of Israelis all about us are casually dressed, full of animation and conversation. In a corner of the large, outdoor cafe, a few young girls are dancing by themselves, eyes shut and unself-conscious. I, too, shut my eyes, listening to the music, sensing the open feeling unique to this country of sandals and jeans, these typical Israelis so sexy and embodied, direct and natural, loud, harsh, vital, bohemian, yet most in this outdoor cafe, or so I imagine, indifferent to or ignorant of what's going on in the territories near-by.

Listening to the blues, I'm transported in my mind to Gaza, vividly remembering all Mohammad and Rina have detailed for me; the sweet freedom of walking there all night, of coffee houses open till four a.m., of days spent swimming in the sea. And for the first time since I moved to Israel in 1991, the visceral connection I've always felt around Israelis, the sheer happiness of belonging here, which brought me here and keeps me here, is, despite all the continuing problems, now loosed—however prematurely—from the shadows of Palestinian suffering.

I have never defined myself primarily by politics, wherever I live. Like most of us, I'm too narcissistic or merely human to be thinking of other's suffering when pleasure comes my way. Yet somehow in Israel the Palestinian plight has lived in me as a direct affliction, as a great shadow, especially when surrounded by the distinctly Israeli talent for uninhibited abandon to music, dance, comraderie.

For years now I've felt cursed with double vision. I'd sit at a party in Tel Aviv and imagine what the people in Nablus were or weren't doing. I'd hang at night on Ben Yehuda in Jewish Jerusalem and suddenly be overcome by the vision of the eerily quiet streets of East Jerusalem. The joy in one society always, sooner or later, stood in contrast with the suffering so close yet invisible, inflicted by our troops in the Jewish name, so that my love for life in Israel was always dogged by these "flashbacks," images or memories of the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This split-screen in my mind would occur unbeckoned; the suffering faces and harsh situations of those living in such contrary circumstances played out organically and contrapuntally in my mind.

Tonight I notice with surprise that those shadows have lifted. No matter how lop-sided or unfair the Declaration of Principles, no matter how many issues have yet to be addressed or resolved—autonomy has begun and that makes this wide-open courtyard with its music and easiness feel earned, not sinister.

The fact that tonight my friends in Gaza—and many who would never be my friends—are walking freely in their own place, at their own pace, liberates this crowd of Israelis and adds to the joyfulness surrounding me. That the people in Gaza are freer tonight in the most elemental ways reverberates here as immense relief. □

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...A KOSHER CHICKEN

(Continued from p. 50)

I'll find. At the seder table, with other *vilde chayes*, my voice grows strong and clear. I learn that I must speak the words to those who do not want to hear. To my mother and my people, it's hard to speak what they have always feared. That we are your daughters too and cannot be forgotten or erased.

We are the stories that were never told. We are Shifrah and Purah, the midwives giving birth. We are Ruth and Naomi and Boaz's sister Dina. And Sarah and Hagar who she sent away. We are Deborah the judge, leading the troops, fighting on the front. We are Miriam in the bulrushes saving her brother Moses. And Rachel and Leah when they were betrayed. We are Vashti who refused and Esther who agreed. We are all of this and more. This was my mother's fear. That I was all of this and more. We are the unplucked chickens, squawking in the yard. That the neighbors always see. And at the weddings and Bar Mitzvahs we are either not invited or told to come alone, to be quiet and blend in. But we are your daughters and cannot be forgotten or erased.

Sometimes, we do not look the same, this was my mother's shame. She did not understand, for as long as she lived, why I could not look just a little more like her and a lot less like me. I never understood, until the day she died, why my mother couldn't be a little more like me and a lot less like her. My mother too was betrayed. For there was no one she could tell about her *young vilde chaye,* whom she had to love in secret and never celebrate. The rabbis turned their heads away, and fathers followed suit. The mothers did not talk, or even whisper by themselves. My mother would not even tell her younger sister because she was afraid of what the neighbors always say. What will the *goyim* think? That we are your daughters. Your sisters and your aunts. And the cousins in the pictures, standing side by side. *A shanda for d'goyim.* No one says a word, instead they keep the family secret and only mouth the words. Like how and why or when?

The truth is I always was just like I am today. Only I didn't know, it wasn't possible as I was growing up to see any other way. For the longest time I floated in the soup and didn't say a word. Then one day I had to choose to leap right from the bowl. I came to understand that there are those of us who lead the way and those who like to follow. My mother was a follower who gave birth to a leader. This was not easy for my mother or myself. I did not choose to be a leader; it was chosen for me. But what I do not know is if my mother ever felt constrained as I always did; if it was her choice to follow, or did she feel that she had no choice? Perhaps she was afraid to lead, this I'll never know. Yet this is how the cycle flows. In every generation, from follower to leader, *l' dor v' dor*. From leader to follower.

All her life my mother didn't understand what it meant to birth a *vilde chaye.* This was my aching disappointment. Before she died, I never had the chance to tell her that to lead like Moses or Deborah is to risk the people's wrath. That to be a *vilde chaye* is to live forever on the edge with your life often at stake. I never had the chance to say out loud that I always needed her. My mother's grief at who I am is my deepest sorrow. More than anyone on Earth, I wanted her to understand and not to be afraid.

But this simply wasn't possible; just like me, she didn't know any other way.

Sometimes, late at night, when I feel my people's wrath, I wonder, was she right? Is it better not to be ever seen or heard? A dumpling floating in the soup? Sometimes, late at night, with my life out on the edge, I wonder, was my mother right? Is it better just to be a *bubbeleh*, a nice Jewish girl, rather than a *vilde chaye*? I always loved my mother and know that she loved me. The mistake I made is in her chicken that I never learned to cook. From the plucking to the soaking, from the salting to the stuffing, to the removal of the blood, we are bound to language and a common history. From the laws of *kashrut* to the sacred washing of the hands, it is in poultry that we are bound eternal, in our femaleness.

In my fantasy, I am born a kosher chicken with my mother's hands holding me. She washes me forever in her large kitchen sink. Cleaning my wings, she tells me not to change a thing, that she loves me just the way I am. On Friday afternoons all her *Shabbas* friends come to see the baby soaking in the sink. They pinch and they poke, laughing at my teeny, tiny polkies. As a kosher chicken, I'd be blessed by the *shochet* and served on a sacred silver platter with squares of kugel by my side to keep me warm. If only I was born a chicken rather than a *vilde chaye*, there would be no painful separation from my mother or my people. I'd be plucked and stuffed, then roasted to a crisp, golden brown. Sprinkled with paprika, I'd look gorgeous all the time.

Near the end, I washed my mother's hands and feet. She couldn't talk but she let me in that close. As I washed her legs and thighs, we made a silent, fragile peace; she the perfect *balaboosta*, and me, the stunning *vilde chaye*. But in my fantasy, I am born a kosher chicken. I sit forever plump and round, in the center of my mother's *Shabbas* table. When she lights the candles and closes her eyes, I am there forever by my mother's side. She is there forever, by her daughter's side. We are together, at the *Shabbas* table, sitting side by side. □

Beyond the Rainbow

(Continued from p. 18)

without the labor of Black Africans. Many white South Africans rightly conclude from this economic reality that Blacks and whites are inextricably linked in striving for the society's future. No such imperative appears to be a controlling vision in the United States.

The politics of race can be hidden and ignored in the United States precisely because race, in American culture, is synonymous with subordination. Perhaps this is why other progressive American politicians, not just Jesse Jackson, cling to the vision of a rainbow composed of many colors. In appealing to and acknowledging multiple racial and ethnic group identities, these politicians recognize that there is strength in numbers. That was always something the ANC could bank on, but that the American civil rights movement could not.

In the last decade, African Americans have played an important role in the anti-apartheid struggle. The sadness of this otherwise hopeful moment is that, contrary to Hillary Rodham Clinton's prediction that "we will follow your [South Africa's] example...," America may not be able to embrace one of the central ideas inspiring our struggle. □

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Staying Fired Up

(Continued from p. 38)

inevitability of backsliding an entry-level epiphany for every social activist who comes into the fold. No one should expect miracles. Two steps forward, one step back is the best we can hope for most of the time. And it *does* produce progress after all.

The third major cause of burnout is backbiting—a hazard familiar to anyone who has ever worked in a group. Burnout results when good people get sick of bad things being said about them. You know what happens: Say there is some controversy in the group about a particular political strategy. Instead of arguing for your position openly and trying to persuade others on the merits, you denigrate your opponents behind their backs, diminish their opinion, role, or status in the group, or turn others against them with some unrelated intrigue or libel. Or suppose you've set your sights on a leadership role in the group. Instead of taking on tasks that will demonstrate your abilities, you expend your energies badmouthing the current leaders and other likely contenders for the job; you circumvent them, organize little cabals against them, or otherwise inflict wounds you mean to be fatal.

Anyone with experience in corporations, armies, political parties, or families has known the backbiting phenomenon, but its corrosiveness tends to be exacerbated in progressive organizations. This is because our groups are pledged to critique power relations and thus are full of liberals who cannot own up to their retrograde urge toward conquest and domination.

The result is a double bind: As a movement, we decry our powerlessness in the larger political sphere and baldly seek the authority that would allow us to effect change, while in our interpersonal relations, we are in denial about the seductions and uses of power, about our rage toward those who have it, and our desire to dominate others or have the last word in decision-making.

I think it essential that progressive organizations place the subject of power high on the agenda for internal discussion. No issue is more common to all of us than the fundamental questions of how we relate to one another, how we assemble authority structures, provide access routes to leadership, and resolve conflict when it arises within the group. Perhaps if we were more honest about our individual power needs and more up-front about the way that leftist hierarchies frustrate these needs, people would resort to backbiting far less often.

In the absence of more candor about the complexities of power, we can try to curb backbiting through moral suasion. Since most of us do our social action work under the banner of our Jewish identity, we could agree to subscribe voluntarily to the Judaic prohibition against *lashon hara*—the evil tongue. Under Jewish law, *lashon hara*, or malicious gossip, is a capital crime that is said to kill three people: the one who speaks evil, the one who hears it, and the one about whom it is said.

Even secular activists who do not feel the weight of this halachic proscription can acknowledge its essential wisdom and can pledge to banish backbiting from their conduct. Furthermore, it will encourage our best behavior if the groups we belong to would, in some public setting or by some social contract, establish their intolerance of *lashon hara*, to eradicate the one-on-one slander that drives people away.

I've offered a few suggestions to avoid burnout but I am still confounded by other problems, such as how to find time to do political work in the press of everyday life (a particularly acute problem for women activists who have primary responsibility for their homes and children); or, how to say no when I'm overextended, if I'm also aware that the hard-working organizer on the other end of the phone desperately wants to hear yes—and I know just how she or he feels; or how to affiliate appropriately when it's impossible to join every group working on an issue I care about; or how to offer "help" without condescending or infantilizing the recipient.

If you have answers to these questions, send them to Tikkun. In the meantime, I hope that you will give some serious thought to the problems of backlash, backsliding, and backbiting. I did not set out to write a speech anchored by alliteration but if the memory experts are correct, the preponderance of "B" words in these remarks might help you recall them three months from now. What interests me more though, is what we do tomorrow and the next day to prevent burnout or cynicism from claiming some of our best people—people like you, who have come to share in this ceremony tonight.

In baseball, they say it's not over 'til it's over. In *tikkun olam*, it's not over until the Messiah comes. And until the Messiah comes, all we have is each other. So, please don't ever give up. Stay the course for the good of us all. As Marshall Meyer would have put it, every one of you can make a difference. And you must! □

Mamaloschen

My aunt was born in America to speak another language —
words as thick as sour cream, sharp as raw onion, light as cucumber,
sweet as applesauce, rich as strawberry jam wrapping around, sliding
over, spinning off tongues, naming characters, feelings, verbs,
idiot, scholar, whore, sorrow, pride, anger, fall, chew, cry.

In her sixty-seventh year her dentures don't fit, give
her a girlish lisp, a little whistle, she's in terrible pain,
bites her lip, can't stop talking about her brother, her husband,
the only ones she trusted, forgets the dark calls to the brother
about the husband. Alone in the house she whispers in Yiddish to the dead.
Her doctor says talk to God, through the rabbi, instead.
Twenty people, twenty advices, she shrugs, smoking her cigarette,
tonguing the tender spot on the inside of her lower gum.

Her father and Sidney Lumet's father together on the stage in Vilna,
she comes by it honestly, theater is in her blood. Memory *is* history.
There were no words in Yiddish for *manic depressive, schizoid,* no words
for *shock treatments*, or the delicate wafers of electrodes taped to her body.

She wants to know why she can't remember in her own way, why
the cab driver asked about her daughter, why
her daughter doesn't talk to her anymore, why
the women in the Sisterhood hate her, why
she can't remember what she was just thinking
about the plastic bottles huddled on the counter—
she takes two, three, five, how many hours apart?
The water glass knocks her dentures, acrid chalk
tracks her tongue at crazy intervals.

There are words for *heartache, character, fairness, milk,* but there is
no word for *antipsychotic.*

In a few more years the language will be dead.
Words for secrets and conspiracies, for comfort,
for such lush remembering, sweet collusion, rich lies,
will die with my aunt, *nee Toby,* who wanted a name more glamorous, who giggled
like a girl when we did the cancan in my mother's kitchen, who woke
my mother at three o'clock in the morning, homocidal but not meaning it,
suicidal but not meaning it, my aunt who cried
at the airport for love and the passage of time
and I wonder what tongue, in ten or fifteen or fifty years what tongue,
pill, rabbi, brother, electricity, words will we use
for keeping not just the dead by memory,
not just memory but ourselves, our multiple, fractured,
frightened, damaged, dying, loving, theatrical, tender, lying,
impatient, inventing, genuine, desperate selves alive?

Amy Wilner

תיקון

Tikkun (tē-kün) ...
to heal, repair and
transform the world.
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