

Revolutionism & the Jews: 1

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CONCERNING THE participation of Jews, or lapsed Jews, in left-wing politics during the last century, two basic facts stand out: the prominent role they have played at one time or another, and their subsequent disappearance from positions of influence and command. In 19th-century Germany, Jews provided the ideological leadership of the socialist movement (Marx, Lassalle, Moses Hess). Later on, Jews were among the leaders of revolutionary, "centrist," and "revisionist" parties alike. The leadership of Austrian socialism ("Austro-Marxism") and Hungarian Communism was almost entirely Jewish, and before World War I there was not a single non-Jew in some East European delegations to the Congress of the Second International. If Jews gradually faded from the top echelons of these movements, it was not just Stalinism or Nazism that was responsible. To cite but one example: most of the founding members of the German Communist party in 1918, including the most prominent among them, were of Jewish origin. Only thirteen years later there was not a single Jew among the hundreds of Communists chosen by the party to run for election to the Reichstag. The prominence of Jews in today's New Left, after they deserted or were squeezed out of the Old Left, is therefore a phenomenon open to more than one interpretation.

The decisive impact which the French Revolution had on the political sentiments of Jews is so obvious as to need no elaboration here. Typical of a whole generation of young Jews was the case of Ludwig Börne. This "*Juif de Francfort*," as his passport described him, was the greatest publicist of his age. He left behind a graphic description of the pre-revolutionary condition of the Jews in his home town:

They enjoyed the loving care of the authorities. They were forbidden to leave their street on Sundays lest they be beaten up by drunks. They were not permitted to marry before the age of twenty-five, so that their children would be

strong and healthy. On holidays they could not leave their homes before six in the evening lest the great heat cause them harm. The public gardens and promenades outside the city were closed to them; they had to walk in the fields—presumably to awaken their enthusiasm for agriculture. If a Jew crossed the street and a Christian citizen shouted, "Pay your respects, *Jud!*" the Jew had to remove his hat; of such measures the intention no doubt was to strengthen the feelings of love and respect between Christians and Jews.

Once the walls of the ghetto came down, some young Jewish intellectuals hastened to dissociate themselves entirely from the pariah people. Others joined the democratic republican forces which had promised to lead the Jews out of degradation. Börne, who migrated to Paris, was attacked by his critics for his anti-Germanism. He replied that he loved Germany more than France, because Germany was the unhappier country, but how could he not admire France, the citadel of liberty?

The economic position of Jews in Central and Western Europe improved rapidly during the first half of the 19th century, but their social and political standing lagged far behind. It was therefore only natural that many Jewish intellectuals should have been in the forefront of republicanism and the radical Left. For although Jewish economic interests might have dictated a certain hostility to socialism, the radical Left stood for a world in which all men would be free and equal. Despite its occasional manifestations of anti-Semitism, the Left offered the Jews an opportunity to be politically active, whereas the parties favoring the established order by and large excluded Jews altogether from their ranks.

It was at this time that the image of the "typical Jewish intellectual" emerged. When such a person discarded his old religious beliefs, wrote Hermann Oncken, Lassalle's biographer, he turned to the other extreme, to atheism and materialism. Having done away with his own past, he felt no particular respect for Christian traditions either; indeed, he was resentful toward the whole world. For centuries the Jews had been held in contempt, yet they had continued to regard themselves as the chosen people. The emancipation provided, for the first time, a means of releasing this tension.

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Georg Brandes (born Georg Morris Cohen), an earlier biographer of Lassalle, was the first to point to one of the more pronounced characteristics of the Jewish intellectual in radical politics: *chutzpah*, a term he defined as "presence of mind, impertinence, audacity, intrepidity, insolence." The Jews had been a timid people, forced into subservience; once they felt the impact of emancipation and *Kultur*, some of them were bound to gravitate toward extremism in politics.

It is usually forgotten, to be sure, that only a small minority of Jews permanently aligned themselves with the party of revolution. The vast majority of European Jewry west of Russia flirted with radical politics only for relatively brief periods in the wake of a widespread revolutionary wave, such as before and during 1848, and on certain occasions later on. Where there was no strong liberal party, or where there was a threat of right-wing anti-Semitism, they gave their vote to the Social Democrats. But a large sector of European Jewry was middle class in character and supported middle-of-the-road liberal and democratic parties—a bit Left of center, but not much. These Jews were patriotic and, to a large extent, conformist; they joined a revolutionary movement only in the face of a government that opposed assimilation and integration. The history of the Jews in the radical movement is therefore largely the history of certain sections of the Jewish intelligentsia, both before and after emancipation.

VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS have been offered to explain the particular fascination exerted by the party of revolution on the Jewish intelligentsia. Of these, the anti-Semitic thesis known as the "ferment of decomposition" has been advanced in different forms in many countries. Briefly, it runs as follows: unable to establish a state of their own, reduced to a marginal, parasitic existence among the peoples of the earth, Jews developed over the centuries an overwhelming destructive urge. Having no fatherland, they wished to deny one to everybody else as well. More extravagant anti-Semites saw a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to subvert the Aryan peoples and to establish Jewish world rule. The more moderate regarded the trend toward radicalism as the unfortunate heritage of an unhappy people, understandable in the light of its past, but dangerous for law and order and the preservation of the traditions and values of non-Jews.

Among Jews, and within the radical parties themselves, the subject was not often discussed. Marx, Lassalle, and many other Jewish socialists completely dissociated themselves from Judaism and Jewry, for both of which they had nothing but contempt. Their choice of revolutionary socialism implied an absolute break with tradi-

tion. But it may be wondered if their decision in favor of the radical Left was entirely unconnected with their Jewish origin and heritage. Anti-Semites like Bakunin were not the only ones to think it was not unconnected. A Jewish contemporary of Marx wrote that radical politics was but a new and different manifestation of religion ("one goes to the democratic club, as the religious believer goes to his house of worship"). Deprived of its transcendental character, religion had become politics, with freedom and happiness on earth the secular message of the new messianism. Gustav Mayer, the distinguished historian of German socialism, found the prophets of Israel to be the models of Marx's faith. He compared Marx's analysis of early industrial capitalism, with its ravages and inequities, with Isaiah's denunciations of King Ahab. Léon Blum, writing at the turn of the century, pursued this theme further. Jews, he predicted, would play a central role in the destruction of the old order and the building of the new. Insofar as there was a collective Jewish will, it tended toward revolution. According to Blum, the highly developed critical faculties of Jews were bound to turn against any idea, any tradition, which could not be justified by reason and did not conform with the facts. Where Christ preached love, the Jewish God stood for justice. The combination of reason and justice, in pursuit of a transformation of the social order, spelled socialism.

Not many Marxists held these views; most preferred to believe with Kautsky that to the extent that Jews were affected by messianic aspirations, these led in a reactionary—i.e., Zionist—direction. The attraction of Jews to socialism was to be explained rather by the simple fact that most of them were city dwellers, and as such had the specific qualities required for the progress of humanity. Though small in numbers, the Jews of Western Europe had produced Spinoza and Heine, Lassalle, Marx, and other geniuses. But these spiritual giants became effective forces in the world only after they had broken out of the fetters of Judaism. Their main struggles were carried on outside its sphere, and usually in conscious opposition to it: "The Jews have become an eminently revolutionary force, while Judaism has become a reactionary factor." Similar views have been expressed frequently on the Left, most recently in an essay, "The Non-Jewish Jew," written by the late Isaac Deutscher; while the essay does not mention Kautsky by name, it is essentially a paraphrase of his pre-1914 thesis concerning Jews and radicalism.

Jewish revolutionaries striving for the liberation of mankind obviously had no use for Jewish nationalism. Most regarded it as an atavistic throwback, a reassertion of tribalism over universalism, a retreat from internationalist ideals. It is only fair to add that this view of things was by no means limited to the Left; it was part

and parcel of the "bourgeois-assimilationist" heritage of the 19th century. The liberal argument against Zionism—voiced, among others, by European and American Reform rabbis—held that divine providence had scattered the Jews all over the world so that they might appear as witnesses to the idea of a God of justice and promote the realization of the prophetic ideal. Jewish revolutionaries accepted this argument as Marx adapted Hegel: they stood it on its head. However, of all the arguments against Zionism (of which there are no doubt a great many) this has been the weakest. Some of the advocates of universalism believed, no doubt sincerely, in what it involved, but for many others it was simply a convenient pretext: "messianic mission" really stood for the fleshpots of Europe and America. A few revolutionaries may have genuinely thought that in view of their vulnerability and rootlessness the Jews were (as Deutscher put it) the natural protagonists of cosmopolitanism and internationalism. But most simply preferred the wider stage of European politics to the narrow confines of the Jewish community.

SEVERAL GENERATIONS after Börne and Marx, yet another explanation was advanced for the Jewish propensity toward left-wing radicalism: that it is an outgrowth of Jewish messianism. This argument has been assailed on the grounds that those who embraced Communism were not, after all, Orthodox Jews, and their move to radicalism was anyway based in part on a wish to dissociate themselves from Judaism altogether. This, however, is not altogether convincing, since there is no reason why the immanent urge for social justice, which for thousands of years found expression in the Jewish religion, could not manifest itself, in a post-religious age, in a secular movement. But the basic assumption, namely that the Jewish religion is somehow more "leftist" in character than others, and that Jews are therefore predestined to join revolutionary parties, does not withstand investigation. The Jewish religion, first of all, is essentially conservative—or at least can be seen to give as much warrant to political conservatism as to any other political tendency. Secondly, the messianic impulse toward eternal peace and social justice has been as clearly evident in other religions. Thirdly, Judaism places strict emphasis on allegiance to a religious-national entity—hardly a prerequisite for cosmopolitanism. It may be only natural for a group that was the victim of persecution for so long to support or sympathize with other oppressed minorities. But this is clearly an insufficient explanation for attitudes that negate the very values of the societies which liberated the Jews in the first place.

One element of revolutionary politics that may have exercised a powerful attraction on Jews is its idealism; another is its abstract character. It is

indisputable that whereas Jews have excelled in many fields of human endeavor, their contribution to politics has not on the whole been outstanding. Traditionally they have shown great ability on the level of abstract thought, but politics also involves instinct, common sense, wisdom, and foresight, and in this respect the record of Jewish intellectuals has not been that impressive. Nor have they demonstrated much understanding of the more imponderable factors in national life. This of course has been one of the main failings of the radical Left in general: not one of the ideologists of revolutionary socialism, for instance, foresaw that in our time internationalism would give way everywhere to national socialism—a trend which has had unfortunate consequences for Jewish socialists, for Jewish communities, and for the world in general.

Historically, these Jewish weaknesses are not difficult to explain. It would have been a near-miracle if, after two thousand years of statelessness, Jews had shown political instinct or the responsibility and maturity that comes from centuries-old traditions of statecraft. Individual Jews, to be sure, have devised clever ideological constructions, but invariably these constructions have exhibited every quality but the essential one: they were hopelessly wrong. Those who are appalled by some of the inanities of present-day radical theories about Judaism or Israel would do well to reread the works of some writers of the 1930's. I refer among other works to Otto Heller's *Downfall of Judaism* (1930), in which the author demonstrated in great detail that in Eastern Europe, under Communism, the Jewish question had been solved once and for all, and that anti-Semitism had lost its social foundation. "What is Jerusalem to the Jewish proletariat?" Heller asked. "Next year in Jerusalem! Next year in the Crimea! Next year in Birobidzhan!"

William Zukerman's *The Jew in Revolt* (1937), an ambitious analysis of the Jewish situation, makes even stranger reading today. Zukerman attacked in the sharpest terms the various schemes then current for promoting Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany. German Jews, he proclaimed, were deeply rooted in German soil and bound to their country by a thousand spiritual ties: "It is a gross slander on the German Jews, whose love for their fatherland is proverbial, to represent them as being ready to rush away in panic at the first approach of misfortune. . . . After all, the Jews are not the only victims of persecution in Germany today. Why not a wholesale exodus of German Communists, socialists, pacifists, liberals, and Catholics?" Zukerman placed the responsibility for the despicable idea of Jewish emigration from Germany squarely on the fanatical Zionist bourgeoisie: "The fact is that insofar as the exodus plan has now become a popular solution for the Jewish problem, it is due more to a number of Zionist zealots and to a

few big Jewish financiers than to the fascists. Of all the paradoxes of our time, this one will probably go down into history as the most curious of all." But he had no doubt that the Zionist project would fail: "In spite of the brutal Nazi persecution, the bulk of German Jewry will remain in Germany and they will be there long after Hitler is gone. . . . They bear the cross of their suffering with dignity and fortitude as behooves an ancient people that has seen martyrdom and knows that tyranny, no matter how temporarily powerful, cannot forever turn back the wheels of history."

Zukerman's thesis, incredible to read today, was nevertheless based on a careful ideological analysis. The Soviet Union, he wrote, had solved the Jewish question "economically, politically, and psychologically," an end had been put to the scourge of Jew-hatred, and "the very meaning of the word anti-Semitism is rapidly being forgotten." This shining example signaled the end of the age of liberalism. The Jew, whether or not he approved of everything going on in the Soviet Union, could "do nothing but follow the road shown by the Soviet Union for the solution of the Jewish problem." The Jew was the "faithful, old, brass-buttoned lackey kicked by fascism down the steps of the palace of capitalism which he did so much to erect and over which he watched devotedly for so many years." But, Zukerman concluded with Fanonian pathos, adherence to the revolutionary socialist movement would atone for everything; by revolting against the existing order the Jews were revolting also against themselves—"and there is no greater, and morally more cleansing, revolt than this."

ZUKERMAN WAS NOT, I believe, a member of the Communist party. His views, far from being aberrant, were shared, if in somewhat more moderate form, by many well-meaning and apparently sane people. The fact that this was so raises a disturbing question regarding their very instinct for survival. The issue of survival is not one that is likely to perturb today's Jewish radical, bemused as he is by a world revolution to whose interests the concerns of individual nations have to be subordinated. Seen from this vantage point, Jews are expendable; other nations, after all, have come and gone in history. Trotsky relates in his autobiography that from his earliest childhood nationalist passions and prejudices were incomprehensible and loathsome to him. Rosa Luxemburg wrote to Mathilde Wurm in 1917: "Why do you come with your special Jewish sorrows? I feel just as sorry for the wretched Indian victim in Putamayo, the Negroes in Africa. . . . I cannot find a special corner in my heart for the ghetto." This, in a way, was an understatement, for, to judge from her writings and speeches, Rosa Lux-

emburg actually cared less for Jewish victims of persecution than for victims of colonial oppression. But in any event it is difficult to imagine that Lenin, though an internationalist second to none, would have referred with such disdain to "special Russian sorrows."

Which brings us to Jewish self-hatred, a well-known phenomenon long before Theodor Lessing published his study of the subject in the 1920's. (To be sure, self-hatred is hardly limited to Jews, and even among Jews it is by no means limited to radicals.) The key to the specific Jewish propensity toward guilt feelings ("it is our fault that we are hated") has been found by some observers to lie in religious tradition, but since the Jewish religion puts no more emphasis on individual and collective guilt than does Christianity, this explanation remains unconvincing. Modern liberalism, on the other hand, is a guilt-culture *par excellence*. Nevertheless, whatever its source, the importance of self-hatred for Jewish radicals today should not be exaggerated. It plays a smaller role now than two generations ago in Europe, and historical parallels are likely to be misleading.

The young Jewish radical who supports, at least in theory, Al Fatah against Israel ("a steady patriot of the world alone, the friend of every country but his own") is not as a rule motivated by self-hatred. Jewishness is for him largely a meaningless proposition; he does not regard himself as part of the community into which he was accidentally born. Hence he is also not a traitor, since one cannot betray what one does not believe in or what one feels no allegiance to. There is admittedly a special cutting edge to the rejection of Judaism and Zionism by the young Jewish radical of our time.* The Old Left did not feel any special solidarity with the Jewish people either, but having lived through the greatest catastrophe in Jewish history it sensed after 1945 the inappropriateness of a public dissocia-

* This point has been made by J. L. Talmon in his recently published book, *Israel among the Nations*: "The descendants of countless generations of injustice, and the heirs to a most ancient tradition of revolt against it, they feel uncomfortable, while there is so much evil and falsehood around; 'a little more so' than their Gentile comrades, because of the great intensity peculiar to their race, and the unquenchable spirit of nonconformism and restless quest which partly at least stems from the lack of a firm Jewish commitment and an anchorage in a vital collective experience. The latter makes the Jewish rebels turn with obvious self-hatred against their own race. Having absorbed the criteria of the detractors of Judaism and never having quite come to terms with their Jewishness—in a positive or negative way—they are unable to take Judaism as it is for granted. They are defying it with standards which can never be met, and attack Israel with ferocious glee for its 'crimes.' Ultra-internationalists, they become racists where Jews are concerned." The phenomenon is not new, but whereas the reaction in the past has usually been in the rationalist tradition, more recently the anarchist-destructive trend has been more pronounced. This "un-Jewish" shift toward irrationalism is an interesting innovation.

tion from the Jewish community. For the young Jewish radical, on the other hand, Jewish history begins in 1960 or thereabouts, and no such inhibitions apply. In some cases one can clearly discern a simple desire to shock—"the death camps were set up and run by Zionists in cooperation with the Gestapo," or "the destruction of Israel would benefit mankind." But existing studies have shown that most young radicals grew up in left-wing homes, without any strong ties to the Jewish community, and hence did not have to rebel against tradition in order to reach their present position with regard to Jews. We can now see that the general process of disintegration that has affected Diaspora Jewry over the last century and more was merely retarded momentarily, but certainly not halted, by Hitler and the Holocaust.

II

UNTIL FAIRLY RECENTLY, most Israelis have been unaware of internal developments in the United States and especially among American Jews. Only during the last year or so have terms like SDS, Yippies, Weathermen, become known outside a small circle of *cognoscenti*. Members of the Israeli political Establishment visiting the United States usually confined themselves to Washington, where they heard nothing particularly disquieting. They would probably not have believed the truth anyway, for to the generation of Israelis who grew up on Berl Katznelson and shared his contempt for Jews willing to fight the social and national struggle of every people but their own, The Movement of the 1960's would have appeared totally incomprehensible.

Some of the younger Israelis, however, have been more receptive. Like most small countries, Israel faces the danger of cultural provincialism; there is, especially among the young, a fear of being cut off from the main centers of world culture, and a desire to be up on every single intellectual fad and fashion. Within the limits set by climate and good sense, young Israelis are, not surprisingly, prepared to follow the sartorial fashions of America and Western Europe; they have adopted the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and other exponents and features of the youth subculture. Drugs have made certain inroads, as have movies expressing the new spiritual climate, and students have demanded a greater say in running the universities.

But for the more extreme cultural and political antics of American-Jewish radicalism, Israel does not provide promising soil. There is a small New Left (*Smol Israeli Hadash*—"Siah"), and a tiny but vociferous quasi-Trotskyite movement ("Matzpen").* Many of its members have by now migrated to Europe and the United States—not because they face the gallows or the firing squad, but for sound ideological reasons. The po-

sition of a member of "Matzpen" is not unlike that of a Jewish Communist in Mandatory Palestine in the 1920's or 30's: once he had reached the conclusion that Jewish Palestine was *ab initio* imperialist and anti-revolutionary, a "colonialist society" that could not be transformed but must be destroyed, the only logical, sensible, and honest conclusion was to emigrate. The chances for such a person to integrate himself within the Arab national movement, however close he felt to it politically, were minimal.

But on the whole these political and cultural influences do not go very deep and the impact of the marginal groups is limited. There is a world of difference between the mood of the American-Jewish radical intelligentsia and the state of mind of most Israeli intellectuals. It is one thing to engage in the systematic disparagement of "Amerika," to predict its further decline and eventual downfall, or at the very least to demand a radical reorientation in the scale of national priorities. To hold this view, even to act upon it, does not expose one to the risk of mortal danger, nor is one's paycheck likely to be affected. Israel, on the other hand, is a beleaguered fortress, its priorities dictated by its enemies. The advocacy of courses of action whose possible effect would be to weaken the state's defenses is not merely unpatriotic in an abstract sense, but can endanger the very existence of the state and the safety of its citizens.

Israeli patriotism, and the conspicuous lack of guilt feelings among Israeli intellectuals, may strike Americans as strange, if not somewhat offensive. Israelis are still strongly imbued with the pioneering values of the *halutzim*, values that must seem as outdated and "square" as the tradition of the frontier in American history. For the Israeli, on the other hand, the American-Jewish radical represents the Diaspora Jew *par excellence*: immature, irresponsible, tormented with sundry imaginary problems, full of verbal revolutionism but no great believer in the unity of theory and practice. When he comes to Israel, the American radical may enthusiastically join a kibbutz, but then find it impossible to adjust to the discipline required of him. It comes as no great surprise to Israelis when American "revolutionaries" leave after a few months declaring that the kibbutz is not radical enough, and proclaiming their intention to return to America, where they will no doubt join the less demanding and more glamorous struggle for liberation as practiced there or—even more likely—become absorbed into the bourgeois society they scorn. To the young Israeli, his American contemporary—restless, neurotic, faddish—is basically unserious, and his ideological critique of Israel more than a little suspect.

* See Carl Gershman's article, "Matzpen and Its Sponsors," COMMENTARY, August 1970.

ISRAELI SKEPTICISM toward American radicals applies above all to the criticism of Israel's "failure" to come to terms with her Arab neighbors. The bi-national solution that some American radicals have advanced may indeed be a wonderful concept, but where in the world has it ever worked? Israelis are told that their country should cease being a nationalist-racist state and should become instead truly socialist and democratic; on this basis, it is argued, rapprochement with the Arabs will become possible. But even if the basic assumption were accepted, namely, that states get along better if they become more alike (a highly doubtful proposition), the opposite course of action would seem to be indicated. To become more like the revolutionary Arab countries Israel would have to introduce a military dictatorship with a one-party system in which civil liberties would no longer be respected and which ideologically would contain an admixture of Islamic, Communist, and fascist elements—a regime, in short, similar to that in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Perhaps on such a basis some common ground could indeed be found with the Arab states. I myself doubt it, but in any case, who would want to live in such a state? What good does it do to argue, as Noam Chomsky does, that a solution to the conflict can be found once nationalism is overcome, if even the extreme Left wing of the "Arab liberation movement" is intensely nationalist in character and continues to deny the very existence of a Jewish nation in Israel?

Israelis will note the genuine concern behind the advice offered them, but they will as a rule reject it out of hand, not just because they consider it totally removed from reality, but mainly because their "advisers" clearly have no wish to link their own fate with that of the Jewish state. Some Israelis have by now reached the conclusion that they may be better off without a certain type of well-wisher who, affected by the "American disease," has only negative criticism to offer and who is, moreover, temperamentally ill-suited to a daily life which in most respects is still much harsher than life in the United States.

The estrangement between Israel and certain sections of American Jewry is not a problem to be dismissed lightly. Since the end of World War II, Zionism and the State of Israel have become more dependent than ever on American Jews. While American Jewry has given invaluable political and financial help to Zionism and Israel, only a few American Jews have in fact settled in Israel, much to the disappointment of Israeli leaders. Yet how realistic was the expectation that sizable numbers of American Jews would migrate? Zionists have always entertained a naive belief in the ultimate rejection of the Diaspora; Israeli schoolchildren are taught to this day that life in the Diaspora is both physically

unsafe and intolerable for proud, self-respecting Jews, and that sooner or later the "ingathering of the exiles" will take place. On a higher level of sophistication, it is argued in Israel that the "American crisis" (the rise in black anti-Semitism, the breakdown of liberal pluralism, and other social processes) will make assimilation more difficult, if not impossible; that there will follow a new revival of national consciousness among American Jews that will affect hundreds of thousands, if not millions, and lead them toward mass emigration. At the same time, the hope has been expressed that even the New-Left Jew will sooner or later confront the question of his identity and will realize that Israel is the only place where he can live as a human being, free of the pressures and distortions of life in the Diaspora.

It is not easy to understand on what these hopes are based. There is a Jewish problem in America, and it will probably be aggravated in the years to come, partly as the result of the general difficulties faced by American society, partly because of the New Left and other social and political trends. But it may be useful to recall that well before Hitler the Jewish problem in Central Europe was much more acute, yet no mass emigration resulted. Zionist thought has never quite accepted the fact that—a few idealists apart—people leave their native lands only because of extreme economic or political pressure, of the kind that is unlikely to arise in America.*

* Even Chaim Arlosoroff was no exception. In a long, fascinating essay ("New York and Jerusalem") published in 1929 he developed the theory that American Jewry, not being rooted in primary production, but over-represented in various marginal professions, was bound to be hit severely by a crisis and by the trend toward concentration and bureaucratization in the American economy (such as the squeezing out of small shopkeepers by the big department stores). Having been told in Cleveland that among 100,000 Polish Americans there were only 30 lawyers as compared with 1,900 among the same number of Jews, he wrote: "When I heard this I said that if a young Jewish lawyer in Vienna named Herzl had not already published the *Judenstaat*, it would have been written thirty years later by one of his colleagues in Cleveland." Arlosoroff noted that at the time very few Jews held a prominent place in American cultural life, in the press and literature, but he also pointed to the growing number of young Jews streaming into these professions; sooner or later, he predicted, there would be an outcry about the "complete Judaization" of the press and literature of the country. Arlosoroff erred in attributing paramount importance to the lopsided Jewish social structure; he failed to see that in the country as a whole the numbers employed in agriculture and mining were in fact declining, whereas science and technology—no less productive branches of the national economy which were to provide work for many Jews—were expanding rapidly. Arlosoroff was no Marxist, but in his analysis of the prospects of American Jewry he attributed great significance to economic factors, which he thought would make the Zionist solution inevitable. Events in Germany a few years later showed that anti-Semitism in its most rampant form came to the fore not as the consequence of economic and social competition but as the result of political developments which had their own momentum.

Even if Jews should be squeezed out of certain professions, there will be openings elsewhere; even if their political influence should decrease, they will not be defenseless—unless a catastrophe should occur that would jeopardize not only American Jews but the prosperity and security of the entire nation.

III

THERE HAS BEEN in Israel much talk of late about the necessity of a “dialogue” with the New Left. Nothing should be done to dampen the enthusiasm of those eager to try their luck, but no one familiar with the problem can feel sanguine about the outcome. Anyone who takes the position that Mao, Fanon, and Guevara are the leading thinkers of the century, that LeRoi Jones is a paragon of socialist humanism, or that the American political system is worse than Nazism, is bound to denounce Israel as a puppet of American imperialism. The thought of The Movement has a certain logic and consistency; once one accepts the basic premises, one cannot stop short where Israel is concerned.

Israelis have heard of groups like “Jews for Urban Justice” and *Na'aseh*, of *Havurat Shalom*, ACIID, and the “Free Jewish Universities,” of the *Bet Midrash* at the University of Michigan and the *Jewish Radical* at Berkeley. While opposed to the Jewish Establishment, these groups profess a deep commitment to their own Jewishness; some of them claim that they “identify strongly with Israel although not necessarily with her policies.” Their doctrines betray strange and contradictory ideological influences. Some spokesmen, like Arthur Waskow of Washington, advocate a return to the ideas of the Bund (minus Yiddish and other essential planks of that organization), while others claim to have rediscovered Ber Borokhov. (Some sixty years ago Borokhov attempted to formulate a Marxist-Zionist synthesis; he believed that Palestine would be built as the result of “stychic” forces—i.e., objective economic trends which would drive both Jewish capital and the Jewish proletariat toward a Zionist solution.) The Bund played an important role in educating the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, and Borokhov was a man of considerable intellect and erudition, though not the greatest of political prophets. (He predicted, for example, that the Palestinian Arabs would be absorbed by the Jews as the result of a process of cultural assimilation.) But whatever the past merits of the Bund and Borokhov—and many of their views were mistaken even sixty years ago—their present relevance to American Jewry is roughly comparable to that of the dispute over the use of amulets between Rabbis Emden and Eibeschutz in the 18th century.

Israelis are as distrustful of the professed “commitment” of the Jewish radicals to Israel as these radicals are of the generation of their parents, and on very similar grounds: the perceived discrepancy between their words and their actions. The radicals accuse the Jewish Establishment of hypocrisy, but what does a “strong identification with Israel” mean unless it involves settling in Israel? To get ten semester hours of credit for living six months on a kibbutz is not quite what was understood by the *halutzim* as “self-realization.” Admirers of Lenin, the committed radicals obviously do not subscribe to his notion of the unity of theory and practice, certainly not in respect to Israel; if they did, they might be led to question the appropriateness of criticizing Israeli policies from MIT or Berkeley. In addition, it is as difficult for these radicals to defend their position against the anti-Israeli New Left as it was for Borokhov’s followers to defend themselves against the Russian Marxists, and not just because the Bolsheviks were the stronger party. Properly speaking, their commitment to a “critical radical political ideology” involves opposition to American foreign policy, not only in Vietnam, but opposition *tout court*. Some want to see America defeated in the global contest; others simply advocate a drastic reduction of defense spending for a decade or two until the main domestic problems are solved. But at this point commitment to the basic tenets of the New Left clashes with the interests of the survival of Israel, and no ideological legerdemain can dispose of the resulting impasse.

Given the constant geopolitical factors, and Soviet ambitions in the Middle East, the survival of Israel, as of other small nations, depends on a global balance between the two super-powers. If this balance is radically upset, if America is seriously weakened, the Soviet Union will emerge as the predominant power in the Middle East. Such a development has, to put it cautiously, grave consequences for the independence and the very survival of the State of Israel. This is the basic fact of Middle East politics, and there is no getting around it. Any action which upsets the balance of power is bound to strengthen the Soviet Union, and jeopardize the existence of Israel. The anti-Israel faction of the New Left is thus absolutely correct in its criticism of the pro-Israel radicals: once one accepts the basic assumption that the American Establishment is totally evil, that its foreign policy is simply a function of its imperialist, anti-revolutionary character, and that the defeat of America is in the interest of world revolution, one cannot logically make an exception of American policy in the Middle East (unless, of course, one maintains that there is no such thing as the balance of power—which is about as sensible as the attempt to deny the existence of atomic bombs).

SOME ISRAELI students of American-Jewish radicalism have argued that every ideological belief has its Achilles heel and that "one well-placed blow may prove fatal to the whole structure, leaving the believer bereft of his former beliefs with their built-in screening mechanisms. . . . The Achilles heel of the Jew on the Left is the problem of his identity. . . . Only Zionism has created the reality which the left wing aspires to. Only Zionism has made it possible for a Jew to exist without the fact of his Jewishness."* Hence the need to persuade the New-Left Jew that Israel is the only place in the world where Jews can lead a fully human existence.

The argument is quite familiar. Seventy years ago Max Nordau wrote about young Jewish intellectuals who had become "cripples without, and counterfeit persons without, ridiculous and hateful, like everything unreal, to all men of high standards, new Marranos who no longer have a faith to sustain them." But America is not Europe, and the New Leftist *has* a faith to sustain him. Perhaps he will eventually realize through bitter experience that he is not wanted in the struggle for the liberation of other peoples and that by pushing himself into positions of command and authority, he does more harm than good. Nordau, well before World War I, in a remarkable prophetic speech apostrophizing some of the left-wing critics of Zionism, predicted that socialism would bring them the same disappointment as had the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the movement for political freedom: "If we should live to see that socialist theory becomes practice, you'll be surprised to meet again in the new order that old acquaintance, anti-Semitism. And it won't help at all that Marx and Lassalle were Jews. . . . The founder of Christianity was a Jew, too, but to the best of my knowledge Christendom does not think it owes a debt of gratitude to the Jews. I do not doubt that the ideologists of socialism will always remain faithful to their doctrine, that they will never become racialists. But they will have to take realities into account. The anti-Semitism of the masses will dictate their policy." Appeals like Nordau's have only rarely impressed Jewish revolutionaries, who always pooh-poohed the idea that anti-Semitism was "eternal" (which, to be sure, Herzl and Nordau never claimed), or that it constituted a serious handicap in the struggle for social liberation.

The Zionist conception of the deep-seated vulnerability of the Jewish radical who devotes his life to the liberation struggle of other nations, but who will eventually return to his own fold, was exaggerated even in Nordau's day. It is, I fear, now very much out of date. Sixty years ago,

a young East European Jewish intellectual could drift from Bolshevism or Menshevism to Bundism or Sejmism or Zionism (or vice versa) without great difficulty; he was only half a generation removed—if that—from Jewish tradition. The Jewish radical of the 1970's is no longer part of that tradition, and I doubt whether this situation can be changed.

Thus the hope that young radicals of this generation will again become "good Jews" is a slender one, comparable perhaps with the hope of a psychoanalyst for the recovery of a patient with a weak ego structure or a serious intellectual deficiency. Individuals may rediscover their Jewish identity and consciousness, but a catastrophe of the magnitude of Nazism would be needed to effect a mass reconversion of people so far removed from Judaism. Jewish radicalism in America is, of course, a form of assimilation, and as such is part of a much wider historical process. The assumption—shared by most (not all) Zionist thinkers—that complete assimilation is not possible has been proved correct in some countries, incorrect in others. Assimilation in the Western world, as I noted, was retarded by the Holocaust, which strengthened Jewish consciousness, created a favorable atmosphere for Zionism among Jews and non-Jews, and made the creation of the State of Israel possible. But the shock has passed; a new generation of Jews and non-Jews has grown up which no longer feels a special obligation or commitment. Even those radicals who express concern for Israel are increasingly preoccupied with American domestic policies.

It can therefore be predicted with reasonable certainty that specifically Jewish preoccupations will gradually be relegated to a lower order of importance in the scale of priorities of many Jewish radicals; they already figure lower than Indochina, pollution, women's liberation, and the race question, and will no doubt decline even further. This may be all to the good, for the present stance of the Jewish radical is a halfway house, morally and intellectually inconsistent, and thus untenable in the long run. "Committed Jews" who devote almost all their time and energies to acting as catalysts for what they regard as "progress" in a Gentile society will find that their Jewish commitment becomes more and more meaningless and irrelevant. Israel will be an embarrassment to them, and they will want to wash their hands of it. The interests of world revolution, after all, override those of a small country in the Middle East.

THE POLITICAL and social position of American Jewry has for a variety of historical reasons been a good deal less vulnerable than that of European Jewry, but the general crisis affecting America at the present time has dangerous implications for its Jewish citizens. This would

* Zvi Lamm, "The New Left and Jewish Identity," *Dispersion and Unity*, 10, 1970, pp. 64-5.

be the case even if Messrs. Rubin, Hoffman, Rudd, the Jewish Weathermen and their supporters had never appeared on the scene. The fact that Jews have been prominently associated with declarations and actions abhorred by the majority of Americans provides fuel for a reaction which will be not just anti-Left or anti-intellectual, but potentially anti-Semitic as well. No great demagogic skill would be needed to single out the Jews as the main culprits for the evils which have befallen America in recent times. If this should happen, the New Left may enter history, ironically enough, as a movement which, albeit in an indirect way, delayed the full integration of American Jewry, kindled the dimly shining candle of Jewish consciousness, and (for all one knows) promoted a substantial increase in *aliyah* to Israel. This would be an example of what Hegel called the cunning of reason. Whether these incidental benefits would be worth the price that would have to be paid is another question.

Of course, it may be argued that despite everything I have said, the outlook for relations between Israel and American Jewry as a whole

is brighter than might appear. Perhaps I have stressed too much certain contradictions in Jewish life which prevail all over the globe and which time may assuage if not solve. I have after all been concerned in this analysis with the activities of a relatively small, if highly vocal, sector of American Jews. But while Jewish Maoists support Al Fatah and the PFLP, the number of American immigrants to Israel is increasing from year to year, and the great majority of American Jews support Israel wholeheartedly. All this is undoubtedly true, but it is also true that American Jews today are apprehensive, and justly so, both about Israel and about the security of their own position in American life. And Israelis have cause for apprehension as well, for their fate, as they well know, depends to a great extent on the future of American Jewry. The four decades since Arlosoroff wrote his essay have witnessed an immense advance of American Jews in almost every field; yet at the end of the period the problems besetting them, though different in character, are at least as formidable as ever, and the dangers looming ahead even greater.

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Revolutionism & the Jews: 2

Appropriating the Religious Tradition

Robert Alter

ON TELEGRAPH AVENUE near the Berkeley-Oakland border, an easy walk from one of the cradles of hippie culture and still closer to the national headquarters of the Black Panther party, there is a billboard on which is written in six-foot-high letters this and nothing else: MAN, MYTH, AND MAGIC. This alliterative enigma is in fact the announcement of a new publication, but it could also serve as the motto for the "counter-culture" flamboyantly evident a mile away, and visible elsewhere across the country wherever the young and the dissident gather. The still growing infatuation with ritual, mysticism, and the occult is sometimes dissociated from political activity, in other cases—witness the attempted levitation of the Pentagon—curiously intertwined with political protest. Among Jews the new vogue of exotic traditions has had the peculiar effect of giving an unexpected cachet to Judaism—not, of course, the organizational Judaism of the "complacent" suburbanite in his million-dollar temple, but the unquiet faith of an inscrutable Kabbalah, of an ecstatic Hasidism, of the Prophets with their impulse of intransigent social criticism.

As with the Gentiles, so with the Jews—some manifestations of the cultic revival have been hyperconsciously religious (or psychotherapeutic) and basically apolitical, like Shlomo Carlebach's House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco, where Hasidism, folk music, and an Esalen touch of togetherness join hands in exaltation. Most of the advanced Jewish young, however, are politically conscious, and for many of them the Jewish idea seems to be playing an increasingly important role in their political consciousness. As recently as three or four years ago, it might have seemed absurd to be "hung up" on ancestral traditions when one should be preparing to put his body on the line for the sake of his oppressed

brothers and sisters in the black ghettos and in Southeast Asia, but today the concern with tradition is increasingly seen as a point of departure for political activism. This development is in part an imitative response to the continuing stress on militant self-affirmation, or "liberation," among the dark-skinned ethnic minorities, but it is also encouraged by the discovery in the light of the new irrationalism that Judaism, as a vivid body of myth invested with the spiritual authority of three millennia, provides rich resources for dissent from the technological flatness and bureaucratic impersonality of a detested "Amerika."

Since my account of this phenomenon already verges on the simplifications of caricature, let me stress at the outset that there are enormous differences in outlook, sensibility, and even political aims among the varied groups that now identify themselves as Jewish radicals (with the adjective emphasized). Indeed, there are currents of Jewish radicalism quite as far apart, at least in mentality, as the American Council for Judaism is from the Jewish Defense League. I shall not attempt here either a comprehensive survey of the new Jewish radical groups or a general critique of their political views. What I would like to do is to consider a few of the representative ways in which Jewish historical experience is being made a rationale for political involvement, in order to try to distinguish which of these ways may be viable, which problematic or dubious, and finally which may seriously violate the central values of Jewish tradition.

For some of the new radicals, the Jewish past is above all a source of vocabulary, and it is a vocabulary that has peculiar effects on the rhetorical tenor of political discourse and perhaps on political conceptualization as well. Let me offer as an initial example a central paragraph from the Statement of Principles of a group called the National Jewish Organizing Project.*

The authors of injustice and oppression in America are not Jewish. They are serving a set of social forms that is destroying Jews, and all

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* The full text of the statement is reproduced in the Fall 1969 issue of *Response*, a new Jewish student journal.

Americans, as the Pharaohs destroyed the Israelites and all who lived in Egypt. We name the Pharaohs in Congress and the White House, who multiply the weapons that will someday burn us all to death. We name the Pharaohs in our great auto companies, who condemn the public to be mangled and die rather than spend their profits on a car that would protect its occupants. We name the Pharaohs in a hundred county courthouses and city jails and college administration buildings, who harass the young and break their freedom of speech and press. We name the Pharaohs who poison the air and water, the Pharaohs who build pyramids of steel and canals of concrete where once stood neighborhoods.

As an account of contemporary American society, this passage in its distortive intemperance is obviously of a piece with other kinds of New Left writing. One might note as a symptomatic expression of this mentality the paranoid certainty of "the weapons that will someday burn us all to death" where a sober assessment of the facts would have dictated at least the qualification of a future-conditional verb. The introduction of the pharaonic imagery does not change the fundamental view of America, though it would seem to increase the factor of distortion by inviting the writers to indulge in that most dangerous form of intellectual promiscuity, the melodramatization of politics. Midrashic exposition in general lacks all sense of historical perspective—which may be fine for the inculcation of a timeless divine law but is disastrous as a mode of political analysis. We are asked, apparently, to see a complete identity between the literal enslavement and mass infanticide reported in the biblical story, and the sundry institutional ills and inequities of contemporary America, conceived to be perpetrated everywhere by conscious despots of murderously malific intent. The casting, for example, of a Grayson Kirk or a Clark Kerr as a pharaoh in the administration building, harassing the young and breaking their freedom, reflects a ghastly absence of perspective on the concrete historical meaning of oppression, not to speak of a lack of all sense of humor. Incidentally, the composers of the statement do not hesitate to read back their own jaundiced view of the American present into the biblical past. The ancient pharaohs in their version destroy not merely the Israelites but "all who lived in Egypt," an implication of which the account in Exodus is quite innocent.

All of this has precisely the quality of a bad sermon: it insistently invokes the Bible as a trope for contemporary experience in a way that must strike a sensitive listener as both arbitrary and pretentious. From the elevation of their pulpit, the exhorters easily assume that they have a Mission to carry the eternal Word to the sons of men, though in the realm of politics there are many words, and none is always right: "The age of the

individual prophet is over, but the prophetic voice and mission must rise from the People, the Community, the Movement." One might forgive this as, after all, a sincere statement of concern about injustice by serious young people were it not for the assumption of the prophetic burden, which is so self-important and spiritually vacuous. Such a politics of preachment, moreover, tends to assume, even without mentioning God's name, a quasi-divine and hence absolute authority for its own particular view of contemporary problems—always a dangerous assumption.

THE INITIATORS of the National Jewish Organizing Project are at least circumspect in beginning their Statement with the assertion that "Judaism is a religious civilization based on action"—Mordecai Kaplan, I fear, is being hustled to the barricades—but another group, the Jewish Liberation Project, is less inhibited in opening a working paper with the flat declaration that "True commitment to the Jewish tradition necessitates participation in revolutionary struggles." Historically, of course, this is nonsense. We have had a Judah Maccabee, we have had a Bar Kokhba, and those who are so inclined may say that "we" have had a Marx and a Trotsky, but there is not the slightest indication of a consensus on revolutionary politics in "the Jewish tradition." On the contrary, one finds in the traditions' wide variety of inferable or explicit political views a good deal of conservatism and political quietism. The proto-Hobbesian outlook of Rabbi Hanina (*Avot* 3:2) is one that found abundant echoes in the psychology and practical politics of Jews over the ages: "Pray for the welfare of the government, since were it not for fear of its authority, men would swallow each other alive."

I obviously don't mean to suggest that a Jew need accept any particular political view simply because it has been articulated in the tradition, but the converse, where one's own political views are imposed upon the tradition, is pernicious because it absolutizes politics, and one brand of politics at that. To the degree that the Jewish Liberation Project-ers are seriously thinking in terms of the authority of tradition and not merely using tradition as a rhetorical prop, a Jew like Nathan Glazer or Irving Kristol must seem not just a benighted political opponent but a hateful heretic who has renounced the eternal Law and the prophetic heritage to become the accomplice of satanic pharaohs. Jews may commendably choose commitments to responsible political activism but this hardly necessitates politicizing Judaism itself. The appropriation of Jewish tradition by the Jewish Organizers and Liberators points toward the general restriction of human richness and variety that would be effected by those forces now seeking to subject all spheres of life—religion, education, domestic relations, the arts—to an imperious political impulse.

SURELY THE MOST bizarre instance of the tyranny of politics over religion among radical Jews is a document entitled *The Freedom Seder*,* compiled by Arthur Waskow, a Fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. and one of the moving spirits in the National Jewish Organizing Project. Waskow explains in an introductory note that the idea of a "liberation Haggadah" occurred to him during the Passover of 1968, a week after the murder of Martin Luther King, in the midst of "the April uprising of Black Washington against the blank-eyed pyramid-builders of our own time." Such a peculiar characterization of the events of April 1968 could be made only by someone who automatically identifies all black violence as an "uprising" against despots, and the body of Waskow's Haggadah is completely in keeping with the political thinking and the rhetoric of this initial statement. Within a sketchy framework adopted from the traditional Haggadah, Waskow introduces calls for "Liberation now!," the singing of "Solidarity Forever," the chant of "all power to the people," and a queer amalgam of quotations from Eldridge Cleaver, Herbert Marcuse, Allen Ginsberg, A. J. Muste, Thoreau, and Martin Buber.

Waskow's call for liberation reaches a crescendo-pitch in the concluding verse of his adaptation of *Dayeinu*, which sounds like a comic parody but is, of course, entirely serious: "How much then are we in duty bound to struggle, work, share, give, think, plan, feel, organize, sit-in, speak out, dream, hope, and be on behalf of Mankind! For we must end the genocide [in Vietnam]† . . . stop police brutality in many countries, free the poets from their jails, educate us all to understand their poetry, liberate us all to explore our inner ecstasies. . . ." The hollow hortatory tone of the politics of preachment is joined here with a total incapacity to make significant distinctions about the meanings of words and of different political situations. Of all peoples in a world that has lived through Auschwitz, Jews ought to be the last to accept mindlessly the propagandistic black-militant usage of "genocide," yet for Waskow that terrible term seems an equally appropriate rubric for, variously, the indiscriminate bombing of civilians in a civil war, for social and economic discrimination, cultural repression, and physical expulsion (of the items on his list, I leave out only the ruthless tribal persecution in Biafra, where there may be some justification for the term).

This inability to draw distinctions makes it dizzyingly easy for Waskow to identify Jewish tradition with the militant politics and the psychodelic sensibility fostered by the new mass culture of the

young and the would-be young. At first glance, his updated Haggadah might seem to resemble those touchingly naive Haggadahs of the early kibbutz movement, where the four cups were drunk in pledges of solidarity to the workers of the world and bad Hebrew verses on the burgeoning soil were sung to sentimental melodies. There is, however, something much more wildly out of whack in Waskow's attempt to combine tradition and ideology, and I think it has to do with his nearly total lack of discrimination about language, values, ideas, and historical experience. Revealingly, he begins his Haggadah by paraphrasing the traditional *Havdalah* ceremony in the following manner: "Blessed art thou, O Lord . . . who makest a distinction between holy and equally holy: between the holiness of this festival and the equal holiness of the Sabbath; between the holiness of light and the equal holiness of darkness; between the holiness of the Jewish people and the equal holiness of other peoples." This may appear noble to some but it is profoundly un-Jewish. Traditional Jewish law in fact is built upon a hierarchy of holiness, with careful distinctions made among different levels and categories of holiness, and a sharp differentiation drawn between sacred and profane. The festival, in hard legal terms, is definitely not equal in holiness to the Sabbath, and, whether we find it palatable or not, the tradition clearly insists on the superior holiness of Israel to the other peoples. (On the question of divine election, the Reconstructionists are more honest in avowedly rejecting part of tradition rather than inventing a spurious tradition in consonance with their own values.) Later, at a culminating point in the Seder, Waskow's leveling approach to hierarchies of sanctity becomes offensively shrill when he inserts between the first two paragraphs of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113 and 114) a poem by Allen Ginsberg which begins with the word "holy" repeated fifteen times and then continues:

*The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!
Everything is holy! everybody's holy! everywhere is holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman's an angel!*

Aesthetically, of course, this is horrendous, not only because the stately linguistic decorum of the Psalms is interrupted by Ginsberg's assertively coarse language, but also because we are suddenly thrust from one of the peaks of world poetry to the bathos of this Whitmanesque doggerel gush. The violation of aesthetic frameworks, however, merely mirrors the more serious violation of a framework of value. As in the orgiastic Frankist sect of the 18th century, Judaism is here fused with its opposite, the cult of Dionysus, the cult which, according to Nietzsche, denies the principle of individuation, affirms the valueless,

* Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 56 pp., \$3.95.

† "Insert any that is current—such as 'Biafra,' 'Black America,' 'Russia,' 'Poland,' etc.—depending on the situation" (Waskow's footnote).

identityless unity of all in a holy universal surge of primordial energy.

Waskow, admittedly, seems primarily a political animal rather than a religious one, and the inclusion of the Ginsberg poem may reveal more about his bad taste than his serious theology, if he has any. Nevertheless, the annihilation of distinctions programmatically affirmed in the poem plays an important role in his enlistment of Jewish tradition in the "liberation" struggle. Holiness is everywhere, all mankind is Jewish, and the emblems of religious authority are dispensed as freely as dime-store police-badges at a child's birthday party. One may balk a little at Waskow's "Rabbi Buber," "Prophet Gandhi," and "Prophet Abraham Johannes Muste," but one could easily choke on "Ginsberg the Tzaddik" and "the Prophet Dylan," while "Rabbi Hannah Arendt" seems an open invitation to a crude guffaw. This absurdly gratuitous bestowing of titles makes sense only in terms of Waskow's need to invest political stances with religious authority, and of his consequent assumption that views resembling his own have a self-evident religious validation.

The process attains a grotesque extreme in the introduction of "the *shofet* Eldridge Cleaver (who went into exile like Moses)." A *shofet* is a biblical "judge," defined flatly in the text of *The Freedom Seder* as a "revolutionary leader." (Having thus absorbed revolutionaries into the tradition, the latter-day Haggadist feels free to set them in a single line with apostles of non-violence.) It is curious that Waskow, who introduces a note of nationally self-lacerating moral sensitivity into his Passover service—"Search further, and inquire what our own fathers Moses and Joshua intended to do to our brothers the Canaanites"—should celebrate the *shoftim*, some of whom were no more than ruthless marauders or desperadoes, and who certainly mark one of the less edifying moments of biblical history. The *shoftim*, of course, fall within Waskow's canon because they can be seen as precursors of the Black Panthers and the FLN, which suggests that it is really contemporary politics that gives its stamp of approval to tradition, and not the other way around: it is hardly surprising that Waskow's text was first published in *Ramparts*. Waskow does not mention that the place of exile elected by the Moses-like Cleaver is Algeria, one of the world's hotbeds of hatred for Israel, and that from this choice location Cleaver has been urging the destruction of the Jewish state with increasing stridency. At this rate, one may well look for the appearance of the *shofet* Yassir Arafat in a future edition of *The Freedom Seder*.

WASKOW'S HAGGADAH is in a very literal psychological sense a perversion because it is a document of self-loathing and self-abasement masquerading as an expres-

sion of self-affirmation. In this regard, the fuzzy role in his text played by Israel is symptomatic of his wavering sense of identity. Waskow is not explicitly anti-Zionist—though, as we have seen, he does not hesitate to cite the authority of anti-Zionists—but the existence of Israel makes him clearly uncomfortable in important respects. For other "progressive" peoples, nationalism is an unquestioned birthright, but the Jew is obliged to be, first and last, a universalist. Thus, when Waskow cites the traditional Seder phrase, "This year here, next year in the land of Israel," he must hasten to assure us that he is not a Zionist white colonizer preparing to move into the territory of a Third-World people: "And as another tradition says, '*Ubi libertas, ibi patria*'—where there is liberty, that is my country. That is my Israel." One notes how when a Jew ceases to be a Jew he becomes either a pagan or a Christian or, as in Waskow's case, both. Just as John the Divine transformed a flesh-and-blood people into a universal spiritual symbol of "true Israel," Waskow converts the revolutionary fact of the reborn Jewish state into a facile moral abstraction, letting others worry about the fate of two million Jews threatened with destruction, while he continues to "dream, hope, and be on behalf of Mankind." At this enormous remove from the agonizing political realities of Israel, it is easy enough to intone moralistic accusations about Israel's abandoning of the prophetic legacy. Characteristically, in a quasi-poem by Marilyn Lowen appended to *The Freedom Seder*, Moshe Dayan is introduced as "that decadent prophet," and then a quotation from Dayan, wrenched violently out of context, is offered to make him look like a savage and bloody-minded oppressor of innocent Arabs.*

The self-effacement before black militancy that underlies the Waskow Haggadah culminates in Marilyn Lowen's poem, where Jewish self-hatred and white self-hatred combine: "our brothers our cousins/ our black our brown family/ before we were bleached/ in this desert of exile/ we too were healthy in color." One might think that if the poet were so distressed as a Jew about her deficient pigmentation, she might move to Israel, where more than half the Jewish population is happily unbleached, with marriage between white and "colored" Jews a healthily growing phenomenon. But her poem, which ends with a prayer to be "next year in the THIRD WORLD," explicitly prefers Cairo to Jerusalem: "This PASS-OVER/ we beseech thee O Lord/ Deliver us back into Egypt/ that we may join with our/ broth-

* One may disagree with particular Dayan policies and yet safely affirm that he has infinitely more genuine understanding of and respect for Arabs as people than any prophetess like Miss Lowen. See, for example, Shlomo Avineri's references in these pages to Dayan on the Arabs in his article, "The Palestinians and Israel," June 1970.

ers." If Miss Lowen is interested in knowing what the *Arab* attitude toward dark pigmentation actually has been, I would refer her to "Arabs and Negroes" (*Encounter*, August 1970), a beautifully documented essay by Bernard Lewis, the distinguished historian of Islam, but I make the rather unrealistic assumption that this sort of implacable self-rejection is susceptible to change through education. Jewish self-hatred is an all-too-familiar phenomenon. What is relatively new about this latest version—at least for Jews who have turned to political activism—is that it comes gaudily wrapped in a maxi-length prophetic mantle, the renunciation of Jewish ties made in the name of a higher Judaism.

One might note that the habit of approaching political issues with a holier-than-thou moralism has of late been encouraged by some established Jewish religious leaders. In this respect, it is instructive that Waskow should simultaneously revile the Jewish Establishment and seek its endorsement for his enterprise. Among the authorities whose help he acknowledges at the end of *The Freedom Seder* is the president of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Bernard Mandelbaum (who has since vehemently dissociated himself from Waskow), and Balfour Brickner, a senior administrator of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. Elsewhere, in the first trial issue of *Sh'ma*, a new "journal of Jewish responsibility," distinctly Waskovian wavelengths emanate from a piece by Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, who presides over one of the most prosperous Reform congregations in the country. Denouncing supposed Jewish complacency about the invasion of Cambodia and the Kent State killings, Wolf argues that Jews are now afraid to criticize American foreign and domestic policy because of their "cowardly acquiescence to Israel," a conclusion that could be reached only through the now fashionable habit of contemplating one's own need to feel moral about politics, not by any serious observation of the political activities and voting patterns of American Jews.

It is finally hard to take seriously any of the religious paraphernalia of *The Freedom Seder* because Waskow's enterprise is so clearly the crude political rape of a religious tradition. At a rather different point on the political-religious spectrum, a Los Angeles group called the Radical Jewish Community enacted another kind of innovative Seder on the fourth day of Passover 1970, starting at a place called Goshen Avenue and moving on to the seashore and then to a hilly desert. This singular event is reported in detail by Richard N. Levy in the same trial issue of *Sh'ma* that featured Arnold Wolf's sermonic obituary for the old Jewish liberalism. The difference in tone between the Los Angeles Haggadah and Waskow's is strikingly illustrated by the words of instruction with which the Jewish Radical Community begins its service:

YHVH are four English letters corresponding to the four Hebrew letters comprising *Ha-Shem*, the "NAME" (*yud heh vav heh*). It does not correspond to the idol of the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition, "God." The "NAME" is meant to connote that which can never be pronounced or understood in a word, and that which all words vainly struggle to express. We shall consequently never pronounce YHVH in the form of the spoken word. Instead, YHVH will be expressed among us in the form of one or two minutes of silent groping meditation.

This at least sounds like the expression of a serious religious awareness—instead of a self-advertising hullabaloo of holy-holy's, an attempt to be still and feel the presence of real holiness; instead of the politics of preachment, with its easy arrogation of absolute authority for relative political views, a sense of spiritual humility in the face of the Absolute. The Radical Jewish Community, to be sure, does have an acute political consciousness, drawing upon the simplistic conspiratorial visions of modern society cherished by the New Left. "And the Americans drowned our pride," this Haggadah says of what is conceived as the latest Jewish enslavement, "in hardworking powerless affluence so that our synagogues became haunted echo chambers." The bit about the haunted echo chambers is not bad, but to attribute the inner emptiness of American-Jewish life to the sinister conspiracy of a quasi-Nazi American Establishment is the kind of shameful evasion of historical reality and responsibility that collective paranoia always invites. More interesting is the way the Radical Jewish Community joins its political awareness with a very contemporary sense of the magical expressive power of ritual. The ceremonial parsley is dipped not in any piddling bowl of salt water but in the ocean itself, which enables the celebrants to remind themselves that the sea is the source and sustainer of all life, that its waters were once pure, and so: "May the dirt and bitterness we are about to taste remind us of the bitterness of our polluted waters."

STILL IN pursuit of immediate contact with primal realities, the young radicals roast a lamb in sacrificial style, with head and legs and innards, on the coals of an open fire, announcing, "We reject the phoney token shankbone which the Jewish Establishment puts on our Pesach Seder plate. . . . It is neat and sterile and too easily stuck into the back corner of our minds as are the grueling facts of ghetto life, the devastation of wars and the conniving warping of free spirits." The tone at such moments becomes stridently aggressive, the sweeping of all real and suspected grievances onto the Seder plate having the effect of converting the Season of Our Rejoicing into a feast of resentment. What may nevertheless give some ground of legitimation to the Radi-

cal Jewish Community's experiment with the Seder ritual is its professed sense of religious experience as an orientation toward ultimates that are beyond politics. Praise is properly given to God "As the One (YHVH) / The true source of our liberation power . . . not to any gun or man or politics or nation or idea . . . but to the all which embraces all of these." But despite the religious soundness of this particular affirmation, other statements by the Radical Community people make one wonder precisely where ideology ends and faith begins. These young radicals seem intent enough in their effort to recover a real sense of spiritual awe, yet their service mingles the stillness of prayer with the grating insistence of propagandistic clichés, and the edge of their resentment against the "Jewish Establishment" unwittingly cuts back through two millennia to the framers of tradition in the Second Commonwealth who established the Seder ritual that has been transmitted to us.

IF THE BLEND, therefore, of activism and Judaism attempted by the Los Angeles group is untinged with Waskow's homiletic hypocrisy, it is nevertheless Jewishly self-defeating, for, as Richard Levy justly observes, this insistence on an original and more "authentic" ritual has all the earmarks of a sect breaking away from the parent body. This is hardly the first time that Jews, disgusted with the emptiness of established religion, have gone into the desert to eat locusts, lamb, or other strange fare, and to restore the purity of the ancestral faith. Yet as a matter of historical fact, it was not the white-garbed apocalyptic sects in the wilderness but the practical Pharisees, articulating a public law in their academies, who transmitted the biblical vision to Jewish posterity. In any case, the Radical Jewish Community, though hardly a surprising development of the new Jewish radicalism, is by no means typical of it. What seems most representative of the new mood among Jewishly inclined radicals is a leftist militant Jewish nationalism, basically political and secular in nature, but not programmatically secularist like the Zionist Left of an earlier generation. I am not sure whether there are yet any reliable estimates of the numerical strength of this movement, but my impression is that it is growing. Last year about fifty campus groups in the United States and Canada joined to form a loose coalition called the Radical Zionist Alliance, and, at least to judge by the Berkeley campus this fall, such groups may be generating appreciably more interest and support among Jewish students this year.

A characteristic focus of activity for the radical Zionists is the organization newspaper, intended for circulation among a much larger body of students, Gentiles as well as Jews. Though these publications contain a predictable share of New Left clichés, Marxist or Marcusean pieties, and bad student writing, one also encounters in them

a surprising amount of serious reflection and careful analysis, and even a good deal of hard information on the Middle East—often translated from the Israeli press—not easily available elsewhere in English. The young editors and columnists are impelled to affirm their solidarity with progressive forces almost as a matter of self-respect, yet they are by and large refreshingly free of the doctrinaire partisan mentality of more conventional radical groups. If, for example, the outspoken Israeli leftist journalist, Amos Kenan, is reprinted in these publications with conspicuous frequency, one can also find lengthy excerpts from articles by people like J. L. Talmon, Shlomo Avineri, and Yehoshafat Harkabi who could hardly be called New Left writers. It is something of a relief to discover a group of "politicized" young Americans for whom the truth is not a matter of ideological orthodoxy.

In organizational terms, many of the groups in the Radical Zionist Alliance were formed in reaction to the political quiescence or "Establishment" nature of the Hillel Foundations at various campuses. Politically, the groups are a deliberate beachhead of counter-attack against the anti-Israel sentiment rampant in New Left circles. In the pages of their newspapers, the young writers insist on the legitimacy of Zionism as a movement of national liberation; denounce Arab terrorism; point out the alliance of Al Fatah with reactionary forces in the Arab world; excoriate the program of genocide—here the word is precise—directed by the Sudanese Arabs against the Sudanese blacks; call attention to the more enlightened of the policies that Israel has adopted toward the Arabs under its rule. They do not hesitate to criticize Israeli government policy harshly, but do not differ in this respect from perfectly patriotic Israeli groups with which they tend to align themselves, ranging from *Siah* (Israel's New Left, a very small, vehemently anti-administration movement, though not anti-Zionist like Matzpen) to the more dovish Old Left Mapam people (like Simha Flapan, editor of the *New Outlook*) and the non-party peace activists in the Israeli academic community. They also do not hesitate to criticize figures like the *shofet* Eldridge Cleaver who in one issue of the *Berkeley Jewish Radical* is roundly rebuked for his pro-Arab stance and reminded that he once thought Zionism a worthy model for black emulation. *Aliyah* is, I would guess, a more seriously-weighted alternative for the new radical Zionists than for any group of young American Jews since the Zionist youth movements of the late 40's, and some of the young people actually make the move to Israel soon after graduation. They all seem to have a powerful sense of *klal yisrael*, of a worldwide community of Jews; and so protest over the persecution of Russian Jewry has become their great passionate cause after Israel—a protest which is, to say the least, a far wor-

thier expense of spirit than denouncing the Pharaohs in the college-administration buildings.

The tenor of these new Zionist groups is vividly conveyed by a trenchant review of *The Freedom Seder* that appeared in a mimeographed publication called the *Jewish Liberation Journal*, issued in New York, apparently by students having some connection with Columbia University. The author of the review, Itzhak Epstein, is identified as Israeli-born and educated in America, but his views do not differ noticeably from those of his native American associates. Fresh from participation in the initial enactment of Waskow's Seder during Passover 1969, Epstein is willing to commend the nobility of Waskow's progressive aspirations. He is, however, dismayed by the contortions of *The Freedom Seder's* universalist bias which, in his view, wholly destroy the original character of the Seder as a celebration of the national liberation of the Jews. "From reading this revised Haggadah," Epstein pointedly observes, "one could not begin to guess that the State of Israel was reborn in our lifetime"; indeed, Waskow's text "gives the overall impression that the most significant contemporary Jewish experience is the 'Black revolution.'" Epstein never actually uses the word "self-abasement" to characterize *The Freedom Seder*—Waskow is, after all, a brother in The Movement—yet this is clearly what most disturbs him as a self-respecting Jew about the liberation Haggadah. He notes the oddness of a Jew quoting from the teachings of black radicals in order to please them and gain their respect. "For anyone to understand and respect *my* tradition, I would have to quote to him from Leon Pinsker, Ber Borokhov, Ahad Ha-am, Y. L. Peretz, A. D. Gordon, Hanna Senesch, Amos Kenan, and the more political writings of Martin Buber." This is sane and above all honest: there is no pietistic posing here, no invocation of Moses and Isaiah and the Baal Shem Tov, but a plain statement of real indebtedness to a varied line of figures, great and small, whose universalism is expressed in a humane, reflective commitment to particularist survival.

At a time when the union of socialism with nationalist awakening is suddenly the great political aspiration of "progressive" people everywhere, it is surely worth noting that the Zionists were the first to articulate this program on a serious scale, and in a period when doctrinaire internationalism was vehemently professed by all other social-revolutionary groups. It is understandable that Ber Borokhov, the major theoretician in the pre-revolutionary period of the *Poalei Zion*, the Russian Left Labor Zionists, who used a Marxist analysis to argue for the historical necessity of Jewish national autonomy, should now become a hero for the new Jewish radicals. As they repeatedly contend, socialist movements today might learn a great deal from Zionism if they were not

so busy denouncing it as a cancerous imperialist growth.

What the juxtaposition of a Waskow and an Epstein may suggest is that Jews can be fully credible in making Jewishness the explicit basis for their political commitments only if they begin by affirming some sense of connection with a polity of Jews. For nearly two centuries Jews have expended a vast wealth of ingenuity in denying or compromising their Jewish identity, in evading its human bonds and responsibilities by professing to assume instead a loftier Mission for all mankind. It is encouraging, then, in a political scene that offers so little cause for encouragement, to find articulate, politically-conscious young Jews who are sure enough of themselves to be themselves. As a final illustration of this new mood among some of the radical Jewish youth in this country, I would like to cite an exchange on universalism that appeared last winter in the *Berkeley Jewish Radical*. Shelley Schreter, a graduate student in sociology, developed with some care a theoretical justification for the need to introduce cultural particularism into a Marxist materialist analysis of history. National and ethnic cultures in themselves, he argued, "embody a fundamental attribute of human existence," and for this reason universalism could never mean the eradication of particularism. "On the contrary," Schreter concludes, "it is *by way of* the particular contexts that people reach *authentic* universalism" (his italics). Now, this may seem a reasonable enough position, envisaging a kind of particularism in which a people, through a proud sense of its own distinctive integrity, becomes aware of its implication in a larger human community. For David Biale, however, who published a rejoinder to Schreter in the next issue of the *Jewish Radical*, the very mention of universalism as the ultimate goal raises fears of the blight of Waskowism: "Perhaps we don't all want to be universalists first and foremost; perhaps we want to be more self-confident than the sort of Jew who must always be defending himself against accusations of clannishness with ready rationales."

ONE YOUNG radical Zionist has suggested to me that the split between his kind of people and Waskow's is a new version of the old opposition between Zionists and Bundists. Waskow himself seems ready to encourage the comparison: in "The Jewish Contradiction" (*New York Times*, October 21, 1970), a clarion call for Isaiah's people to work for Isaiah's vision, he claims that some of the "young, committed, Diaspora-centered Jews" have discovered and adopted the Bund as a historical model. The comparison, however, does considerable injustice to the Bund, for the Bundists, despite their anti-Zionism and their denial of an international Jewish community, had a strong, self-affirmative sense at least of

Russian Jewry as a distinctive national culture. They left the Russian Socialist party in 1903 because they were not allowed to participate in it as an autonomous national group, and for much the same reason, the Polish Bund in the 1920's refused to join the International. (There is an element of truth in Lenin's famous quip that Bundists were merely Zionists who were afraid of a sea-voyage.) Unlike the Jewish Organizers and Liberators, theirs was not a parlor-and-pulpit socialism, for the Bundists had a large and serious constituency among the Jewish proletariat, whose lot they worked to improve; and as honest secularists, they were never guilty of pompously invoking Jewish ritual and myth in an implicit renunciation of their own rights to historical self-determination as Jews.

What seems to be happening today among radicals who stress their Jewishness, under the impetus of the new particularism and the new traditionalism, is a more extreme polarization than existed among such groups in the past. The self-deniers, for all their prophetic-rabbinic guise, are a world away from those Jews who refuse to renounce their prerogatives as the members of a people that deserves an equal place among the nations of the earth, not in some visionary *Heilsgeschichte* but in real historical time. At a moment when young people and intellectuals in this country are staging spectacles of self-degradation on such an unprecedented scale, one must be grateful that there are at least some young Jews for whom the generations to come will not have to blush.

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Revolutionism & the Jews: 3

The Role of the Intellectuals

Nathan Glazer

IT IS notoriously difficult to frame a definition of "intellectuals" that will serve for all times and all issues, but let me suggest a working one: Intellectuals are people who make a living from ideas, and are in varying degrees directly influenced by ideas. Thus they live off ideas and they live for ideas. Politically, as we know, the intellectuals have in general been critical of established institutions and values, sometimes from the Right, much more often from the Left. Only very rarely have they been conservative in the sense of approving of established institutions and values.

Intellectuals possess most of the attributes of an interest group: they are concentrated in a limited number of occupations, they commonly share a certain orientation to society. Nevertheless, is there any point in talking about them as a distinctive group in relation to other groups in the United States? In talking about intergroup relations, we know we will have to talk about Jews, Catholics, Protestants; about whites and blacks and other deprived non-white or quasi-white groups; about skilled workers, the lower-middle class of white-collar workers and low-paid professionals, the upper-middle class of better-paid professionals and managers and proprietors; about the urban underclass and the suburbs. But why is it necessary to talk about intellectuals? Are they not encompassed in these other groups? In a measure of course they are. And yet there are a number of recent developments in American society that make it to my mind more and more relevant to speak of intellectuals as a distinct group affecting the future of group relations in America.

First, intellectuals have found a new locus, a home, which is quite different from their previous locations, and which is itself far more cen-

tral in American life: this is of course the university and college campus. Now there have always been intellectuals in universities and colleges, but I think it is true to say that throughout the period between the two world wars the main seat of American intellectuals was Greenwich Village (and even to some extent Paris), their outlets a few magazines of small circulation, their institutions *ad hoc* associations designed generally for political purposes. There were at best a few friendly publishing houses—and even these were not run by intellectuals. One can get a sense of this world, and some notion of the narrow hold intellectuals then had on American life, from Daniel Aaron's book, *Writers on the Left*. In the 1920's—and indeed up through the end of World War II—no one would have dreamed of going to the colleges and universities to find out what was happening in American intellectual life. One need only look at the college literature of this period—a good compendium is A. C. Spector's *The College Years*—to see how great a distance there was between the American campus and the central, shaping ideas of the time.

THE GREAT change in this situation began to take shape after World War II, symbolized perhaps by the fact that William Phillips and Philip Rahv, the editors of that key intellectual journal of the 1940's, *Partisan Review*, became college professors. But so indeed did most of their contributors. Yet this was only the most superficial aspect of the change. Originally intellectuals in the academy thought of themselves as outsiders—a Leslie Fiedler teaching at Montana, an Irving Howe teaching at Stanford and Hunter, a C. Wright Mills teaching at Columbia, might quite easily see their role in the academy as peripheral. Intellectuals first, college professors by chance. But as time went on, the curriculum of the colleges and universities became more contemporary, in part under the influence of the intellectuals themselves who in turn became more numerous, particularly in the younger academic ranks. Then, beginning with a bang at Berkeley in 1964, the political concerns that were so important to intellectuals began to become more important on the campus, once again pushing intellectuals into a larger role. From being

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marginal to university life, intellectuals became central.

A second development paralleled the move of intellectuals *into* the universities, and their growing influence there: this was the enormous increase *in* the universities themselves, in their student bodies, which now number seven million, and in their faculties, which now approach 600,000. Thus, not only was a new field of action captured: the field of action itself became immeasurably more important. It reached many more, proportionately and absolutely, of the youth, it involved an ever higher share of the Gross National Product, it had closer and more significant relations with government—relations which, when sentiment on the campus turned against the government, could be used to influence government policy. But even before they began making sensational copy for the mass media late in 1964, colleges and universities were increasingly becoming a focal point of interest—for businessmen, for politicians, for the mass media, and all the more, of course, with the subsequent spread of student revolt.

THE CAPTURE of a new and growing field of action for intellectuals did not mean giving up old fields of action. Quite the contrary. In the past, intellectuals had controlled a few magazines with tiny circulations. *Partisan Review*, despite its great influence, had a circulation of less than 8,000 in the middle 1950's; COMMENTARY never went above 25,000 until after 1960. The circulation of other intellectual magazines was far below these figures, and the intellectual weeklies, the *Nation* and the *New Republic*, struggled along with a few tens of thousands. Intellectuals controlled no publishing houses, despite their heavy contribution of literary properties. In the mass media—magazines, radio and television, newspapers—they played almost no role at all.

The transformation in this general area has been as phenomenal as in the case of the universities and colleges. The circulation of intellectual magazines has generally increased in an extraordinary degree, while many of the mass magazines such as *Esquire* and *Playboy* regularly publish leading figures of the intellectual world, and not as ornaments alone, but as valued contributors who provide perhaps one of the strongest selling points for these periodicals. Publishing houses are now typically controlled by young editors, with strong ties to the present-day intellectual community. TV production staffs often share the concerns of intellectuals, and increasingly even newspaper reporters are to be considered intellectuals. All this is only a natural consequence of the intellectual conquest of the campuses, since editors, producers, and reporters are almost always recruited from the campuses.

Finally, there is one other factor that has con-

tributed greatly to an expansion of the role of intellectuals: this is the inability of the American hinterland to develop spokesmen and leaders of substance. By the hinterland I mean the people, probably still the majority, that H. L. Mencken abused as the booboisie and that Sinclair Lewis satirized—people who were attracted in varying numbers to the Ku Klux Klan, Father Coughlin's Social Justice movement, isolationism, McCarthyism, Senator Goldwater, and Governor Wallace. One describes this phenomenon with hesitation, because it has a shifting make-up and constituency. The kind of social groupings (for example, small-town businessmen and professionals, city shopkeepers, policemen) from whom supporters of an anti-Catholic movement such as the American Protective Association in the 1890's were drawn will be found in support of the radical Right today; but today these groupings include Catholics. The constant element would seem to be an exclusivist (or, following Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab in *The Politics of Unreason*, a "preservatist") tendency, and one finds it among those who have not done too badly, but also not too well; who are not exposed to cosmopolitan—"intellectual"—influences; who are suspicious of foreigners and of new ideas.

This exclusivist tendency, I submit, is weaker today in America than ever before. When one remembers how many distinguished political leaders and even intellectual leaders supported American exclusivism during the fight against immigration in the 20's, during the heyday of isolationism in the 30's, during the anti-Communist purge of the later 40's and 50's—one is simply astonished at the almost complete absence of any such respectable support for right-wing tendencies in America today.

There are many reasons for this: the collapse, militarily and intellectually, of fascism is certainly one, but the main reason, I would guess, is that it has become very nearly impossible for conservative, let alone reactionary, thinking to flourish in the colleges and universities during the past two decades. And since the universities and colleges now provide almost all the intellectual leadership we have, there is precious little such leadership to be found for rightist constituencies. Thus there now exists no powerful force within the intellectual world to challenge the intellectuals on the Left.* Even many Cath-

* It would be interesting to study the cases in which books are purged from libraries and teachers fired for putting radical or avant-garde writers into school curricula. It is my impression that the number of such cases declines steadily, even though the fare in question (e.g., Eldridge Cleaver) is much stronger. (By contrast, the *New York Times* attacks the United States Information Service for the effrontery of adding perfectly conventional and respectable conservative literature to its libraries.) The feelings still persist that would lead to book-banning. Those who have these feelings, however, seem to have lost their former self-confidence.

olic schools and colleges are now dominated by the concerns and ideas of the Left intellectuals, and form no bulwark, as to some extent they once did, against intellectual domination.

One can point to two facts which suggest the extent of this dominance by the intellectuals of the Left. Until the 1950's, the distinctions between highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow were universally considered critical in discussing American culture and American intellectual life. They have quite disappeared—but not because, as many in the 40's and 50's argued would happen, highbrow ideas have been coopted and swallowed up by middlebrow culture. Quite the contrary: I believe that highbrow ideas, the ideas which were sharply critical of the bourgeoisie and its culture, have by now captured the old audience of the middlebrow. The loss of confidence and nerve that follows when the bourgeoisie is inundated by an anti-bourgeois culture—which is just what is happening today—can scarcely be exaggerated.

A second fact: For a long time, analysts of the campus scene made a distinction between elite and non-elite schools. The non-elite schools maintained a collegiate, anti-intellectual culture; the elite schools, while they included such tendencies, also maintained an intellectual culture. Today it is no longer possible to make an important distinction between the two kinds of campus. There is one culture, and Kent State is a part of it no less than Princeton. Despite its strong anti-rational—and therefore anti-intellectual—bias, it is a culture molded by the intellectuals: by their ideas and attitudes, even if their ideas and attitudes are no longer communicated through reasoned discussion.

II

IF IT IS true that the intellectuals are a distinct grouping within American society, it is also true that a high proportion of the members of this group are Jews. Recent studies of college faculties, the largest single concentration of intellectuals, report that Jews, who form 3 per cent of the American population, or less, characteristically form more than a third of the faculties of elite schools, and more than 10 per cent of the faculty population as a whole. Among college students, from whom intellectuals are recruited, there is a similar picture (though the proportion of Jews among students is smaller than it is among faculty). The change is not only visible on the campus, however. Publishing, which as late as the mid-1950's was a field in which few Jews worked, has been transformed in the past fifteen years into a largely Jewish industry. In the field of mass entertainment, of course—especially movies and popular music—there have been large numbers of Jews for a long time. But in the past two decades

this field too has been “intellectualized” to an astonishing extent. Song lyrics are no longer confined, as we well know, to moon and June, which used pretty well to sum them up. So too with movies and mass magazines.

Because so many intellectuals are Jews (even if most Jews are not intellectuals), one of the most serious issues affecting the position of Jews in general during the coming years may very well stem from the circumstance that it was intellectuals—college students, faculty members, intellectual periodicals, the “intellectualized” mass media—who most strongly opposed American participation in the Vietnam war, and who in addition attacked and overthrew the traditional restraints—on sexual behavior, on anti-authoritarian behavior, on violent behavior in certain settings—that had been established in American society.

To consider the war first: I have always believed American intervention in Vietnam to have been a terrible mistake and a disaster from the beginning, and that we only evaded this recognition—and still evade it—through the typical American pattern of trying to reverse a failure of policy by technological means, in this case massive destruction. But in this I only reflect the views of . . . intellectuals. I do not believe that even now the majority of the American people see the matter in this way. They can select quite different facts for emphasis, and interpret the same facts differently: that it was the boys who did not go to college who fought the war, the children of “Middle America”; that it was the boys who stayed behind, who were part of the intellectual class, or hoped to become part of it, and their teachers, who opposed the war and made impossible a united national commitment to those fighting it; that the war was lost in large measure because the intellectuals undermined patriotism, nationalism, the authority of government and army. The conceivable end of this line of thinking—and many of the parents and relatives of the 300,000 dead and maimed Americans may take it—is that the intellectuals are responsible, the “faggots,” as the construction workers in New York call the students, the longhairs, and (if the inhibitions against anti-Semitism raised by the war against Hitler should be overcome) finally the Jews.

I think anyone who looks to the future in America must consider this possibility—almost a probability—of the rise of a stab-in-the-back myth, in which it will not only be students and professors and intellectuals who are attacked, and not only Jews in their role as members of this general community, but conceivably Jews *as Jews*. The parallel between Weimar and America is often raised. There are many, many differences. And yet this parallel cannot be dismissed. We must end the war—that is the first order of business. But let no one deceive himself that all will

be well when the country contemplates a futile and useless and costly war, the first war it has lost, as President Nixon reminds us, in its history.

As serious in its implications for potential conflict between the intellectuals and "Middle America," and therefore for Jews because of their prominence among the intellectuals, is the radical transformation in the tone of moral discourse and of the character of private and public behavior in the United States in the past ten years. If, for example, one considers the flooding of the bookstores with what until recently was considered hard-core pornography and was illegal to print, import, or distribute, one finds that Jews have been prominent in this revolution. The Jewish role in any case would be large because it was in paperback publishing and distributing that Jews made their mark in publishing in the 50's. (As is true with all new entrepreneurs in an established field, they had to find new product lines.) Similarly with the transformation of films to the point where the family movie has become a small part of the whole. Similarly with the liberalization of abortion laws, in which Jewish state legislators in California and New York played a leading role. Some of the chief propagandists for drugs during this period—Allen Ginsberg, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin—have been Jews too, as have many leaders of the attack on authority—the authority of school administrators, policemen, government officials. Obviously Jews are not the only people who have been involved in this moral revolution. Obviously, too, much of it has been directed against an outmoded and provincial puritanism, and much of it represents a real advance of freedom. But the moral revolution in Weimar Germany also had much to commend it—the 20's in Germany were indeed one of the great cultural eras in world history—and many besides Jews were involved. That did not prevent Hitler from successfully blaming the moral "degeneration" of Germany on the influence of the Jews.

Anyone concerned for the future of Jews in America who sees what the intellectuals have accomplished will certainly think twice before applauding or rejoicing in the Jewish role in the transformation of the United States. This revolution was carried out in the cosmopolitan centers, and spread to the hinterland. After all, the hinterland does not make its own movies, publish its own books, produce its own television programs. It takes what the cosmopolis gives it. And I believe there is a good deal of resentment over what the cosmopolis has been giving it. Now conceivably the cultural victory is so complete that there is no longer any effective way for the hinterland to fight back. Its children, too, in large measure oppose the war in Vietnam, approve the new sexual freedom, smoke pot, and thumb their noses at authority. Perhaps America will

simply lick its wounds, and blame no one but its own ignorance, arrogance, and *hubris* for the disaster of Vietnam. But we see here, in the potential backlash at what the intellectuals have done in relation to Vietnam and to the overturning of traditional moral values, perhaps the greatest single danger to Jews in the next ten years.

III

THE PROSPECTS are equally ominous when we turn our attention from what the intellectuals have done to what they have thought and said and the impact of their ideas on the country.

There are three aspects of the thinking of intellectuals that are troubling for the Jewish position. First is the disappearance of any important group of intellectuals or stream of intellectual activity that finds anything positive or good about America and American life. There was a unique moment in the 1950's when the intellectuals approved of a good deal about America. This had not been the case, at least not on such a scale, since the early decades after the founding of the Republic. Intellectuals, true to their calling, had attacked, and quite properly, American expansionism in foreign wars (Mexico), slavery, big business, political corruption, imperialism, materialism. In the late 1940's and 50's, in the aftermath of a war against the unmitigated evil of Nazism, and when we were confronted in the Soviet Union by a foreign enemy that combined in paramount degree dictatorial brutality and cultural vulgarity, intellectuals for the first time in a hundred years discovered something to celebrate in America: its encouragement of group life of various kinds; its ability to change without violence; its altruistic and generous assistance to war-ravaged countries; its openness to foreign and immigrant influence; its relative classlessness.

All this, of course, has changed. America is *not* approved of by the intellectuals today. Its encouragement of group life is denounced as hypocritical sham; its ability to change without violence is radically questioned (violence indeed is given more praise and more support than was ever dreamed possible—and by intellectuals); its foreign role is seen as an expression of the most brutal, cruel, and selfish of imperialisms.

This change in the way intellectuals think is bound to have consequences for Jews. A country in which the authority of government is undermined, a society in which violence becomes more common and more accepted, do not represent an environment in which Jews will flourish. Jews, in fact, have already been hurt by violence. Given the oddities of Jewish social distribution, it is the property of Jews that gets destroyed when there is rioting in the ghettos, just as the long-

haired students in New York who are attacked by enraged construction workers are likely to be Jews and just as it turns out that three of the four students who were killed at Kent State were Jews. At present all these are simply statistical consequences of Jewish distribution. What one must fear is that the actual statistical associations will enter the consciousness of the violent ones, and the old anti-Semitic, conspiratorial explanations of conflict, tragedy, and failure will be revived.

But it is not only the possibilities of backlash here which constitute a threat to Jews. The greater danger is that American opinion in general will be influenced by the view prevalent among intellectuals of the American role in world politics. American intervention has in the past helped Jews in cases where they were being persecuted. Many trends—in particular the increasing circumspection with which the influence of great powers is or can be used—reduce the value of this source of possible aid for threatened Jewish interests, including, of course, aid to Israel in the form of arms. But it is further reduced if public opinion, influenced by intellectuals, comes to assume that American intervention is always and inevitably selfish, or imperialist, or racist in character. In this case, obloquy may even fall upon those for whom American help is intended.

Similarly, in the domestic sphere, if America is believed to be inherently discriminatory and racist in its treatment of minority groups, then the very success—economic, political, cultural—of the Jewish group becomes suspect: it becomes a success based on collaboration with the enemy. This is already the argument that is made by those Jewish members of the New Left who are professedly most sympathetic to Jews; they see the Jewish position in this country not as the product of worthy Jewish effort in a benign environment, but as the consequence of an unmanly accommodation by the “Uncle Jakes” to an arrogant, racist society. Here, then, is another way in which the assault on the reputation of America—an assault which has already succeeded in reducing this country, in the eyes of many American intellectuals, to outlaw status—must affect the position of Jews.

THERE IS a second aspect of the current outlook of intellectuals that one must soberly consider as a factor of potential influence on the position of Jews. This is the view now held by most intellectuals of the moral quality of Jewish life, both in the United States and in Israel. Nazism, fascism, the Second World War, the slaughter of the six million, and the almost miraculous creation of the State of Israel with the remarkable momentary support of both the United States and Soviet Russia—all this combined for a time to raise Jewish prestige among intellectuals to the highest level it had reached

since the intelligentsia emerged in Europe, regardless of whether we date that emergence from the Reformation, the Enlightenment, or the Industrial Revolution. Intellectuals had never thought well of Jews before. Until the late 19th century, Jews were conceived of as medieval, backward, money-grasping, clannish. Even those Jews who joined with the radical intellectuals, pouring into the socialist parties of Europe and becoming some of their leading theoreticians, were ready to adopt a view of their own people as either medievalists or capitalists. Throughout the 19th century, and right through the history of fascism, there was, in addition, always a body of influential right-wing intellectuals who held exactly the same view of the Jews, the only difference in this respect being that on the Right there was no Jewish participation to moderate the excesses of anti-Semitism.

All this changed in World War II and its aftermath. Indeed, there has never been such a wave of philo-Semitism among intellectuals as that which rose to flood tide in 1945—and, I would suggest now, ebbed in 1967. Many factors contributed to the ebbing of the philo-Semitic outlook of the intellectuals. One was the overwhelming military victory of Israel in 1967. Intellectuals in the present era do not look kindly on the military, if it is not formally a revolutionary military. Another factor was the rise of the Third-World revolutions, and the sometimes fortuitous association of these revolutions with the enemies of Israel. The Arab world was scarcely revolutionary, but Algeria, whose struggle against French colonialism had been turned by French intellectuals into a paradigm of Third-World revolution, spoke Arabic; the Arabs became allied with elements of black Africa; and, through an odd chain of circumstances, Israel became the perceived enemy of revolutionary intellectuals, black as well as white. The victory of Israel over the Arabs in 1967 put the finishing touches on this development.

There were other factors in the decline of philo-Semitism among intellectuals. After World War II, not only America but capitalism gained new credibility and support among intellectuals. It was capitalism after all that was producing a high standard of living in America and Western Europe, and it was under capitalism that a high degree of personal liberty seemed to obtain, in contrast to the situation under socialism in Russia and Eastern Europe, which provided neither freedom nor a high standard of living. Now Jews, despite their prominence among the intellectuals criticizing capitalism, seem to flourish as a group under capitalism. For businessmen and free professionals (and for intellectuals, I would add) it could scarcely be otherwise. Thus when capitalism got into trouble with the intellectuals once again, as it did in the 1960's with the surprising recrudescence of Marxist and other radical doc-

trines and with the even more surprising turn by many intellectuals toward the support of authoritarian regimes, Jews quite naturally turned up once again as a backward element and an obstacle to progress.

There is a third aspect of the declining philo-Semitism of intellectuals, and this is the declining credit of religion in the modern world. A religious revival took place after World War II. Religious thinkers, old and new, were held in high repute by intellectuals. No matter that these were largely Protestant thinkers; their prestige spilled over to Jews as well. Today religion has credit only to the extent that it becomes political or "relevant" and participates in current struggles, and whatever the efforts of various groups of Jews to insist on the social role of Judaism, the fact is that if Judaism is to be taken seriously because it works for social justice, it will not be taken seriously at all. Judaism has to some degree, and individual Jews have to a much greater degree, worked for universal social justice, but this is not the distinguishing mark of Judaism—a religion whose true strength and authority lie rather in its unbending monotheism, its historical depth and weight, its focus on a single people in all its concrete reality.

Finally there is the fact that Jews have depended on liberal values for their security and their prosperity, and never have liberal values been in worse shape among the intellectuals. Interestingly enough, even the one liberal value that has defined the main thrust of Jewish defense organizations over the years—tolerance—has come under severe attack from such leading intellectuals as Herbert Marcuse, Barrington Moore, and Robert Paul Wolff. Nor is the attack confined to them, as one can see (to take a random example) from the catechism entitled "Answers to Liberal Questions on Campus Uprising" circulated by the New University Conference and published last spring in the *Guardian*. Now both the *Guardian* and the NUC may be considered relatively moderate representatives of the New Left: they are not Weathermen. Yet this catechism explains why it is unnecessary to respect the rights of minorities of students who want to attend classes during strikes or to enlist in ROTC, and it also defends the kinds of violence that are used to support this refusal of tolerance. If liberal values, and particularly the value of tolerance, decline, Jews are in trouble; if arguments are made for violence and violence is encouraged, Jews are in trouble. Perhaps not immediately—so many Jews after all are engaged in the attack on tolerance and the encouragement of violence. But soon enough. More than most people, Jews need a civil society, one in which rules exist and are enforced, because they are a small minority whose very security is based on rules of civilized intercourse. When these go, Jews will suffer.

IV

I HAVE argued that if we look at intellectuals, we will see less understanding of and support for Jews and Jewish interests than we have had from that quarter in many years. At the same time, I have argued that the role intellectuals have played in this country in recent years is likely to arouse a nasty opposition which—since so many intellectuals are Jews—may spread to Jews as such. These two arguments apparently come down to saying that if, on the one hand, intellectuals maintain their prominence and power, and hold to their present intellectual stance, Jews will suffer; while on the other hand, if they decline in power and influence, Jews will suffer. Is there no contradiction here?

No, there is none. First, groups can act against their own interests. Second, the fact is that while intellectuals are in large measure Jews, Jews are not in large measure intellectuals. What is good for intellectuals may not be good for Jews, so that intellectuals may maintain prominence and power while Jews and Jewish interests suffer. But aside from this purely formal point, we have to contend, as always in discussing any minority group, with the sticky phenomenon known as "self-hatred."

Up to now I have spoken as if the only reasons for the declining philo-Semitism of the intellectuals have been certain developments in the world which place the interests of Jews in opposition to those of groups now favored by intellectuals—revolutionaries of every stripe, both in the Third World and in the United States. But in all truth the matter is not so simple. There is a peculiar bite to the enthusiasm with which intellectuals—and Jewish intellectuals—have taken up these causes. For the anti-Jewish tendencies of Jewish intellectuals cannot be understood merely in terms of concrete interests which they have chosen to espouse. They have also chosen to put down certain things. The virulence of the New-Left attack on "Zionism" around the world cannot to my mind be explained on the basis of a belief that in the conflict between Jews and Arabs, the Jews are wrong and the Arabs are right. It is also explained by the fact that the Jews stand for something—and not only to intellectuals in general, but to Jewish intellectuals, perhaps, in particular. They stand for rationality; they stand for a society of mixed and limited goods; they stand for individual responsibility; they stand for ambiguity and irony; they stand for the virtue of attachment to a concrete people as well as attachment to abstract universal principles; they stand for the modification of the ideal by the real. It is interesting to me that when intellectuals were attracted to the qualities of ambiguity and irony (let us take, as a symbolic example, the work of Joyce, and recall that a Jew stands at the heart of his major novel),

they understood and were sympathetic to the Jewish position. As they turn more and more to a world-view in which there is no nuance, but only black and white, a world in which even Soviet Russia seems too acquiescent in its relations to a complex reality and only Mao and Castro and Che in their resistance (or apparent resistance) to such reality satisfy—at such a time the Jews are not in favor. And for the Jewish intellectual, there is the additional element of fighting these hated values of moderation and tolerance as he has experienced them first-hand, up close, and often in himself.

Self-hatred can mean and has meant many things. In the past, when one spoke of self-hatred among Jews, one usually was referring to the embarrassment of being associated with a low-status, pariah people. Individual Jews tried to free themselves from this association by turning against the Jewish group, Jewish practices, Jewish mores—by “passing,” sometimes becoming more anti-Semitic than non-Jewish anti-Semites. This is the classic Jewish self-hatred. Today, when Jewish status has risen, when Jews are no longer generally seen as outcasts from a Christian society (in part because the society itself is no longer so thoroughly Christian), we encounter a new form of self-hatred—a hatred of what Jews have become, the qualities they have come to stand for: rationality, moderation, balance, tolerance. All these qualities are now attacked in their own right, but even more, I am convinced—though it would be hard to prove—they are attacked by Jews because they are also Jewish values which hamper anyone raised in them from becoming as completely committed to the values of irrationality, intolerance, and extremism as many Jewish intellectuals would now like.

But if one element in the present mood of intellectuals is a forcible unlearning of liberal values, and if the victims of this process are Jews and Jewish interests, should not those of us concerned

with Jewish interests favor the counter-attack on the intellectuals that I have suggested is altogether likely as a result of the role they have played in connection with the Vietnam war and the change in American moral standards? The answer is no, if only because this counter-attack too will be marked by intolerance and violence. Jewish interests can no more be served by the extremism of the Right than they can be served by the extremism of the Left which so many intellectuals favor today.

Jewish interests are clearly tied up with the fate of liberalism, of tolerance, of nonviolence. This is certainly the case in the United States; it is the case in other countries where Jews live; and despite the permanent war in the Middle East, it is even the case there. It is a liberal, open society that makes it possible for the American Jewish population to raise money for Israel, and to influence the government in support of Israel's right to exist. More liberal policies in the Soviet Union would undoubtedly serve to limit the ominous attachment of the Russians to the cause of arming the Arab states, and would make possible increased Jewish emigration from that country. Israel itself, despite the need to maintain powerful and terribly costly armed forces, observes the values of a liberal society within its own borders, and will, one hopes, be pushed by its loyalty to these very values toward new approaches to peace.

The aim of those of us within the intellectual community who are committed to liberal values and to Jewish interests as well must be to persuade our fellow intellectuals to give up their attachment to the enemies of those values on the Left while also guarding against the counter-attack from the Right. It will not be easy to maintain such a complex stance, but it is the only one that can serve the interests of an open society, of Jews, and—I also believe—of intellectuals themselves as well.