

Jewish Socialist Critique



JEWISH SOCIALIST CRITIQUE

Number 1 (Vol. 1, No. 1)

Fall 1979

Jewish Socialist Critique is published quarterly by Goldeneh Medinah Inc., Room 1366, 2000 Center Street, Berkeley, California 94704. Subscription: \$8.00 for four issues (\$10.00 foreign); libraries and institutions \$15 per volume (four issues; \$17 foreign). Single copies \$2.50. Copyright 1979 by Goldeneh Medinah Inc.

Editorial Collective: Michael Cholden-Brown, Samuela Evans, David Forbes, Janet Kranzberg, Joanna Levine, Gary Ruchwarger, Gershon Shafir, Susan Slyomovics.

Associates: Jo-Ann Mort (New York), Myron Perlman (Chicago), Dick Platkin (Los Angeles), Debra Reuben (Berkeley).

Production: Susan Alexander, Michael Cholden-Brown, Samuela Evans, Matt Pico, Debra Reuben, Gary Ruchwarger, Susan Trobe.

We welcome manuscripts as well as comments on the journal. Poetry should be sent to Jo-Ann Mort, 854 West End Ave., New York, N.Y., 10025. Please send two typed copies of manuscripts along with a stamped self-addressed envelope to Room 1366, 2000 Center Street, Berkeley, Ca., 94704.

Cover: Newspapers and brochures of *Bund*, 1897-1904. *The Jewish Labor Bund*, 1958.

Graphic on page 82 by Susan Trobe.



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Statement of the Editorial Collective	5
Marx and the Jewish Question: A Response to Julius Carlebach Gary Ruchwarger	19
The Holocaust Season: A Singer's Story Karen Bogen	39
This Passover or the Next I Will Never be in Jerusalem Hilton Obenzinger	58
Epilogue: The Reemergence of Socialism Among Jews Arthur Liebman	61
The War of Independence Hannah Davis	78
Waskowrestling David Forbes	79
Grandmothers and Granddaughters: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Israel Gershon Shafir	87

Contributors:

KAREN IRIS BOGEN is a poet and playwright living in Berkeley, California. She has written a volume of poems, *Birth*, and two plays, *Circle of Silence* and *Solitude*, both of which have been performed in the Bay Area.

HANNAH DAVIS is a student of Middle Eastern history and a poet.

DAVID FORBES is a doctoral student in educational psychology at U.C. Berkeley. His dissertation deals with the ideological origins and presuppositions of current counseling theory.

ARTHUR LIEBMAN is Professor of Sociology at The State University of New York at Binghamton. He is the author of *Jews and the Left* (1979), *Latin American University Students* (1972), and *Politics of Puerto Rican University Students* (1970).

HILTON OBENZINGER is an active member of Jewish Alliance Against Zionism. He has given public readings of his poetry with singer Ruthie Gorton.

GARY RUCHWARGER works at U.C. Berkeley and is a member of AFSCME local 1695. He teaches the course, "Political Zionism, Israel, and the Palestinians," at the East Bay Socialist School.

GERSHON SHAFIR is a doctoral student in sociology at U.C. Berkeley. He has survived the Hungarian Revolution, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, and the Los Angeles earthquake.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to affirm ourselves as Jews and as socialists — and how do we develop a political life informed by both identities? Moreover, why is it necessary, and what makes it possible, to assert ourselves as Jewish socialists now? It is to the exploration of these and other questions that Jewish Socialist Critique is devoted. The statement which begins our inaugural issue reflects the efforts of our editorial collective to deal with the particular issues of: (1) ethno-national consciousness, feminism, and socialism; (2) Jews and the left in the United States; (3) Jewish socialists and the American Jewish community; (4) Israel and Zionism.

Marx and the Jews

One of the most controversial subjects in the history of the relationship between Jews and socialism is the matter of Marx's attitude toward the "Jewish question." Gary Ruchwarger discusses this issue in an essay inspired by Julius Carlebach's recently published *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism*. Ruchwarger focuses on Marx's position on the debate in Germany over Jewish emancipation, and on his famous — and notorious — essay, "On the Jewish Question." He affirms that Marx's writings on Jews and Judaism in the 1840s were inextricably linked with his emerging portrait of capitalist society. Ruchwarger refutes the charge that Marx was antisemitic, insisting that this claim can be made only by removing Marx from his historical context and by ignoring Marx's mature view of the Jews' role in capitalism.

Holocaust

Karen Iris Bogen's "The Holocaust Season: A Singer's Story" focuses on the experience of an anonymous victim of the Nazi Holocaust. It also probes central questions pertaining to the genocide of European Jewry: the alleged passivity of the Jews, the specific responses of orthodox Jews, and the caring and solidarity among death camp inmates. Although Bogen concentrates on a religious exposition of these matters, she offers interpretations that go beyond religious categories. Her combination of poetry and commentary serves as an effective means of struggling with what she terms this "catalogue of hell."

The Reemergence of Socialism

It would seem that in a community committed to the prevailing social and ideological order there is but a weak foundation for a Jewish socialist movement. Yet many disagree with this assessment. Arthur Liebman, in the epilogue to his recently published *Jews and the Left*, predicts that socialism will reemerge among Jews as the economic and political crisis in the United States deepens. He argues that two factors will promote this revival of socialism: the existence of organized Jewish radicalism and the specific position of the Jews in a developing monopolistic capitalist society. Although Liebman at times writes as if he believes Jews would be better off if they were not excluded from the corporate bourgeoisie, he offers a provocative analysis of the current occupational and economic structure of American Jewry. And while his bold prediction that socialism will again become a force in the Jewish community is certainly controversial, much can be gained by his evaluation of the overall position of Jews in American society.

Religion and Socialism

Recently, a number of Jewish leftists have attempted to integrate religion and politics. David Forbes' review of *Godwrestling*, by Arthur Waskow, rejects this movement which reads socialist principles and practices into midrashic and biblical texts. Forbes concedes that religion has sometimes served as a vital force in inspiring and mobilizing radical activity; but he insists that it cannot take the place of a socialist analysis of concrete historical situations. Although Forbes commends Waskow for his innovative biblical interpretations, he forcefully uncovers the utopian aspects of Waskow's stance.

Feminism in Israel

There have been few studies in English on the position of Israeli women or Israeli feminism. Gershon Shafir's review-essay discusses the works of two Israeli women and examines the political history of Israeli feminism over three generations — from the *Yishuv* era to the present. He also deals with the situation of women in contemporary Israeli society. Shafir's analysis reveals the current challenges facing feminists in Israel, as well as the challenge Israel faces from its feminists.

STATEMENT OF THE EDITORIAL COLLECTIVE

During the last three decades the world has seen the rise of numerous national liberation movements against colonialism and imperialism. And in recent years the corporate bourgeoisie in the United States has witnessed serious challenges to its prevailing system of racism and cultural oppression at home. Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans have engaged in organized struggles to resist the material exploitation they experience. In this process they have adopted their own ideological and organizational forms in order to affirm their identities and preserve their cultural traditions.

The advanced capitalist world has also been confronted by the movement for the liberation of women. This movement has built itself into a political force against male supremacy — a linchpin of capitalist oppression. Socialist-feminism has made important contributions to understanding the system of power which stems from both the class relations of production and the sexual hierarchical relations of society.

The experiences of ethno-national groups and women demonstrate that oppression involves more than economic exploitation. The left thus confronts an urgent political task: to develop a socialist theory that encompasses the realities of women's lives and the lives of members of racial and ethnic minorities. Just as the struggles against women's oppression and racial/ethnic oppression cannot realize their full potential without a strong socialist movement in America, so the left cannot grow without a theory that comprehends and incorporates these forms of oppression.

The development of such a theory will not be easy. Indeed, the problem of how a revolutionary theory can emerge from the day-to-day practice defined by the existence of capitalism has long bedeviled socialists. In the United States, as elsewhere, the specific dilemma of integrating questions of class with those of culture has remained unresolved. Jews, in particular, have been directly concerned with this dilemma. The failure of the left to develop a sophisticated and

coherent theory of ethnic consciousness has contributed to the tumultuous relationship between American Jews and the left; Jewish involvement in leftist activity has fluctuated partly because of the inconsistency and misunderstanding characteristic of the left's treatment of Jews and Jewish issues.

To be sure, the degree of commitment to socialism among Jews is not merely a function of the left's attitude toward "Jewish" concerns; the class position and interests of Jews is no less relevant in determining their political stance. But the actions and policies adopted by socialist parties and movements in the United States clearly affected the measure of support that they received from Jews.

Today, as well, many Jewish socialists, like socialists of other groups, take into account the left's position on ethnic consciousness in their own political action. The experience of many Jews in the new left in particular has made them wary of socialist organizations and movements that champion self-determination for national minorities yet ignore the desire for cultural autonomy among ethnic groups or that fight racism yet overlook the existence of antisemitism. In order to gain a better understanding of the attitudes current among Jewish socialists it is necessary to consider the past relationship between Jews and the left in the United States.

Jews and the Left in the United States

It is well known that Jews have participated heavily in socialist organizations and movements in the United States. This participation has often been erroneously attributed to the Jewish religious and ethical tradition. In fact, however, the relationship between Jews and socialism is rooted in the ways in which Jews in czarist Russia and in the United States confronted capitalism during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Russia by the turn of the century Jews were for the most part an exploited proletariat as well as an oppressed people. The roles of the czarist government in the economic and ethnic oppression of Jews made it easy for Jews to concentrate their antagonism on the state — the ultimate cause of their plight. As a result, significant numbers of Jewish immigrant workers who streamed into the United States before the First World War carried with them a strong identification with the economic and political ideas of socialism.

This identification was strengthened in the United States where the

Jewish proletariat, like other segments of the working class, were ghettoized in similar occupations and geographic areas, and faced exploitation as a class and oppression as an ethnic group.

At the same time, however, this particular working class possessed a specifically Jewish identity. For the masses of Eastern European Jews developed a rich popular culture based on Yiddish and supported by literature, the press, music, and the theater. Largely a working class culture, *Yiddishkeit* embraced intellectuals and literary people as well as the Yiddish-speaking masses. These workers and intellectuals — a considerable number of immigrant Jews were both at once — were linked by reading groups, classes, choruses, and drama troupes in which radicals and socialists prominently figured.

The Jewish working class was marked by a tremendous capacity for sacrifice, intense feelings of solidarity, and a considerable faculty for organization. The strength and militancy of these Jews may be measured by reading the accounts of the 1909 shirt waist makers' strike, the 1910 cloakmakers' strike, the 1912 furriers' struggle, and the 1912-1913 strike of 100,000 men's garment workers that led to the founding of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. Moreover, Jewish workers provided a key source of support for the Socialist Party in the years prior to 1920.

After World War I a number of factors began to work against the links between the Jewish community and the left. (Of course, the popular movement for socialism as a whole was weakened after the war — due to government repression and reforms as well as the failure of trade unions to pursue a class-conscious perspective.) The rapid decline in immigration of working class Jews (as a result of the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924) and the dramatic socioeconomic changes due to occupational and educational mobility began to dilute the strength of a working class movement among Jews in the United States. As the Jewish community grew wealthier and diversified its class positions it tended to dwell more on issues of Jewish awareness and less on the problems of social transformation. Moreover, the consolidation of Jewish communal and philanthropic organizations — especially the federations — marked the increasing unification of the American Jewish community under the leadership of a small number of prominent Jewish families and individuals. Gradually, socialist ideology was overshadowed by the outlook of the Jewish bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the greatest political challenge to the stance of the Jewish left from within the American Jewish community came

from the Zionists; the development and importance of Zionist organizations and the weight of Zionist sentiment within American Jewry were key forces in removing the left from centerstage on the American Jewish scene.

Yet the Jewish labor movement and left subculture continued to exist during the interwar years. The primary institutions of the Jewish left were the labor fraternal orders (such as the Workmen's Circle and the International Workers Order), and the left Yiddish-language press (such as the Jewish Daily Forward — *Forverts* — and the *Freiheit*). Jews comprised a relatively large proportion of both the Communist and Socialist parties throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, numerous Jewish workers, and professionals served as leaders and activists in socialist organizations and parties before the Second World War. During the Depression, Jewish students in particular developed an ideology and political commitment that reflected their proletarian status.

The terrible trauma caused by the genocide committed by the Nazis against European Jewry in World War II and the founding of Israel shortly thereafter consolidated the emphasis on Jewish spirit among American Jews. Indeed, the extent to which Israel heightened Jewish consciousness can be measured by the fact that Communist Jews developed strong feelings of attachment to the Jewish people and Jewish culture during the war years and up to 1949. The Soviet Union's early support for the creation of Israel in the United Nations and its aid to Jewish forces in the 1948 war also served to bring Communist Jews closer to the American Jewish community.

With the advent of the cold war, however, the temporary detente between Jewish Communists and the Jewish community came to an abrupt end. Organized American Jewry, along with other sectors of American society, was plunged into the hysteria of McCarthyism. American Jewish organizations rushed to identify and remove actual and suspected Communist individuals and groups from the Jewish community. The arrest and trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the early 1950s was particularly frightening to Jewish establishment leaders as the campaign of their supporters emphasized their Jewish backgrounds. Jewish organizations were anxious to eliminate the associations many Americans held between communism and Jews and took concrete steps to do so. Thus, for example, in 1953 the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish War Veterans offered their cooperation and files to

the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities (HUAC). At the same time, however, there were many courageous Jews who refused to participate in this witch-hunt and thereby risked their own positions in the Jewish community.

Meanwhile, during the post-war economic boom, more and more Jews were being recruited into higher status jobs. In addition to their increasing membership in the professions and petty bourgeoisie, many Jews gained managerial and administrative positions in business and public service. Yet Jews in considerable numbers continued to participate in progressive movements and organizations which sought aims not directly compatible with their economic interests. The most dramatic example of such involvement was the role of Jews in the New Left.

Born amid the desegregation struggles in the South and among new militant student groups on campuses, the New Left was a decentralized movement that practiced, at least in its early years, participatory democracy. It was a movement with many Jewish leaders and a significant Jewish presence. Indeed, studies indicate that approximately one-third to one-half of those involved in the New Left were Jewish. Significantly, the majority of those Jews active in the early years of this movement — from the late 1950s through the mid-1960s — had old left backgrounds.

Young Jews in particular, both democratic socialists and social-democrats, were attracted to the humanistic and civil libertarian positions of the New Left. Yet many of them felt a continual tension between being a part of the Jewish community (whose major organizations were shifting to the right), and being active in the left. A mass-based movement, the New Left was marked by many political conflicts and splits. As certain groups embraced doctrinaire party positions and attacks on Israel became commonplace, some Jews withdrew from the movement. Many others, however, continued their radical involvement: moving to feminist struggles, community organizing, and union activity.

The issue of race relations was crucial to the Jews' involvement in the New Left. Jews played a key role in the early civil rights movement, both as activists and leaders. Jews — like other whites — left the civil rights movement as blacks sought control of their own organizations. Moreover, as the struggle of blacks moved its attention from civil rights in the South to economic conditions in the cities of the North, class conflict divided major sectors of the

black and Jewish communities.

The bitter polarization of these two communities — especially in New York where charges and countercharges of racism and antisemitism abounded — resulted in strong reactions on the part of Jewish leftists. These reactions depended upon the nature of their involvement in the new left. Many of those at its forefront consciously rejected their identification as Jews and condemned the Jewish community as reactionary; others — primarily left-liberal sympathizers—were repelled by the positions of both sides in the conflict and reduced their political activity while retaining their political ideals; and some became so paralyzed by the confrontation that they abandoned the political arena altogether.

For example, by 1968, leading Jewish organizations had begun to oppose black demands for community control which many Jews regarded as a challenge to their own socioeconomic security. These demands were also regarded as affronts to the civil libertarian and liberal positions which many Jews had held. Thus, these Jews defended the organized conservative response to the Ocean-Hill-Brownsville controversy in 1968 in the name of liberalism and traditional Jewish support for trade unionism.

Unfortunately, few Jews or Blacks have been able to perceive the extent to which their conflicts stem from a social system that fails to meet human needs — educational or otherwise. The furor over community control of schools was a classic case of the way in which Blacks and Jews are pitted against one another in this system.

A more recent example is the Andrew Young controversy in which an almost hysterical division has been encouraged between these two communities. Many Blacks were outraged by the pressure exerted by what some term “the Jewish lobby.” It must be recognized, however, that the major Jewish organizations — the so-called Jewish lobby — do not speak for all Jews; many Jews not only favor talks with the PLO but support a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is precisely on such issues that Black and Jewish radicals must unite. We cannot allow the conservative elements in our communities to speak for us.

It has become evident during the last decade that the shift in the class composition of the American Jewish community that occurred during earlier decades has engendered a conservative ideology and political practice within leading Jewish organizations and among

many individual Jews. A number of Jewish intellectuals and public figures have symbolized and legitimized the rightward trend in the Jewish community. Figures such as Henry Kissinger, Arthur Burns, and Milton Friedman, have been the most notable of the influential conservative Jews. Moreover, a number of Jewish intellectuals who once involved themselves in liberal and leftist activities are now grouped around conservative journals such as *Commentary*, and insist that the interests of Jews lie in supporting right-wing Democratic senators. Others, like Irving Kristol, have associated themselves with reactionary think-tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute.

However, the rightward movement of American Jews must be placed in its historical context. Although Jews have become more conservative in the last decade, so have many other groups in American society — if not more so. In comparison to most other ethnic groups, a majority of Jews in these years continued to hold progressive stands on most political and social issues — from Vietnam to social spending.

The American Jewish community is not monolithic; it is a diverse and stratified community. There remain significant numbers of Jews as well as various Jewish groups with strong ties to radical and socialist movements and organizations. And just as it was a distinctive feature of Jewish workers in the early 1900s to cross ethnic barriers to develop bonds of solidarity with other immigrant workers, so Jewish leftists today strive to reach beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries that divide and oppress people.

Jewish Socialists and the American Jewish Community

The position of Jewish socialists is problematic today because of the relatively prosperous situation of American Jews. In the urban areas of the United States the various minority groups are divided into a few higher status groups most of whose members gain middle or upper strata jobs, and more numerous lower status groups whose members largely enter the working class or subproletariat. The ethno-national consciousness of the higher status minority groups tends to be defensive in nature. It arises in part from the desire to overcome remaining obstacles to their advancement, but more so to ward off threatening demands for equal privileges by lower status groups. Thus within the American Jewish community, Jewish defense

organizations engage in efforts to resist the economic and social claims of lower status minority groups. It is no accident that leading Jewish organizations submitted supporting briefs in both the Bakke and Weber cases.

The conservatism of dominant sections of the American Jewish community has prompted many Jewish socialists in recent years to renounce completely their Jewish affiliations in favor of a complete immersion in the left. To a large extent, we share this estrangement from the Jewish community. Yet we believe our socialism is unavoidably linked to our immediate backgrounds, which includes our Jewishness.

As a consequence of the general resurgence of ethnic consciousness and the specific reaffirmations of Jewish identity in the late 1960s, two new types of Jewish leftists emerged. What may be called a "Jewish new left" developed in the wake of the 1967 Israeli-Arab war and the consequent tensions that arose between many Jews and the New Left. This movement was formed largely by Jews with backgrounds in American labor Zionist movements. Their politics were primarily of a defensive nature; they devoted themselves to responding to New Left anti-Zionist attacks and to ferreting out antisemitism in the society as a whole. The more they concentrated on "Jewish" issues, the more diluted became their leftist ideology and politics.

Many other Jewish leftists, who acknowledged their Jewish identity but refused to assert it in a defensive manner, began to feel the need for an organized expression of their stance. The development of this position occurred at the same time as the demise of New Left groups and the awakening of the left to the significance of ethno-national consciousness. These Jews have been joined by others — active in socialist movements and organizations — who had previously separated their Jewish identities from their political lives, but who now confronted the question of combining their ethnic consciousness with their politics. We are a part of this movement and aspire to further its development.

Of course, the difficulties of being at once a socialist and a Jew have a long history in the socialist movement itself. The fact that many individuals in the past have attempted to reconcile this tension and that we ourselves are grappling with it today, demonstrates the importance of this dilemma. At the same time, we do not subscribe to the "Judaic theory of socialism" that attempts to identify areas in

which Judaism overlaps socialism. Rather, we wish to enlarge the perspectives of both socialism and Judaism. Ours is an attempt to foster Jewish solidarity with other social groups struggling for human freedom, and simultaneously to alert socialists to the importance of addressing questions of culture and ethno-nationalism.

The Jewish consciousness of upper strata Jews often intensifies when they feel threatened with a loss of socioeconomic privilege. The Jewish consciousness of Jews who are socialist, however, is stimulated by a sense of affinity with generations of Jews who waged world-historical struggles against various forms of oppression. We identify particularly with those Jews who in recent times — the eras through which our parents and grandparents lived — resisted the havoc of capitalism and fascism. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, working class Jews in Russia and the United States waged battles against class exploitation. And during the 1940s Jewish leftists militantly resisted the Nazis — in the underground organizations of western Europe, in the ghettos and death camps, and in the ranks of Eastern European partisan forces.

We also feel the tragedy of our people's persecutuion and extermination brought about by the specific form of oppression known as antisemitism. To many the history of antisemitism is all-too-familiar. What is not so well known, however, is the way that antisemitism operates in the United States today. The general population, as well as many leftists, have not understood the necessity of separating Jews' actions as Jews from their actions as representatives of class interests. Jews in the petty bourgeoisie, for example, are seen, critiqued, and attacked *as Jews* rather than as members of a certain class stratum. In this journal we will discuss other ways in which antisemitism operates in the United States.

As Jewish socialists we welcome the current attempts on the left to develop a socialism with a broader perspective. Until recently, socialists generally restricted themselves to class issues; cultural, sexual, and ethno-national questions were often seen as secondary to the central task of economic transformation. In the past decade, however, the left has gained a heightened appreciation of these questions, and is now dealing with concerns which were previously excluded from traditional socialist theory and practice. For generations there have been Jews committed to socialism. But socialist movements and organizations have not always been committed to accepting them as Jews as well as socialists. In earlier

periods Jews were regarded as a national minority and organized parallel socialist parties. In the New Left, on the other hand, Jews participated at the heart of the movement but were scarcely acknowledged as such publicly. Now we are prepared to pursue our involvement in the socialist movement, defining and asserting ourselves as Jews.

We have no desire to limit ourselves to narrowly defined "Jewish" concerns. We recognize that the dominant forces in the United States seek to encourage ethno-nationalism as a base for political action in order to inhibit the development of class consciousness across ethnic lines. If socialists are to thwart this strategy all forms of ethnic chauvinism must be fought. Most importantly, we must support those forms of ethno-national consciousness that foster class consciousness in so far as oppressed groups oppose the institutional racism of the ruling class. Third World struggles against Bakke and Weber are outstanding examples of actions that stimulate class consciousness. Furthermore, in the course of these struggles we learn both how much divisiveness remains among the working class and the extent of solidarity we have so far achieved.

In sum, our position as secular Jewish socialists affirms the possibility of a broad-based socialist movement which can transcend the limitations of ethno-national interests while at the same time acknowledging the significance of ethno-national consciousness in itself and for the movement. Such a task will be difficult; but an effective socialist presence in the United States depends upon its completion.

American Jews, Israel, and Zionism

During the Second Temple period the Jewish people became scattered throughout the ancient world. Aside from the Jewish centers of Palestine and Babylon, there were numerous Jewish communities throughout the Roman Empire. By the end of this period, the Jews that lived under the rule of Rome actually held a more important place in Jewish life than the previously dominant Babylonian Jews. While these Jews were organized as separate communities they sustained contact with, and maintained spiritual attachment to, the Jews of Palestine and Babylon. Indeed, all these communities served as mutual guarantors.

The relationship between Jewish communities in more recent

times, however, has been markedly different. For many Zionists have called into question the intrinsic worth of the "diaspora"; they view the Jewish communities throughout the world as mere appendages of Israel rather than as actual participants in the life of their own countries. They contend that the cultural life of "diaspora" Jews is marginal and on the way to extinction.

The assertion that the Jewish "diaspora" is unnatural and worthless can only alienate those Jews who are interested in a specifically Jewish cultural revival in their own homelands. Most Jews reject the very notion that their lives are being led "in exile." This concept is a kind of inverted anti-semitism; it is an acceptance of the anti-semitic premise that Jews are an alien element, that they do not belong in the countries in which they live, work, and love.

Thus, American Jews have developed a separate Jewish identity, making distinctly "Jewish" contributions to American culture and history. The vibrancy and rich variety of American Jewish life has been the result of interaction, not with an abstract and purely pan-Jewish culture or history, but with the specific character of American society. The fact that the Jewish community has also taken its place within the center of American bourgeois culture and values is precisely why a socialist critique, not a Zionist ideology, is the demand of the current historical moment.

This raises the question of the relationship between American Zionism and the Israeli government. Despite common goals, each partner has attempted to impose its own brand of Zionism on the other. During the mandate period, the prosperous American Zionist movement attempted to direct the economy of the Yishuv along the lines of "private enterprise." The Jews of Palestine, however, favored colonization in the form of collective agricultural settlements. Since the consolidation of the state, Israeli officials have employed the support of American Jews to gain leverage with the United States government. After the 1967 war, the interests of both the ruling elite in Israel and the American Jewish establishment have virtually merged. Each has managed to define the concerns of their respective communities in terms of Zionist imperatives. In Israel this has been done by identifying security with expansionism and in the United States by linking the prosperity of American Jews with the role of a "strong" Israel serving American interests in the Middle East.

Those Jews who challenge this dominant tendency in the relationship between the Israeli and American Jewish communities

must develop an alternative one based on the real long-term needs of both. Jews on the left must express their critique of Israel in a way that distinguishes between unacceptable tenets of Zionism on the one hand, and the rights of Israeli Jews for self-determination on the other. And this critique can no longer be stifled by the repeated assertions of the Israeli government that the country and its people face the threat of imminent destruction.

Jewish and other socialists concerned with Israel must encourage and support those struggling for a truly socialist movement in Israel. A comprehensive Israeli socialist movement in the 1980s will have to develop a national consciousness which is not inherently expansionist; a program of economic and social development which stresses equality and is not compromised by excessive pragmatism and bureaucratism; and a spiritual outlook which is able to withstand the pressures of religious fundamentalism.

Currently, the major task is to struggle for Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation. Military superiority has engendered a fierce arrogance among Israelis while subjugation has created immense resentment among Palestinians. If progress toward reconciliation is to be made, Israel must end its oppression of the Palestinian people and accept the legitimate right of the Palestinians for their own state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In turn, Palestinians must concede the existence of an Israeli-Jewish nation with its own legitimate rights. Beyond the nation-state solution it is necessary that both peoples strive for mutual cooperation within the broader framework of a socialist Middle East federation.

Furthermore, Jewish socialists must take the lead in the effort to demystify Zionism. This political phenomenon has been and remains "overdetermined" — it is burdened with all sorts of fanciful notions and wild associations. While some of its proponents regard Zionism as a sacred concept and a legitimate religious belief, some of its opponents view it as a malevolent force beyond history and rational understanding.

It is important to recognize that Zionism is neither merely a tool of western imperialism in the Middle East, as the crude anti-Zionists assert, nor simply the national liberation movement of the Jewish people, as Socialist-Zionist apologists maintain. And just as socialist anti-Zionists frequently fail to acknowledge the severely limited options faced by oppressed European Jews attracted to Zionism, so Socialist Zionists are unable to perceive the disastrous consequences

of the Zionist belief in economic, social, and cultural segregation as requirements for the rebirth of Jewish national life.

Zionism can only be demystified by viewing it for what it is — a political movement and ideology which arose from, and developed in, a specific historical context. It is neither a religious doctrine nor a demonic entity. In order to understand Zionism and critique it intelligently, we must analyze its history and nature with the critical conceptual framework of Marxist theory. Only then will we be in a position to refute the myriad distortions proffered by both sides of the conflict over Zionism.

JEWISH CURRENTS

has since 1946 been publishing a socialist-oriented, independent, pro-Israel, non-Zionist monthly magazine that also reflects progressive secular Jewish culture.

Every 10 years we have published a Reader containing the best articles, stories and poems that we have printed in the preceding decade. The Third Reader is now available (paperback, \$3.75 plus postage.)

Our regular departments include "Around the World," "It Happened in Israel," "Our Secular Jewish Heritage" and "The Editor's Diary," by editor Morris U. Schappes. Editorials, book, film and music reviews fill out our 48-page monthly, with an oversized Hanuka issue in December. Subscriptions are \$10 per year \$8 for students of senior citizens.

Recent Pamphlets:

Albert Prago, *Jews in the International Brigades*, 75 cents.

Louis Harap, *Zionist Movement Revisited*, 60 cents.

Morris U. Schappes, *The Jewish Question and the Left — Old and New*, 60cents

Make checks out to

Jewish Currents, Dept. S
22 E. 17 St., Suite 601
New York, N.Y. 10003

"...the most impressive journal of intellectual opinion to have appeared on the scene in years."

William Styron

Subscribe Now!

Marxist Perspectives

Forthcoming Articles:

Christopher Hill
Carlos Fuentes
Owen Lattimore
Ann J. Lane
Ernst Mandel
Carl Marzani

Bertell Ollman

Joann Magdoff
Herbert Aptheker
Gertrud Lenzer
M. Jane Slaughter
James Livingston
Sidney Mintz
Jacob Neusner
Michel Melot
Lucia Chivola Birnbaum
A. G. Quintero-Rivera
Susan Fox
Ann Lauterbach
Samuel Zelnick

Religion & Revolution
Styron's Sophie
Mongolian Collectivization
Linda Gordon's Marxism-Feminism
Eurocommunism
Berlinguer & The Bishop Of Ivrea: An Exchange of Letters
Review Of Works On Marxist Theory Of History
The Mass & The Mid-day Meal
Review Of Genovese On Slave Revolts
Auguste Comte & The Future
Feminism & Socialism
Romeo And Juliet
Food, Time, & Sugar
Jewish Law & Women
Camille Pissarro, Anarchistic Artist
Sicilian American Women
On Puerto Rico
Poetry
Poetry
Melville's Bartleby The Scrivener

If you have a one-year subscription to MP and have received your fourth issue, it will be your last unless you renew now.

Send prepaid orders to

The Cloniar Corporation/MP
420 West End Avenue
New York, NY 10024

Published Quarterly
Subscription Rates (in U.S.\$)

	1 year	2 years	3 years
Individual	\$18.	\$33.	\$46.
Institutions	\$30.	\$55.	\$76.

Outside USA add \$3. per year for surface mail; add \$12. per year for air mail.

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip/Country _____



MARX AND THE JEWISH QUESTION: A RESPONSE TO JULIUS CARLEBACH

Gary Ruchwarger

Marx's article, "On the Jewish Question," published in 1843, has long been an embarrassment to Marxists and a source of satisfaction to anti-Marxists because of its numerous anti-Jewish remarks. Commentators sympathetic to Marx usually explain away these remarks by pointing out that *Judentum*, the German word for Judaism, had the derivative meaning of commerce, and therefore recommend that the reader substitute the word "capitalist" for the word "Jew" in the essay. They thus read it as one of the first formulations of Marx's critical understanding of capitalist society. But this word-play evades the fact that Marx was writing about Jews in particular as well as about society at large. Critics hostile to Marx, on the other hand, often reject the article as a whole, since it misunderstands and consequently misrepresents both Jews and Judaism. To dismiss it entirely on the basis of its prejudice, however, is to ignore the substantial contributions of this essay: Marx's preliminary analysis of state and society and his novel defense of Jewish emancipation.

In his scholarly study, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism**, Julius Carlebach avoids the pitfalls of such uninformed treatments of Marx's article. Carlebach maintains that throughout this work he is "endeavoring to understand Marx's critique of Jews

I am indebted to Debra Reuben for her editorial contributions to this paper.

* London, Henley and Boston; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; 66pp., \$20.00

and Judaism in the intellectual and historical contexts in which it was written." (p. 157) Indeed, in some respects he succeeds in this endeavor. He certainly deserves credit for his portrayal of the historical context in which the Jewish fight for emancipation and the great debate surrounding it took place. As he correctly states: "Neither Marx, nor Bauer whom he is reviewing, said anything about the real nature of the problem; i.e., who were 'the German Jews', how many were there and what caused them to seek emancipation at that time." (p. 9)

What was the status of the German Jews when Marx and Bauer wrote their essays? The Jewish question emerged as a result of the French Revolution. This upheaval provided the first instance in Europe of the complete legal emancipation of the Jews, and had a great effect on those parts of Germany where Napoleon's armies destroyed the old regime. After 1815 German Jews witnessed the erosion of many gains they had made when Prussia refused to honor the spirit of the Congress of Vienna peace settlement, which guaranteed civil rights to Jews. By the beginning of the 1840s, however, the issue had acquired general interest again. The controversy over Jewish emancipation raged, especially in the commercial centers such as the Hanseatic towns and the Rhineland.

Carlebach devotes the first part of his book to an account of the campaign for Jewish civil rights in Germany. He focuses on the factors which shaped this campaign; the socioeconomic forces which engendered it, the upheavals within the Jewish community which led to urgent demands for citizenship, and the role of the Prussian state as arbiter of Jewish demands.

One of Carlebach's major points is that the Prussian landowning aristocracy feared that the emancipation of the Jews, with their alien social structure, would lead to their intrusion into all social classes. "It was not so much a question of Jews occupying 'interstitial roles' in social structures as Bauer and Marx were to argue . . . but that Jews would move predictably *into* all social classes, most of which at that time of transition from feudal to capitalist society were unwilling to grant Jews membership of their groups." (p. 16) Carlebach observes that the greatest resistance to Jewish emancipation in Germany stemmed from the aristocracy and senior civil service establishment on the one hand, and the peasants and guild members on the other. The least resistance was offered by those in the independent professions and higher merchant groups.

Carlebach comments:

Indeed the apparently irrational list of restrictions applicable to Jews in Prussia in the early 1840s acquires a semblance of meaning when they are viewed as state-sponsored responses to class prejudices in the Prussian population. The dilemma of course was not one-sided. The Jews themselves, unacquainted with and perplexed by the rigid and highly structured class system in Prussian society, were at a loss to know how they could fit into such a closely-knit system which made no concessions to newcomers and tended to obliterate any vestige of 'other-group identity' of those it eventually accepted. (p. 17)

Nevertheless, the drive for complete emancipation proceeded. As Carlebach notes, on July 13, 1843, the chamber of deputies of the Rhineland Province moved that the king of Prussia be requested "to prepare for the removal of all existing restrictions which prevent equality between the Jew and his Christian subjects in civil and political matters." (p. 89) Carlebach then concludes his account of the historical background to Marx's essay with the following:

. . . although hostile voices continued to be heard the traditional prejudices and fears remained, the general trend in Prussia was positively and unmistakably moving towards acceptance, however reluctant, of the Jews as equal citizens in the state and loyal subjects of the king. This was the trend, until the radical critics of state and society issued a renewed challenge to the Jews. (p. 90)

This last sentence is grossly misleading; for Carlebach here implies that "the radical critics of state and society" — including Marx — interrupted the drive for Jewish emancipation. At the very least, this suggestion contradicts Carlebach's later observation that Bauer — the leading representative of this "radical challenge to the Jews" — "had no influence at all on the legislative processes in Germany..." (p. 147) More importantly, Carlebach's subtle indictment of the "radical critics" fails to convey the extent to which Marx himself advocated Jewish emancipation.

Marx and the Question of Jewish Emancipation

It is clear that in the early 1840s Marx was a supporter of civil

rights for Jews, and that this support set the stage for "On the Jewish Question." During the period shortly before he wrote this essay, Marx was a contributor to and editor of the Cologne paper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*. This paper had a number of Jewish backers and strongly favored Jewish rights. In the spring of 1842, just before Marx became its editor, the *Rheinische Zeitung* opposed a suggested Prussian law that would have established separate "corporations" for Jews to ensure that they would have no jurisdiction over Christians.

In his own first contribution to the *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx wrote of the necessity for the separation of church and state, and argued against any religious criteria for the individual's relation to the state. Although this article did not deal directly with Jewish emancipation it was implicitly included in Marx's argument. When Bruno Bauer took on the supporters of Jewish civic rights (in "The Jewish Question" — an essay that prompted Marx's "On the Jewish Question"), one of his main opponents was the *Rheinische Zeitung*. Bauer, agreeing with the standpoint of Carl Hermes (a conservative advocate of the Christian state who had called for a form of apartheid for Jews), attacked the argument for Jewish rights made by Ludwig Philipson in Marx's paper. In August 1842, Marx himself collected Hermes' articles against the Jews with the intention of writing an article on the subject of Jewish emancipation. Near the end of his editorial stint, Marx agreed to a request from the head of the Jewish community in Cologne that he draft a petition to the Rhineland Diet in favor of Jewish rights. By then, Bauer's work had appeared and Marx wrote in one of his letters: "However detestable the Jewish religion is to me, Bauer's conception is too abstract."¹

The essence of Bauer's position was that the German situation could not be solved primarily by political means, such as granting the Jews equal rights with Christians, but only by emancipating all Germany from religion itself — Christianity as well as Judaism. Bauer, like Marx, approached religion under the influence of Feuerbach, who insisted that religious descriptions of God were only veiled accounts of the essential qualities possessed by human beings. For Bauer, it was the problem of religion — the abolition of religion — that was the key to social and political change, not the reverse. He therefore dealt with the question of political rights for Jews from an atheistic position which rejected Christianity as well as Judaism and sought the liberation of human beings from all religious

mystifications.

For Marx, however, the direct attack against religion that Bauer proposed was futile and misdirected. Since religion is only the symptom of a more basic malady, its demise cannot be hastened. The real foe is the distorted social order of which, as Marx put it, religion is only the "spiritual aroma."

It is from this perspective that Marx wrote "On the Jewish Question," his response to Bauer's "abstract" conception of the Jews' demand for civil rights. In the first part of his essay, Marx points out that to criticize religion without criticizing its secular roots amounts to maintaining a position that is no less "theological" than the religious position itself. And he declared: "We do not turn secular questions into theological questions; we turn theological questions into secular ones. History has for long enough been solved into superstition; but we now resolve superstition into history."²

Marx summarized Bauer's stance as follows: First, Germans *themselves* are not free, and the Jews should work for a free Germany rather than for their own special emancipation. Second, if they seek the same rights as the Christians they are accepting the Christian state, a regime in which both Jews and Christians are enslaved. Third, neither the state nor the Jews, so long as they remain religious, are capable of being emancipated. Even if the Christian state granted the Jews political rights, the fact that they oppose their own "illusory" nationality to "actual" nationality and that they adhere to an irrational system of law, would lead them to consider themselves as foreigners in such a state.

So Bauer's solution to the Jewish question was that the Christian state must be emancipated from Christianity before any advance is possible. Only then would it make sense to call for freeing the Jews.

While Marx agreed with Bauer's critique of the Christian state, he attacked him for not recognizing the distinction between the state and civil society.* Society could not overcome its flaws merely by liberating the political state from religious constraints. Political emancipation was not "human emancipation," for even in the most highly developed states (such as North America), the equalization of

*Marx followed Hegel in presenting these two terms as polar opposites. Civil society was the realm of private persons whose only aim was "their own petty selves and particular interests." The state, on the other hand, was the embodied principle of a people's collective life and general welfare.

political rights still left human beings enslaved to the delusions of religion and separated from each other by the barriers of private property. There was, therefore, no contradiction between people having political rights and preserving any particular religious consciousness. In its full development, the state "acknowledges itself simply as a state and ignores the religion of its members." (*EW*, p. 10) Thus, Jews in Germany should be granted full civic and political rights.

Marx also believed, unlike Bauer, that Jews should be endowed with the "rights of man." These rights were those of "a member of civil society, that is of egoistic man... an individual separated from the community, withdrawn into himself, wholly preoccupied with his private interest and acting in accordance with his private caprice." (*EW*, p. 26) For Marx, Bauer's insistence that Jews should be denied these rights was absurd. Jews pursued their own personal needs just like everyone else. It was not, as Bauer held, the Jewish religion, but the limitations of "political emancipation" that had to be surpassed. The freedom that political emancipation provided, Marx claimed, was merely the liberty to engage in the competitive struggle to meet individual needs that is required in a society based on private ownership. Thus Marx said to the Jews: "If you want to be politically emancipated, without emancipating yourselves humanly, the inadequacy and the contradiction is not entirely in yourselves but in the nature and the category you share the general prejudice." (*EW*, p. 21)

So Marx ended the first part of his essay having shown that an immediate political demand of progress (civil rights for Jews) can be supported, and, at the same time, linked systematically with the further goal of social change.

The second part of the essay is a much shorter review of an article by Bauer entitled "The Capacity of the Present-Day Jews and Christians to Become Free." Bauer's article focused on criticizing Judaism as a religion in comparison with Christianity. For Bauer, Christianity is a religion which already implies freedom and human progress; Judaism is a religion based on adherence to an irrational, outmoded system of law. Whereas Christians had only to dispense with their own religion to attain emancipation, Jews had to break with the completion of their religion, that is, Christianity; the Christian had only one hurdle to overcome, the Jew two.

Rejecting again Bauer's theological depiction of the Jewish question, Marx approached the problem in terms of a social critique. For him, the question of Jewish emancipation had become the question of what specific *social* element must be overcome in order to abolish Judaism.

This is the special theme of the second part of Marx's essay: not the religious "sabbath Jew" of whom Bauer wrote, but the *economic* Jew; not the role of religion among Jews but the role of Jews in the socioeconomic world. Marx links the everyday Jew with practical need and self-interest or egoism — the central features of civil society in general — and the pursuit of money and financial power, symbolized by the bill of exchange.

The first aim is to view the question in a historical manner. Judaism, according to Marx, was "a universal *antisocial* element of the *present time*, whose historical development, zealously aided in its harmful aspects by the Jews, has now attained its culminating point, a point at which it must necessarily begin to disintegrate." (*EW*, p. 34)

The subject of this part of Marx's essay, then, was not the Jewish character, but the question raised by Bauer's contrast of Judaism and Christianity: "which of the two is more *capable of emancipation*?... which makes free — the negation of Judaism or the negation of Christianity?" (*EW*, p. 32) The declaration that the basis of Judaism was self-interest and its god money prepared Marx's answer to Bauer's question:

Very well: then in emancipating itself from *huckstering* and *money*, and thus from real and practical Judaism, our age would emancipate itself: . . . when the real Jew recognizes his *practical* nature as invalid and endeavors to abolish it, he begins to deviate from his former path of development, works for general *human emancipation* and turns against the *supreme practical* expression of human self-estrangement." (*EW*, p. 34)

Marx's quarrel with Bauer did not end with "On the Jewish Question." Bauer replied to his critics on the Jewish emancipation issue in three articles published between December 1843 and July 1844, marked by his increasing elitism and outspoken animosity towards the "masses." Marx's rejoinder appeared in three sections of *The Holy Family*, written in the autumn of 1844. For the most part, Marx refers to and reiterates the points of his article "On the Jewish

Question" to prove that Bauer's reply did not deal with the essential issues of the controversy. He insisted again that the modern state — precisely because it left human beings free as private individuals — could not make religious affiliation a condition for citizenship. He also reaffirmed the difference between political and human emancipation, and declared: "[S]tates which cannot yet *politically* emancipate the Jews must be rated by comparison with the perfected political state and shown to be under-developed states."³

Noteworthy in these sections of *The Holy Family* is Marx's extensive defense of the leading Jewish advocates for emancipation. He supports their contention, against Bauer, that the Jews were an historically significant people who had made a distinct contribution to human development. Although Marx regarded these writers — Gabriel Riesser, Gustav Philippson, Samuel Raphael Hirsch, and others — as "poor opponents" for Bauer, they could not be defeated by the arguments of what Bauer termed "absolute criticism." In general, Marx emphasizes his agreement with all the Jewish writers that religious freedom is a necessary aspect of political emancipation.

At the outset of his discussion of "On the Jewish Question," Carlebach states that is easy to see why many scholars have expressed the view that Marx was not really interested in Judaism. For the first essay, at least, deals mainly with preliminary forms of some of the most fundamental concepts in Marxism, including the criticism of civil, i.e., bourgeois society, a materialist approach to history, and the analysis of the "rights of man" as inadequate. (p. 165) With some justification Carlebach states: "It is the misfortune of the Jews that these substantive ideas should have been developed under a heading 'On the Jewish Question', which has thereby given credence and circulation to his second essay, which is incomparably weaker and less convincing." (p. 165)

And Carlebach is precise when he states that "it is not quite correct to argue . . . that Marx championed political emancipation for Jews. It would be more correct to say that the Marxian concept of political emancipation made it impossible to exclude any category in civil society from it." (p. 165)

Carlebach agrees that in one sense it is possible to argue that Marx

equated Judaism with what he would later call capitalism, because he associated Jews and Judaism with money and commercialism. "Since he regarded them (money and commercialism) as essentially antisocial, he also describes Jews and Judaism as anti-social," (p. 113) Carlebach points out, however, that Marx does not merely present an analysis of the "social significance" of Judaism, but he also "confirms and supports Feuerbach's and Bauer's criticisms of the Jewish religion and Jewish history and adds some comments on his own, which are even more contemptuous and certainly less well informed than those of his predecessors." (p. 173) Carlebach concludes: "In the Marxian conception, the Jewish religion is wholly negative." (p. 173)

Now it must be noted that critics of Marx usually end their case at this point, claiming that Marx never returned to the Jewish question after his essay appeared early in 1844. Carlebach is to be applauded therefore, for his discussion and interpretation of the sections on the Jews found in *The Holy Family*, in which Marx practically rewrote (says Carlebach) the essays "On the Jewish Question." Carlebach affirms that Marx in the earlier essays wanted to present Judaism as a social and historical phenomenon in such a way that the question of Jewish emancipation could be shown to be a political issue free of religious overtones. Since this was only partially achieved, Marx set out to correct the shortcomings of the earlier essays in *The Holy Family*. According to Carlebach, Marx made a number of changes in his analysis, including a new, more favorable view of the Jews' role in civil society as an agent of change. (p. 176)

Carlebach's treatment of Marx's "radical critique of Judaism" is one of the few that clearly explains its political purpose and content in connection with the Jewish emancipation question, or that even ascertains the views of its target, Bauer. Despite its considerable scholarship, however, this book joins the large production of literature that alleges that Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question" is anti-semitic because it equates Judaism with the spirit of moneymaking, self-interest, and egoism, and Jews with the role of merchant-huckster.

Carlebach, who sometimes writes as a prosecuting attorney, states his case as follows:

. . . Marx's second essay on the Jewish question is cast in the same mould as those of Luther and Hitler. Like them, Marx

knew little about Judaism and cared little for any empirical realities. Luther wanted to convert Jews; Marx wanted to abolish them; Hitler wanted to expel and subsequently to exterminate them. Marx is a logical and indispensable link between Luther and Hitler. He transmitted many of Luther's ideas on the Jewish religion in secular form and underwrote many of the ideas which were eventually to find their way into Hitler's conceptual system. . . . Practical need was the 'worldly basis of Judaism — the foundation of the Jewish religion — the human basis of the Jewish religion — the subjective basis of Judaism'. Peddling was the world cult of the Jews — the empirical essence of Judaism. The triadic pattern: essence — beliefs — socioeconomic role was too close to the other two systems to be ignored. (p. 353)

Carlebach goes on to argue that Marx contributed to the "semantically created stereotype" of the Jews which prevented many from distinguishing between illusion and reality:

Even those who rejected 'the mystifications of anti-semitism' directed at 'the mere sociological phenomenon of Jewish particularity' nevertheless attacked and continue to attack the 'Jewish narrowness of society', oblivious of the reality that so nebulous a distinction may acquire meaning in a Marxist conceptual system, but in the final analysis can lead only to the destruction of innocent Jewish lives (p. 354)

And he concludes with a presentation of evidence showing that "Marx's polemic against the Jews has found its way into the arsenals of anti-Semitism." (p. 354)

Was Marx an Antisemite?

But for Carlebach to accomplish this feat — making the Marx of the 1840s an "antisemite" in this century — he can only be one of those historians who, as Hal Draper remarks, "project themselves back into history as undercover agents of the Anti-Defamation League."⁴ Indeed, as Draper declares: "Mainly, the allegation is supported by reading the attitudes of the second half of the twentieth century back into the language of the 1840s. More than that, it is supported only if the whole course of German and European anti-Jewish sentiment is whitewashed so as to make Marx's essay stand

out as a black spot." (p. 591)

It must be remembered that in the 1840s both sides, for and against political emancipation, shared the economic image of the Jews.⁵ The strong bourgeois-liberal movement campaigning for Jewish rights made it clear that civil emancipation was required in order to solve the Jewish question by dissolving Jews as a distinct group into the common body of Germanness and thus eventually eliminating it. Gustav Mayer says of the pro-Jewish liberals: "Only through full and equal rights, they believed, would it be possible to wean away the Prussian Jews from their un-German customs and from their one-sided preference for petty trade." (*KM*, p. 595)

In the course of his indictment of Marx, Carlebach writes:

Marx did not invent the negative connotation associated with words such as 'Jews' and 'Judaism'. He merely gave stereotypical folk-images an aura of social and philosophical respectability by giving the folklore of the Grimm brothers' *Deutsches Wörterbuch* which defined among Jewish characterist 'slovenliness as well as their greed for money and their usury. . . . dirt. . . . stink' an intellectual significance which persuaded generations of his followers and admirers that, since he had defined Jews thus, they must indeed be so. In this way the prejudices, hates, and preconceptions of centuries of Christian and German nationalist advocates became 'empirical knowledge' for Marxists. (pp. 353-54)

It is interesting to note that Carlebach does not mention any other major thinkers whose critiques of the Jews may have influenced *their* followers.

Carlebach notwithstanding, the act of granting "social and philosophical respectability" to the stereotype of the economic Jew was not at all limited to Marx or to socialists; this stereotype was found wherever there was a hostile attitude to the bourgeois or financial world — on the right as well as on the left, in France and England as well as in Germany. Thus, for example, the reactionary anti-bourgeois critic Thomas Carlyle was not only malignantly anti-Jewish but also opposed offering greater legal rights to the Jews.

Moreover, it is totally misleading to situate the economic-Jew stereotype only within an anti-Jewish context. For this stereotype had at this time gained general *Jewish* acceptance. Witness the case of Moses Hess, a young Hegelian who had been raised in an

orthodox household and later become a proto-Zionist. Carlebach, in his treatment of Hess, dismisses the charge that Hess drew an even more repellent picture of Judaism than Marx. During the course of his apologetics, however, Carlebach understates Hess's view of the Jews' role given in an essay, "On the Money System."

Hess's thesis was that contemporary society was a "huckster world," a "social animal world," in which people became fully developed "egoists," beasts of prey and bloodsuckers. "The Jews," wrote the father of Zionism, who in the natural history of the social animal-world had the *world-historic* mission of developing the *beast of prey* out of humanity have now finally completed *their mission's work*." Hess condemns the priests of ancient Judaism as the "hyenas of the social animal-world" which are as bad as the other animal-people because of their "common quality as beasts of prey, as bloodsuckers, as Jews, as financial wolves." (*KM*, pp. 592-93)

Heinrich Heine was another famous Jew who shared the image of Jews as money-grubbers. His article on the Damascus affair of 1840 — one of the famous "blood-libel" frameups — is filled with bitterness toward French Jews for ignoring their fellow Jews abroad. "With the French Jews, as with all other Frenchmen," wrote Heine (in France) "gold is the God of these times, and industry the prevailing religion." He calls Baron Rothschild and the well-known financier Fould, "two distinguished rabbis of finance." Heine states caustically: "I do not believe that Israel ever gave money, save when its teeth were drawn by force. . . There are, of course, now and then examples that vanity can open the obdurate pockets of Jews, but then their liberality is more repulsive than their meanness." (*KM*, p. 593)

It is also enlightening to examine the first *Jewish* socialist movement which arose in the late 1870s, three decades after Marx wrote his essay. The Jewish question now must be seen in relation to a growing racist antisemitic movement. Jewish socialists were facing an antisemitic threat at a time when a significant number of Jews lived by selling their labor power. Although the situation of Jews was thus different from the 1840s, read the words of Aaron Lieberman, the historic founder of this movement who tried to win the Jewish masses over to socialism. *His Call to the Jewish Youth* echoed the spirit of Isaiah with its demand: "Emancipate yourselves from the power-lust that lies at the bottom of your privileges. Stop praying to gold and might." Lieberman castigates the Jewish bankers and

merchants for the misery of his people:

We have had to pay for your sins! The race hatred, the religious hatred, with all their terrors have fallen mostly upon us the poor Jews. You kindled the fire that devours us. We have you to thank for it that the name Israel has become a curse. The entire Jewish people, suffering and astray, must suffer more than all other peoples because of your greed. It is your fault that we have been exposed to calumny. International speculators, who have dragged our name through the mud, you do not belong to us!" (*KM*, p. 597)

The influence of the age-old stereotype is acknowledged here by the very passion of the appeal to reject it, to stress the class struggle *among* the Jews in order to overcome it.

Surely it would be unfair to apply Carlebach's formula for what makes a polemic "antisemitic" to Lieberman's proclamations. Yet, as Hayim Greenberg, a leading theorist of Socialist Zionism has confirmed: "The views of many Jewish socialists in regard to the economic role of the Jews have also been tinged by a certain anti-semitic bias. . ." But Greenberg doesn't stop here; he says of the socialist Zionists themselves *and* their left wing: "Nor is Zionism free from its share of responsibility. There was a time when it used to be the fashion for Zionist speakers (including the writer) to declare from the platform that "to be a good Zionist one must first be somewhat of an anti-Semite." (*KM*, p. 602)

Greenberg points out that this position was held by Pinsker, Syrkin, Borochoy, A.D. Gordon, and others — all founders and mentors of the Labor Zionist movement. To this day," he submits, "Labor Zionist circles are under the influence of the idea that the Return to Zion involves a process of purification from our economic uncleanness." (*KM*, p. 602) Moreover, the movement's social democratic theoretician, Ber Borochoy, rests his entire theory of Socialist Zionism on a class analysis of the Jewish people according to what, *ex post facto*, are deemed "antisemitic" conceptions; and his essential "Marxist" case for Zionism was that it was the only way to alter the class structure of the Jews.

Marx and the "Economic Jew" Stereotype

We have assumed thus far that the reader has a general

understanding of the economic history behind the stereotype; that is, how Jews were for centuries restricted to a distorted economic position because of their function as intermediaries within the small scale commodity production economy of feudal society and because of medieval Christianity's prohibition on their entrance into agriculture, guild occupations and professions. European Jews, and especially the German Jews with whom Marx was familiar, were regarded as "a universal and contemporary antisocial element" for the following reasons:

(1) The upper stratum of the Jews played a significant role in the development of post feudal society, particularly considering the small fraction of the population they comprised; (2) Jews were concentrated heavily in "middleman" and financial occupations, including the majority of *poor* Jews in huckstering occupations such as peddlers and petty merchants; and (3) the economic role of the Jews was highly visible, as, for example, when Prussian Junkers hired Jews as loan collectors and mortgage foreclosers — the Junkers earned the profits, and the Jews, the epithet "bloodsuckers."

Carlebach repeatedly chastises Marx for his failure to examine the historical and empirical realities of the Jews' situation. The truth is, however, that in 1843 little was known, even to those greatly concerned with the question, about the social or economic development of the Jews. The very concept of a *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Jewish studies) emerged only in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.* Today there is a great deal of scholarship on the subject, but it is anachronistic to imply that it was available in the 1840s. We now know, for instance, that by the early 1800s Jewish financiers had grown rich in the new capitalist order and had achieved a privileged position in German society. As the historian Eleanore Sterling observes:

In the sections where capitalist commerce and industry had already made important progress even without Jews, the

*In fact, those who pioneered "Jewish Science," showed little interest in the economic or social aspects of Jewish history. As Meyer Waxman observes of Leopold Zunz (the founder of Jewish studies): "he develops the view that the two main phases of the life of the Jews in exile are thought and reaction to suffering, and that it is these two which constitute the principal elements of Jewish history." *A History of Jewish Literature*, Volume III (New York, London: Thomas Yosoloff, 1960), p. 425.

Christian population by no means felt that the success of the Jewish upper stratum was a handicap for themselves. Thus, already in 1817 the *Gewerbepolizei* in Aachen said that Jewish business in the Prussian Rhineland could no longer be considered "usury" but a synonym for free trade and the profit system. (*KM*, p. 599)

Carlebach is well aware of these facts. He observes that the Jews sought allies in their emancipation drive from those "sections in the social structure in which they found least resistance, or better, the greatest degree of acceptance, namely in the middle classes, the bourgeoisie — the fast-rising, expanding, ambitious and least tradition-bound sections of the community." (p. 63)

It is incorrect, however, to imply — as Carlebach does throughout his work — that the stereotype of the economic Jew among the population derived solely from the prominence of wealthy Jews such as the Rothschilds and Foulds. Many or most of the *poor* Jews also made their living from commerce; they were peddlers, hawkers, petty traders and merchants, small money-lenders — in immediate contact with the poor Christian population. They subsisted as go-betweens, caught in the classic pattern of having to oppress those below as they were oppressed from above. Jews were linked with "financial exploitation" on levels well below Rothschild. As Solomon Boom states of the period when Marx wrote his article: "Recent happenings in the Rhineland and Alsace strengthened this popular suspicion; Jewish money lenders broke up properties of landlords and farmers at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. The western radical community was not unaffected by the resulting animosities." (*KM*, p. 600) And Gustav Mayer claims that to the young Marx: "'The Jews' . . . meant mainly the Jewish cattle dealers in the Rhineland; those who bought from, and sold to the small peasants, taking advantage of their own superior business abilities." (*KM*, p. 600)

Carlebach also complains that "Marx concentrates his entire critique on a metaphysical abstraction called 'the Jew', whom he has equated with every facet of an emerging capitalist system." (p. 161) While it is certainly true that he identified the Jews with commercialism, the Marx of 1843, like the rest of the socialists at that time, had only a superficial idea of the real workings of capitalist

society. In this period before Marxism, he concentrates on the role of money and the chase after money; he has not yet uncovered the dynamics of capitalist commodity production, class exploitation, etc. Thus he can say: "The contradiction which exists between the effective political power of the Jew and his political rights, is the contradiction between politics and the power of money in general. Politics is in principle superior to the power of money, but in practice it has become its bondsman." (*EW*, p. 36) While it is therefore incidentally recognized that the state has become the instrument of a new economic power, this new power is seen only in terms of money:

Money is the jealous god of Israel, beside which no other god may exist. Money debases all the gods of mankind and changes them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-sufficient *value* of all things. It has, therefore, deprived the whole world, both the human world and nature, of their own proper value. Money is the alienated essence of man's work and existence; this essence dominates him and he worships it. (*EW*, p. 37)

It is therefore the organization of society that Marx claimed has to be changed: "An organization of society which would abolish the preconditions and thus the very possibility of huckstering, would make the Jew impossible." (*EW*, p. 34)

It has already been stated that the equation of Jews with huckstering and money-making presupposed here by Marx, was widely assumed in the early nineteenth century. Clearly, as Carlebach shows, Marx shared many of the vulgar and hostile views prevalent about Jews and Judaism and injected them into his essays. But the paradox is that for Marx, Judaism provided the basis for the liberation of modern society precisely *because* it was emancipation from bargaining and money that would liberate human beings. As Jerrold Siegel has argued in *Marx's Fate*: "Here (in "On the Jewish Question") we find Marx asserting for the first time that a purely materialist standpoint — what he called 'practical need' or 'egoism' . . . — was the source of true liberation. . . In the perspective Marx took up here, materialism was Jewish, and its implications were positive." (p. 118)

Although Siegel stretches things with his claim that Marx's anti-Jewish remarks were "part of a strange and perverse but nonetheless insistent affirmation of his own identity as a Jew,"⁶ he offers a

significant contribution with his discovery of "surprising similarities" between Marx's image of the Jews and his early depiction of the proletariat. There were, to be sure, substantial differences between the two groups. Whereas Jews who had money were part of the propertied class, the proletariat was propertyless. And while the Jews insisted on their political rights in Germany, the proletariat did not claim any "particular redress"; it was not "opposed to particular consequences but is totally opposed to the assumptions of the German political system." (*EW*, p. 58) Nevertheless, both the proletariat and the Jews were groups whose life was totally immersed in the world of material need. The proletariat was the only class with the capacity to liberate the Germans because it was compelled "by its *immediate* situation, by *material* necessity and by its fetters themselves." (p. 58) Judaism, also, since it was "the religion of practical need," by its very nature "could not find its consummation in theory, but only in *practice*, just because practice is its truth." (*EW*, p. 38) The proletariat was a "passive element," its existence a product of modern social development. Judaism, also, "is always passive, cannot expand at will, but *finds* itself extended as a result of the continued development of society." (*EW*, p. 38) The proletariat's existence was a proclamation of the "*dissolution of the existing social order.*" (*EW*, pp 59-60) The Jews were "a universal *antisocial* element of the *present time,*" (*EW*, p. 34) whose development to a culminating point meant that society had attained "a point at which it must necessarily dissolve itself." (*EW*, p. 34)

As Siegel further affirms: "Marx wrote the essay 'On the Jewish Question' before he penned his description of the proletariat. The similarities in the two portraits suggest that — consciously or unconsciously — Marx's image of the Jews was a stage on his path to conceiving the proletariat as he did." (p. 118)

But such insights concerning Marx's thought are beyond the grasp of Carlebach. For despite his attempt to place Marx's critique of Jews and Judaism in its proper intellectual context, he fails to understand the critique within the context of Marx's own intellectual development. It is important to note that throughout the period 1837-43, Marx's thought combines insights of a unique critical depth and incisiveness with ideas adapted from theorists like Feuerbach and Bauer and from socialists like Hess. The form is still borrowed and at times eclectic; but the critical content is Marx's own. It follows, therefore, that two errors must be avoided when discussing

the work of the early Marx. One is to claim that by 1843-44 Marx's thought had reached maturity and had cast off its idealist heritage, for that is obviously not the case; the other, corresponding mistake — is to claim that because Marx was still influenced by the Young Hegelians at that time, his work does not stand on its own, exhibiting a concreteness and rationality which clearly outstrips the writers who influenced him. Carlebach, in failing to comprehend both the development and originality of Marx's thought, manages to commit both errors.

Carlebach protests that Marx converted "flesh and blood people into a socioeconomic category." (pp. 2-3) In doing so he fails to acknowledge that Marx wrote his essays on the Jewish question before much was known of the concrete realities of Jewish life and, more importantly, before Marx had developed his exhaustive analysis of the capitalist mode of production.

Indeed, because Marx viewed the economic basis of society as the key to understanding the life of society, Marx soon moved away from his early thesis that freedom was the emancipation of society from Judaism. In *Capital* he wrote: "Trading nations ... like Jews in the pores of Polish society... can arise and exist only when the development of the productive power of labour has not risen beyond a low state, and when, therefore, the social relations within the sphere of material life ... are correspondingly narrow."

Many Jews were proto-capitalists; as merchants and financiers they fulfilled a primitive role in the development of the social division of labor as it evolved in European society. The economic basis of modern society was, however, *industrial capitalism*. Jews, as merchants and financiers, were capitalists before capitalism emerged in its mature form, and with the rise of industrial capitalism, the role of the merchant and financier diminished.* Indeed, those with capital became just another stratum of the capitalist class receiving a portion of the surplus value exploited from the laborer by the

*As Abram Leon claims: "Judaism was an indispensable factor in precapitalist society. It was a fundamental organism within it. That is what explains the two-thousand year existence of Judaism in the Diaspora. The Jew was as characteristic a personage in feudal society as the lord and the serf. It was no accident that a foreign element played the role of 'capital' in feudal society... The 'capital' of precapitalist society existed outside of its economic system. *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), p. 257. But, Leon goes on to argue, the rise of capitalism to hegemony in the social system corresponded with the *decline* of Jewry in this function.

industrial capitalist. The Jews may have bequeathed "the god of money" to European society but the Jews themselves had become relatively unimportant in an economic sense, and increasingly so as time went on and the strength of industrial capital grew. Although some remained in *prominent* economic positions they were by no means *dominant* ones, as few Jews became industrial capitalists.

Thus, while Marx was the first to provide a secular rather than a theological critique of the Jews' position and role in the modern world, his concern with the Jews *per se* disappeared. For Marx, emancipation from "Judaism" was no longer the path to human freedom; rather it was to be attained by emancipation from the capitalist mode of production. Because he focused his attention on the real economic basis of society, Marx realized that Judaism — the commercial spirit — was not the source of the problem but only one of its manifestations. Marx's later writings contain few references to the Jews, and they cease to be an important category in his analysis of modern society.

In conclusion, it should be said that Marx's treatment of the Jewish question perhaps best reflects the futility of the Jews' reliance on political emancipation to gain their social emancipation. With the advent of the secular state and society animosity toward Jews became secularized. Whereas formerly the Jewish problem seemed to arise from conflicts between religious communities, it now became clear that the dilemma stemmed from the intermediary function that Jews served in the economy. The Jew became the immediate symbol of a society increasingly based on exchange, and thus a target for those elements in Europe who blamed the Jews for ills inherent in capitalism.

In considering Marx, however, it must be remembered that his call in 1843 for the "abolition" of Judaism did not at all mean the "abolition" of Jews. As Carlebach himself emphasizes:

Marx's call for the 'abolition' of Judaism, a concept which has disturbed many Jewish writers ... did not mean to provide 'a warrant for genocide'. He was trying to reduce Judaism, which he equated with the 'money system', into an abstract 'principle' in civil society that would have no function and therefore no place in a communist society... he no more intended personal harm to individual Jews by calling for the dissolution of Judaism than he would have wanted workers attacked when he called for the abolition of labour.(p. 178)

Notes:

1. Quoted by Jerrold Siegel, *Marx's Fate: The Shape of a Life* (Princeton, New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 69.
2. *Karl Marx Early Writings*, translated and edited by T.B. Bottomore (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 10. Hereafter *EW* in the text.
3. *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism*, translated by Richard Dixon and Clemens Dutt (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), p. 130.
4. *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution: State and Bureaucracy* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1977), p. 607. Hereafter *KM* in the text.
5. Much of the following discussion—and quotation—is drawn from Draper's "Special Note A: Marx and the Economic-Jew Stereotype," *ibid.*, pp. 591-608.
6. In his review of Saul Padover's *Karl Marx: An Intimate Biography*, *The New Republic*, January 6, 1979, p. 29.



2000 BOOKS FOR A BUCK

Has the local Walgreen's run out of your favorite reading matter? Then browse by mail, courtesy of **Modern Times Bookstore**. Our brand-new 96-page catalog is the largest collection of non-sectarian Marxist and feminist literature outside of Modern Times itself. Includes gay liberation, Afro-American and labor history, anti-nuclear literature, non-sexist non-racist children's books—and everything else you'd expect. Carefully annotated, coherently organized. **All for \$1** (credited to first purchase, of course).

MODERN TIMES
 3800 17th St. — Box N
 San Francisco, CA 94114
 (415) 621-2675

THE HOLOCAUST SEASON: A SINGER'S STORY

Karen Bogen

The following poems and commentaries were selected from *Crucifixion and Holocaust: Two Poetic cycles with Exegeses and Commentaries*, a doctoral dissertation by Karen Iris Bogen, copyright 1978.

THE DEATH OF THE SCHOLA CANTORUM

My voice like sun is glowing in my throat:
 every lesson's the first. The towers
 like my teacher's fingers live
 for a certain direction; like prayers
 they shoot up to God. But now
 a tank rolls past my studio window—
 what is a tank doing here?
 A black gangle of unmusical youths
 has rammed my teacher's hands behind his head;
 his back is hanging from a Star of David.
 King David! when will the smoking clouds
 reveal your manhood? But only a psalm
 fans over us. The Schola Cantorum's
 a hole in ash. Through it we crawl
 to the ghetto.

DEPORTATION

The train engineer like a mad obstetrician
 is flushing the baby from the mother's body:
 from Germany he pulls unborn Israel.
 The stinking memory of bread
 emerging from our mouths floats over
 the last blessing of the candle:
 "Next year in Jerusalem;" we sang,
 bayonets in our throats.
 My teacher's head is next to mine;
 over his eyebrows my fingers dance.
 "Courage!" they say. "Give them not
 one tear but save the rest to drown them.
 Vengeance, not sorrow. Vengeance!"
 "The only Jewish vengeance is to live," he
 whispers as we hang on the neck
 of the Third Reich, albatross
 of peoples.

ARRIVAL AT AUSCHWITZ

Fathers! Husbands! Why don't you speak?
 Are we to die as a single candle-
 nameless to you, to God?
 Your eyes are the empty arks of temples.
 Fathers! Brothers! Soldiers' eyes'
 are drinking us and no one
 steps between. The womb of Israel's
 melting into air as lines of heads
 are moving, moving . . .

SISTERS

Women once peeking from bonnets of strawberries-
 Nurses once white as stars-
 Women once clouded in bridal veils-
 Athletes once sleek and swift as sun:
 we are to be melted into a single Eve.
 What you hated in me will soon be dead:
 songs I sang too much, too strongly; anger
 like axes pounding on politics.
 Your flittering malice is now naked.
 Can I be your sister now?

TO A WOMAN

You led me past mice-covered corpses and offered
 me your lap. Grass covered your ankles;
 it was the season of Pesach.
 Like a bonnet lay the sun behind your head:
 Now there is time for solitude:
 bouquets of tears are rising from my mouth
 as the daily portion of corpses fades.
 If I could I would die in your lap.

The Death of the Schola Cantorum

The poem begins with my protagonist, a very young woman, at the
 height of her existence in pre-Holocaust civilization. She is a music
 student, a singer, and in the joy of her vocation is conscious only of
 the present moment:

My voice like sun is glowing in my throat;
 every lesson's the first.

She looks about her, radiant with joy and anticipation, as only a
 young artist immersed in her new vocation might feel:

The towers
 like my teacher's fingers live
 for a certain direction; like prayers'
 they shoot up to God

Poised unknowingly at the edge of hell, she sings to us with a Davidic
 joy for the first and last time. Her words are reminiscent of King
 David, that other Jewish singer, whose presence will soon hover over
 this interpretation of the uninterpretable:

My heart is ready, God
 -I mean to sing and play.
 Awake, my muse,
 awake, lyre and harp
 I mean to wake the dawn!

It is not the dawn that arrives; it is the night and she, being (obviously) unused to violence of any kind, cannot comprehend the overrunning of the school and molestation of her teacher by Nazi hordes:

But now
a tank rolls past my studio window-
what is a tank doing here?

And now the horror that will be endlessly repeated — the civilian set upon by soldiers, the helpless and unarmed made into an object of derision by a mob superior in physical strength, wearing the protective garments of the barbaric tribe:

A black gangle of unmusical youths
has rammed my teachers hands behind his head;
his back is hanging from a Star of David.

Surely, there are precedents for this sort of thing throughout history, particularly Jewish history during Biblical times and after. What makes it so horrible here? Its historical proximity? The senselessness of its repetition in our century? The innocence of the victims who are simply making music, threatening no one? Or is it the fact that one can sense that no one is immune from this sort of treatment in the post-Holocaust age and neither age nor vocation nor civilian status is protection against the "black gangle" in any of its forms?

King David! When will the smoking clouds
reveal your manhood?

And the immediate answer:

But only a psalm
fans over us.

Her eye reports clearly the scope of the wasteland; it invades her vision completely:

The Schola Cantorum's
a hole in ash. Through it we crawl
to the ghetto

Affliction and plea (and hope implicit in the plea) are a tradition within Jewish religious literature. One thinks most immediately of Job, but perhaps that is not the most appropriate example here. The cry for rescue in Psalm 44 (a "national lament") and the horrifying catalogue of misfortunes in Psalm 102 speaks to the Holocaust as accurately as any word written before the catastrophe. The anonymous poet of Psalm 44 speaks of God's love making possible the ancestral victories in Canaan—

it was not by their swords they won the land,
it was not by their arms they gained the victory:
it was your right hand, your arm
and the light of your face — because you loved them. (3-4)

— and states baldly his/her sense of abandonment and horror:

You let us go to the slaughterhouse like sheep,
You scatter us among the nations;
.....
All day long I brood on this disgrace
my face covered in shame,
under a shower of insult and blasphemy,
a display of hatred and revenge. (11, 15-16)

These afflictions will be familiar to any reader with even a vague knowledge of recent history, including the words "to the slaughterhouse like sheep," which have been used to malign the helpless victims of the death camps; the use of those words here is ironic, perhaps savage — but what else can pierce the veil of protection surviving populations have placed around themselves when contemplating these events? Cover this page with tears, reader, and think of the protagonist of *The Holocaust Season* as bard of one million dead Jewish children.¹ They cried for rescue as in Psalm 44:

Wake up, Lord! Why are you asleep?
Awake! Do not abandon us for good.
Why do you hide your face,
and forget we are wretched and exploited?

For we are bowed in the dust,
our bodies crushed to the ground.
Rise! Come to our help!
Redeem us for the sake of your love. (23-26)

But no one heard them as no one with any power to rescue, to be a modern King David, hears the protagonist of *The Holocaust Season*. Alongside her teacher and millions of compatriots, she is forced to crawl to the ghetto.

Deportation

How does one respond to evil while in the midst of evil? Since the end of the war numerous persons have attempted to criticize Jewish behavior during the Holocaust: "Why did they march into the night the way cattle go to the slaughterhouse?"² The obvious answer is, "They were forced into the night," as my poem shows. As for the question of revolt, Eliezer Berkovitz reminds us that:

There were laws operative all across German-occupied Europe. Millions of gentile people, oppressed and humiliated, exploited and massacred accepted their plight without resistance, until the required favorable conditions for a revolt rose³

Given these conditions, what sort of response is possible? It is this question which is portrayed in all its attendant human agony in *Deportation*. Clearly, there is no real room for a physical response; once one is forced into the train, one is captive among its four walls and removed from the eyes of any and all potential rescuers:

The train engineer like a mad obstetrician
is flushing the baby from the mother's body;
from Germany he pulls unborn Israel.

Jewish history and the religious literature which interprets it teaches us that other responses are appropriate: one need not murder one's oppressor to remain fully human and holy when one is at the end of someone else's knife.

The stinking memory of bread
emerging from our mouths floats over
the last blessing over the last candle.
"Next year in Jerusalem" we sang,
bayonets in our throats.

This is known as "*Kiddush haShem*, the sanctification of the Divine Name."⁴ It is the type of response Jesus demanded from his fellow Jews during the Roman occupation; it is the type of response advocated by Rabbi Johanan ben Zaccai in the face of the destruction of the Second Temple. He along with his followers believed in

an even more fundamental liberation . . . a moral revolution
[was] embodied [for them] in the
torah . . . They were confident that before long the truth would
prove mightier than the mightiest legion.⁵

Kiddush haShem is a response informed by an ultimate faith in the continuance of human life beyond the situation which threatens life. Had the death of the human race or of the entire Jewish people been a possibility or probability to Jesus or to the Talmudist ben Zaccai, would *Kiddush haShem* have seemed a proper response to them? In other words, was it an appropriate response to the Holocaust?

In the face of almost complete lack of physical resistance on the part of European subject populations *who were better situated than the Jews*, does one have the right to ask such a question? Should not all questions be hurled at those who perpetrated and abetted the atrocities? Perhaps. But the oppressed are more accessible to the mind than the evil banal magicians who turned persons into excrement, and I am more concerned with their quality than their tormentors' lack of it. In *Deportation* I illustrate precisely, I hope, the human beauty of the student — my protagonist — asking the question and the fragility and breathless strength of her teacher's response:

My teacher's head is next to mine;
over his eyebrows my fingers dance.
"Courage!" they say. "Give them not
one tear but save the rest to drown them.
Vengeance, not sorrow. Vengeance!"
"The only Jewish vengeance is to live," he
whispers as we hang on the neck
of the Third Reich, albatross
of peoples.

These lines are informed by facts: Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, tells us of a similar incitement to revolt and invocation of *Kiddush*

haShem in his essay, "A Plea for the Dead." Like the young girl in my poem, young men in the transport containing Wiesel advocated open revolt at the gates of Auschwitz: they did not believe, or perhaps even understand, that the world outside Auschwitz had excluded them from its consciousness. They hoped to awaken it, or if not that, to

prove our courage and our dignity, [to] show
 . . . that Jews know how to die like free men,
 not like hunched-up invalids. (p. 228)

And like the teacher in my poem an older man, more familiar than they with *Kiddush haShem*, reminds them that survival is the first Jewish commandment. My teacher bids his student to respond to evil by surviving it:

"The only Jewish vengeance is to live,"
 he whispers. . .

The old man Elie Wiesel quotes reminds his young friends not only of the world's indifference, long familiar to him —

The world knows, no need to inform it.
 It knew before you did . . . it won't lose
 a minute thinking about our fate. (p. 217)

— but that the duty of their remnant is to survive:

Save your strength for later . . .
 Don't waste it. (p. 217)

Elie Wiesel then says of himself and his condemned companions:

Then we all held our heads up high and
 murmuring the Kaddish we marched ahead,
 almost like conquerors, toward the gates
 of death . . . (p. 217)

What kind of religious response is this? Why does neither the teacher in *Deportation* nor his real-life model immortalized in "A Plea for the Dead" throw themselves on their tormentors?

Life, in Jewish tradition, is not equally valuable under all conditions; sometimes one must leave this world in order not to pollute it with behavior that would retard the coming of the Messiah,

the reign of universal justice under God. When life can only be purchased by abandoning one's sense of spiritual quality- and this is undoubtedly how some Jews viewed the prospect of existence in the death camps-*Kiddush ha shem* allows its practitioner to remain holy and free, in the spiritual sense, of those who have taken possession of his or her body. Those mad possessors, in the Jewish theological schema, are guilty and will someday have to answer for the blood dripping from their hands:

. . . we hang on the neck
 of the Third Reich, albatross
 of peoples.

Yes, the albatross will forever be around their necks and God will judge them in the end.

Kiddush haShem was formulated by the rabbis as a response to persecution by agents of force far greater than the Jews; these armies frequently used mass deportations and massacres to destroy as much of the Jewish population as they could. These oft-repeated conditions, when combined with Jewish tradition, enabled *Kiddush haShem* to become, for some Jews, an instrument of Jewish integrity and religious decency during the Holocaust. Lucy S. Dawidowicz tells us what elements in the Jewish tradition gave rise to *Kiddush haShem*, the blessing of the Holy Name even in the teeth of death:

The tradition teaches that the whole world depends on justice, that good is rewarded and evil punished. The universe is orderly and rational. Whatever exists and is done serves God's purpose and has meaning, though that meaning and purpose are not always revealed to men . . .

.....
 To facilitate their survival in powerlessness and to lessen the impact of humiliation and suffering, the Jews made virtues of self-discipline, prudence, moderation, forgoing present gratification for eventual benefit. They learned to practice non-violent means of resistance and to find ways of circumventing discrimination and deflating persecution. (*War*, pp. 465-466)

The question of the teacher and the response of the student make these words real. One desires with all one's heart to live even in the midst of the Holocaust. But piety experienced as part of thousands of years of collective life cannot be removed from a life founded upon it

and grounded in a social world that supports it as an essential element of group survival. The dilemma illustrated in *Deportation* and reported to us by Elie Wiesel, among others, is so awful that no response can be adequate. All questions belong to the tormentors. Could anyone but God have the right to question those who made religious or political choices under the conditions of the Holocaust?

Arrival at Auschwitz

The poem *Arrival at Auschwitz* begins a cycle within *The Holocaust Season* in which God's mark is that of the hole, of absence. My protagonist upon arriving in Auschwitz is confronted with a world of burning flesh and impotent brethren and her shock is literal and complete. In Auschwitz she is not a witness to the murder of civilization and conscience, which is, after all, in its roots deeply protective of its future as exemplified in its children; she *is* the death of civilization. What happens in Auschwitz happens inside her, since life and death are ultimately individual matters. As in *The Death of the Schola Cantorum* she cries out to once-protective human figures to rescue the mass of condemned Jewish women of which she is a part:

Fathers! Husbands! Why don't you speak?
Are we to die as a single candle-
nameless to you, to God?
Your eyes are the empty arks of temples.

Silence, emptiness and the loss of religious self-hood: these are the forces tearing at her when she first lays eyes on hell. A great girder on which her civilization has rested has been knocked out of existence: the potency of men in relation to the women they are supposed to love and protect from harm. Their impotence and her recognition of it lead to similar feelings about herself and the condemned mass of women she accompanies: they are fragile as "a single candle" and about to be snuffed out by the winds of hell, of universal death. The sense of abandonment by her protectors, fragility, then impotence lead to a sense of non-identity: she feels cast off by civilization, thrown into the death-wind and therefore out of God's sight, *nameless*. This is the closed circle which, under more "normal" circumstances, probably often results in suicide: the whole world is a

murderous pit from which nothing can escape. From her fellow human beings to God, nothing is potent, all is infected and this fact is confirmed in Judaism itself, whose deepest and most life-affirming symbol of the continuity of both human and divine life has been desecrated. I am speaking, of course, of the Torah:

Your eyes are the empty arks of temples.

Yet she is still alive, not quite mentally removed from herself although death is imminent. She makes another appeal:

Fathers! Brothers! Soldiers' eyes
are drinking us and no one
steps between.

These lines are deliberately reminiscent of the prisoners' induction into Auschwitz, when they were stripped and disinfected. Tadeusz Borowski, former Auschwitz inmate and author of fiction based on his experiences in the camps, reported the truth as it happened:

All of us walk around naked. The delousing is finally over . . .
But all the same, all of us walk around naked: the heat is
unbearable . . . twenty-eight thousand women have been
stripped naked and driven out of the barracks. Now they swarm
around the large yard between the blockhouses.⁶

Why go on living in a world where this is possible? My protagonist does not have time, fortunately, to ask herself this question; she is too caught up in death's infection as the majority of her female cohorts are shuttled off to the crematoria:

The womb of Israel's
melting into air as lines of heads
are moving, moving . . .

This sight drives everything out of her but pain. All religious sense has left her and will not awaken until later; her raw emotions are her only life at this moment. And, truly, what she sees can and never will be accurately described. Why does she not commit suicide at this moment? Is it because for the young, even in hell, all things are possible, even faith in persons, even love? It is at this point that her deepest capabilities for moral survival will begin to come into focus.

Sisters

The catalogue of hell goes on and so does the need for human contact. When the history of these events is read by future generations in a hopefully more optimistic time, they will ask why those who chose to write about the subject were not turned to ash by despair. After all, the overwhelming stink of death and the persistence in the contemporary world of those habits of mind which allow instruments of mass death to stand at ready indicate a mirror in which humankind can only see itself as demon, or Medusa. What makes life and life's generation appropriate under such circumstances?

The poem is about the moment when my protagonist becomes grounded in a life beyond culture, beyond her development as a singer and daughter of religion which was her *raison d'être* before the catastrophe. It is at the end of *Sisters* that she accepts evil and her life in the midst of it. And again, I must emphasize that this is a "true" story: numerous survivors of the Nazi death camps have testified that they, too, sank into the black chasm of death and despair after their deportation and arrival but, *given time*, were able to fight their way up to the surface in which they could religiously wage a fight for their lives and quite frequently the lives of their comrades. Terence Des Pres quotes a survivor on this subject:

They were beaten with clubs and whips, torn by dogs, dragged around by the hair and kicked in the stomach. . . Then, when they collapsed, they were thrown into the crematory — alive. I stood rooted to the ground, unable to move, to scream, to run away. But gradually the horror turned into revolt and this revolt shook me out of my lethargy and gave me a new incentive to live. I had to remain alive. . . It was up to me to save the life of the mothers. . .⁷

My protagonist begins her immersion in hell when the Schola Cantorum is burned to the ground. She then passes through hell's various circles until she stands in front of the fire — quite literally. That is, in both *Arrival at Auschwitz* and *Sisters* she sees masses of women hurled into the crematoria: "we are to be melted into a single Eve." She has not had a life filled with the friendship of women:

What you hated in me will soon be dead:
songs I sang too much, too strongly; anger
like axes pounding on politics.

Yet her clarity is stronger than the pain of rejection. She sees they are all prisoners and at the moment of death have everything important in common: "Your flittering malice is now naked." "Naked" in this sense means all divisions artificially imposed — cultural differences, political differences — are as ash, for they are irrelevant when the cultural milieu that engendered them no longer exists. And my young protagonist sees this, or rather feels it, and is able to ask, "Can I be your sister now?"

This is the effect of cultural rending and the air and fact of constant death: rebuilding the self when all else has been uprooted. But has this not been the Jewish condition since earliest times? The centuries upon centuries of forced migrations, dispersions, persecutions have made this primary adaptive trait practically a Jewish characteristic. And when religious sense itself seems to be absent, the superbly developed adaptive function remains.

There is much in the tradition of classical Judaism which nurtures that function, even when external circumstances mitigate against it. Ms. Dawidowicz quotes numerous sources, from folk sayings to Halakha: " 'Ye shall therefore keep My statutes and Mine ordinances which if a man do, he shall live by them.' " *Live* in this sense means to survive and perpetuate the community, without which the future would never arrive and the coming of the Messiah, and universal deliverance, would then be deferred forever. One chooses life in the midst of the Warsaw ghetto or Auschwitz because it is a *mitzvah*, a duty, a commandment, and life's salvation is social, not anarchic; therefore, in choosing life one chooses love, not as an ideal but in action. Des Pres, student of survivors, states:

Prisoners survived through concrete acts of mutual aid and over time these many small deeds, like fibers in the shuttle of a clumsy loom, grew into a fabric of debt and care. (*TS*, p. 134)

A survivor offers this example:

I was so weakened that during roll call I could scarcely stay on my feet. But the others pressed close on either side and supported me with the weight of their bodies. (*TS*, p. 134)

Must God be mentioned by name in order for us to be aware of His presence? "Every Jew who survives," Ms. Dawidowicz quotes the rebbe of Zelechow as saying during the Holocaust, "openly sanctifies God." (War, p. 291) This is known as *Kiddush ha-hayim*, sanctification of life: it is the unity of the biological imperatives Mr. Des Pres explores so brilliantly in *The Survivor* and the historical and religious patterns Ms. Dawidowicz weaves into her history of the Jews of Europe during the Holocaust. A religious tradition is not a fashion or fad of history; it is, in this case, a *Kiddish ha-hayim*, a sanctification of life. In the case of the Holocaust it was quite probably in many cases the instrument of that sanctification with its behavioral correlative: adaptability through social regeneration. Civilized structures came after the beginnings of life and the nurturing of adaptive functions, but Judaism and the Jewish people are a special case: physical survival and religion became one and the same quite early in Jewish history and have persisted under conditions of near-constant persecution. How did they survive? When civilization fails, life continues:

Your fluttering malice is now naked.
Can I be your sister now?

To a Woman

Prisoners in the concentration camps helped each other. That in itself is the significant fact. Sometimes it was help individually given . . . Sometimes it took the form of one group helping another. (TS, p. 135)

Why?

Death was thereby cheated, made less than absolute . . . (TS, p. 135)

The poem *To a Woman*, like the other poems in *The Holocaust Season*, is based on careful readings of Holocaust history and literature, as well as interviews with survivors. The fictional incident in the particular poem is meant to show a truth not generally known among people who believe the commonly-held fallacy that "the rule of war was total" (TS, p. 135) in the concentration camps and inmates were totally devoid of social decency; a discernible pattern of care and cooperation amounting to "a general fabric of debt and care," (TS, p.

135) no matter how faint and fragile, was there.

Terence Des Pres presents incontrovertible evidence of this pattern in *The Survivor*, as does Elie Wiesel in *Night*, the memoir of his internment in Auschwitz and Buchenwald; of course the experience of Leo Baeck, who lectured on philosophy and religion to his fellow prisoners in Theresienstadt, is certain evidence of moral life persisting in the black winds of hell.

Why. I have already asked, did this pattern of kindness and cooperation assert and reassert itself in the camps? To make death less than omnipotent, I answered, with a quote from Terence Des Pres . . . how is this possible? Or rather, what made it possible? Des Pres answers:

Inmates were continually giving and sharing little items with each other, and small acts like these were enormously valuable both as morale boosters and often as real aids in the struggle for life.

.....
Through giving and sharing the state of potential warfare was transcended. (TS, pp. 138-139)

The survival instinct is transcendent in Des Pres' interpretation of concentration camp behavior; the primary cause of survival there was not individual brutality but a creative reordering of society in the midst of a threat so vast as to be overwhelming, as it indeed was for many prisoners:

Here, in fact is the deepest cause of early death; the horror and irreparable hurt felt by the prisoner when he or she first encounters the spectacle of atrocity. Moral disgust, if it arouses too abruptly or becomes too intense, expresses itself in the desire to die, to have done with such a world. (TS, p. 80)

Yet, "survivors are proof that the desire to live returns" (TS, p. 81) after an appropriate amount of time can flow between the moment of supreme moral disgust and the return of the will to live. "It returns, but slowly, through an inner process of regeneration which takes time." (TS, p. 81)

In *To a Woman* my protagonist experiences an act of kindness which exemplifies the pattern of decency Des Pres reports. The kindness of an older woman precipitates that lapse of time necessary for the regeneration of the girl's survival instincts. The question of

time is vital to understanding the poem: the incident of comfort takes place outside the camp's normal rhythms and activities, which are exclusively directed toward hastening the prisoners of Auschwitz into death:

You led me past mice-covered corpses and offered
me your lap. Grass covered your ankles;
it was the season of Pesach.

The third line of this quotation is particularly significant here in that it represents a Jewish — that is, a culturally and religiously rooted — state of mind against the girl's present reality of devoured corpses and murder. The rhythm of the Jewish year, its seasons and festivals, illuminates the dark interior of her mind, allowing her to transcend the degradation she suffers in Auschwitz. Therefore, her soul at that moment has time to heal and "an inner process of regeneration" (*TS*, p. 81) is begun which will continue: Now there is time for solitude. Solitude, that is from the pressing horrors of Auschwitz:

bouquets of tears are rising from my mouth
as the daily portion of corpses fades.

Given this reprieve, the soul can heal enough to let the body carry on. And though ultimate despair may never be very far away — "If I could I would die in your lap" — there is a deeper need for life rooted in human contact and given that touch, that spark of hope passing from one fleshly soul to another, life *can* persist and a person can go on.

Certainly this truth is enunciated in *To a Woman*; and while biological needs and the body's capacity to endure may be the bottom line of the camp inmate's experiences which provide the referent for *The Holocaust Season*, Jewish tradition is partly responsible for Jewish survival in the camps, too. There is a unity between the need to survive and the ethical behavior advocated, actually commanded by Jewish religious teaching. The most relevant concept here is *hesed*, loving kindness, which from Biblical times has been viewed as the basis of the social covenant which replied to brute force by the erection of a common life based on kinship, membership "within the circle of the family or tribe."⁸ S.S. Cohon elaborates upon the meaning and significance of *hesed* in *Judaism: A Way of Life*:

Hesed. . . expresses the idea of goodness, kindness, mercy or favor, growing out of the sense of brotherliness and involving mutuality of relationship. When bestowed upon a person, tribe or people, it calls for reciprocal helpfulness, born of sympathy and consideration. The covenant between Israel and God expressed itself by the same relationship of *hesed* between deity and the people, on the one hand, and of the people to one another. (*Way*, pp. 203-204)

Dr. Cohon cites numerous examples of the commanding of *hesed* by Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah and later sages, and is always careful to pronounce the reason for its emphasis: survival of the group, without which the individual cannot survive. Were brutality and chaos allowed to prevail in the Jewish people, the group would have been demolished by its enemies at any one of a number of historical points. For the group to remain strong in the face of violent historical extremity, the members must first of all trust one another. Therefore *hesed* must be advocated, commanded and reinforced as a matter of practical — that is, social — necessity.

This is actually what Des Pres is saying, but he doesn't include the history of *hesed* in Jewish life as part of his rationale for Jewish behavior in the camps. The moral sanity, the acts of decency he recites over and over again, are based ultimately in biological needs and the bank of tried-and-tested responses to life-threatening violence residing in individuals and groups, he says. Very well, but those biological responses were reinforced in the Jewish people by religious tradition, which, over a period of thousands of years of survival in the face of persistent threats, was woven into the biological fabric of enough Jews so survivors could actually emerge from the camps.

Again and again we ask how this was possible. How can one inmate of Auschwitz take, as in *To a Woman*, another on her lap when they are pitted against each other daily for a piece of bread? A people whose collective life has been almost completely marginal for almost the entire duration of its history will perhaps be more equipped than most to recognize the pitted struggle as an illusion. Covenant is a bond forged out of the need for mutual survival amid hostile conditions: "the fear which dominated the ancient world could be overcome by an artificial extension of kinship through a covenant." (*Way*, p. 203) Perhaps the recognition of the necessity of covenant will prevail throughout the modern world as well — someday.

Cohon dwells upon the extension of covenant as part of the evolution of the Jewish religion. Perhaps the idea that the covenant must include all nations and beings came out of the Jewish people's contact with various nations, which enabled them to observe that the rule of violence was everywhere and therefore the danger to human life lies no less outside the Jewish world than within it. The surfacing of this idea — the universal need of covenant — was prominent in Isaiah who wrote or spoke the following words during the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem in 701 B.C.:

It is a light thing that
thou shouldst be my servant to
raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and to restore the preserved of
Israel; I will also give thee for
a light to the Gentiles, that thou
mayest be my salvation unto the end
of the earth. (49:6)

The Holocaust indicates a truth which Isaiah recognized a long time ago: there is a universal covenant among all nations, all creatures of flesh, which if unheeded endangers all life, but if recognized and cultivated in individual and social life allows life to go on in accordance with the logic of its inner promptings. We live in a time when Isaiah's message can no longer be ignored if the human species wishes to remain alive. And the Jews, who are familiar as few peoples are with survival in a state of almost constant threat, are in a good position to point this out, for moral survival in the teeth of degradation is commanded by the Jewish religion. Halakhic law is meant to nurture the covenantal qualities of human behavior because without these qualities, cannibalism, Holocausts, occur. Is this what the Holocaust, and its survivors tell us? Can we listen? Can we hear?

NOTES:

1. Lucy S. Dadwidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933-1945* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975), p. 544.
2. Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time, "A Plea for the Dead"* (New York: Avon Books, 1968) p. 217.
3. Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith After the Holocaust* (New York, KTAV Publishers, 1973), p. 30.

4. Ibid.
5. Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, *The Wisdom of the Talmud* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), pp. 49-50.
6. Tadeusz Borowski, *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*, translated by Barberg Vedder (New York: Penguin Books, 1976) pp. 29-30.
7. Terence Des Pres, *The Survivor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 84. Henceforth *TS* in the text.
8. S.S. Cohon, *Judaism: A Way of Life* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948) p. 202. Henceforth *Way* in the text.

NEW OUTLOOK SYMPOSIUM on the Middle-East:
"BETWEEN WAR AND PEACE" to be held
in Washington D.C., Oct. 27th - 29th, 1979

NEW OUTLOOK, an Israeli journal dedicated to the search for peace in the Middle East, is sponsoring The Second International Symposium: "The Middle-East: Between War and Peace". The symposium will be held on October 27th to 29th 1979 at the International Inn in Washington D.C.

The purpose of the symposium is to explore in new ways the road to a comprehensive peace. The symposium will focus on an examination of the conditions whereby Palestinian self-determination and Israeli security can be compatible. To this end NEW OUTLOOK is planning a dialogue between distinguished Palestinians and Israelis. A number of other issues, including the role of the U.S. Government and the American Jewish community will be substantially explored. The symposium will be a milestone on the path to peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Arabs. For information and program details write *New Outlook* 10 East 39th St., Suite 902, NY, NY 10016, Phone 212-685-5293.

Hilton Obenzinger

THIS PASSOVER OR THE NEXT I WILL NEVER BE IN JERUSALEM

The clan is all together, eating Passover matzoh, joking.
At the head, the old Patriarch makes his blessing; he collars me
& he imparts wisdom:

"Is it so bad to be a Jew?

In Israel even the street-sweeper is a Jew, not that anyone
should be a street-sweeper, but
nobody yells 'Dirty Jew!'

After 2000 years we have something finally. Isn't it about time?

We are not taking any Arab land from anybody.

This is the land that belonged to our forefathers

& we only came to take up our inheritance.

Can anyone say we are taking what is already ours?

Why don't you go to Israel, learn something about your people?

Can it be nothing but good?"

I fidget & nod politely at his references to Abraham & other
long-lost relatives.

"So you move so far away from your parents in New York,
you move to California to live with the Indians.
You decide to be so noble to be a school-teacher with the Indians.
Nu, I wish them well, but what is this with the Indians,
aren't they so different & so wild?"

"Actually,

Indians are not what you see on TV..."

"Nu, but are they your own people? Your own flesh & blood?
Do you hate New York so much you have to live with Indians?
What is this Indians? You can work in your father's store,
make a good life. He is getting old and you need gelt in life,
right?

Is it so bad selling rags?

Can't you be writer all you want, love Indians all you want
& make money too?

What's this, Indians and California?

If not Israel, shouldn't you think New York maybe to live?"

These poems are from the collection *This Passover or the Next I Will Never be in Jerusalem*. This collection will be published by Momo Press, San Francisco, in the winter.

The young couple across the table from me, recently married
& living just a few blocks away as does all the family
peppered throughout the Brooklyn neighborhood
So as better to visit one another on Shabbos when one can only walk & by
injunction are forbidden to drive,
these young marrieds smile good-naturedly & ask,

"Don't you feel strange living so far away from your family?"

Why is this Jew different from all other Jews?

I sip my wine. The white table cloth is a vast Jordan.

This Passover or the next I will never be in Jerusalem.

The Jordan flows between me and the land I never remember anyone
promising me.

No sound can be heard except the occasional wail of some
wild animal.

I will never step across the shore. Am I the anti-Moses?

I jump up from my plate, startled.

"Uh, no, I don't feel strange at all..."

YES WE HAVE NO BANANAS

"Yes, we have no bananas"

that's what they sang as my father clung

to the rails of the steam ship

pale from the depths of steerage.

Ellis Island has no bananas?

No bananas in this, the Goldenh Medina?

In Lublin he wanders through the woods

with his friends to picnic.

Pounced upon by thugs — "Jews!

Out of our woods, you dirty Jews!" —

they were chased back towards the ghetto

until he grabs some acorns, fires

them back, cracks some heads:

"I'll teach you to beat on Jews!"

"Yes we have no bananas"
 was what they sang
 on the Lower East Side.
 "Apple pie & coffee" was all the English he knew.
 "Apple pie & coffee" he said
 & others they laugh, these Americans,
 they call him a "greenhorn"
 & they sing "Yes
 we have no bananas,"
 as he wanders the garment district
 looking for work
 eating apple pie & coffee
 day after day in the automat.

HERE I AM, A JEW FROM BROOKLYN

Alone I watch the fat green Klamath slide down the banks.
 I throw the book about Treblinka concentration camp uprising down.
 It's well known: Jews flowed into ovens & died.
 I sob & my head gushes through rocks & that isolated beach.
 My heart flings Treblinka down.
 I'd like to hide with salmon and seal, in the trunks of acorn trees.
 It's well known: The Klamath is Indian land, Yurok land.
 Here I am, a Jew from Brooklyn, wailing over
 my own dead at a wall of water in California.
 The Klamath remembers its own blood.
 Without this river, how could there be Yuroks?
 What the hell is a Jew doing here anyway, by what bond?

Suddenly from out of the brush
 a deer steps gingerly on the pebbles.
 Hid among the rocks, he peeps out to see what's going on.
 He watches, alert, but strangely not suspicious.
 I stop crying. The deer steps forward, approaching me,
 slowly walks, pauses, spies me, pauses
 & walks again.
 He nears the river, bends to drink
 his lapping explodes the silent river.
 I move towards him, reach out, palm forward to stroke him.
 Those soft antler nubs, still furry, please him the most.
 I tug & stroke those nubs
 & he wags his head around till he's had enough.
 My heart eases.
 My companion paces back into the woods.

EPILOGUE: A PREDICTION THE REEMERGENCE OF SOCIALISM AMONG JEWS

Arthur Liebman

At this point I would like to offer a prediction about the future of socialism among Jews in America. Socialism, I contend, contrary to popular impressions, will be on the future agenda of the American-Jewish community. The conditions, the situations, and the circumstances that led many Jews, particularly the best and the brightest, to socialism in the past will in various forms reemerge to play a similar role for Jews in the future. I believe that, in America in the forthcoming decades, the Jewish community's harsh confrontation with capitalism will result in a renewed Jewish commitment to socialism.

Yet if one were to take a snapshot of the present-day Jewish and American communities, a superficial reading of the film would not indicate the imminent presence of a revived socialist movement, particularly with respect to the Jews. For the society as a whole, despite several years of high unemployment and a decline in real income, there are not many indicators to suggest a rise in the level of working-class, much less socialist, militancy. The poor, the colored minorities, and the working class—those who primarily bear the brunt of the twin scourges of joblessness and inflation—occasionally do strike out in ways that can be interpreted as quasi-socialist forms. But more typically they either stoically accept their fate, turn to religion, or seek out other nonpolitical outlets for the expression of their plight and frustration.

In the political realm, conservatives and conservatism are on the

This epilogue is reprinted from Jews and the Left, Arthur Liebman. Copyright 1979 by John Wiley and Sons, Inc. with permission of John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

ascendancy. The 1976 presidential election, the defeat of Democratic congressional candidates in Democratic strongholds in Washington and Minnesota in 1977, and Daniel P. Moynihan's defeat of Bella Abzug in the New York senatorial primaries attest to this rightward drift in the nation. The national debate on the issue of the Panama Canal treaties and the lack of such a debate on even a watered down version of the Humphrey-Hawkins full-employment bill are other indications of the growing strength of the Right and the weakness of the Left as well as the vacuity of American politics.

A glance at the political spectrum to the left of the Democratic Party reveals some wide, nearly empty spaces. The student movement is dead. The women liberationists are on the defensive. Pockets of Leftists and New Leftists exist in and around the Democratic Party, some unions, universities, poverty programs, and small publications, but there is no Left or New Left party or organization of any consequence that still functions.

Socialism's fate in the Jewish community seems even more dire. The economic and occupational bases that once sustained a meaningful Jewish Left are now largely a thing of the past. In terms of income and occupations Jews appear to be among the most favored of the nation's ethnic and religious groups. The organs and organizations that are dominant in the Jewish community reflect the predominance of its bourgeois base. Power and influence among American Jews are concentrated in its wealthier strata and in the rabbis, administrators, and bureaucrats of community organizations, and the intelligentsia allied with and attuned to it.

Jewish radicals, whether of the Old Left, New Left, or Jewish New Left varieties, are few in number. The organizations that constituted the sinews of the Jewish Left subculture, if in existence, either serve only a handful or are now politically blander and more moderate than was true in past decades. Jewish radical newspapers and periodicals tend to be in financial difficulty and on the verge of extinction or bankruptcy. Their readership can be counted in the hundreds or low thousands, while their more conservative ideological competitors are read by the tens of thousands.

The status of Jewish radicals in the Jewish community today is a far cry from what it was prior to World War I. Now they have little influence in community affairs. Now, as opposed to the earlier period, they are viewed by a large segment of American Jewry with suspicion, even with hostility. Leftists, whether Jewish or non-

Jewish, Old or New, are regarded by many Jews as being opposed to basic Jewish economic and political interests, that, is, Israel's security, a militarily strong United States, and a seemingly bountiful capitalist system. The only socialist honored by this community are those who have been embalmed in nostalgia.

The prospects for a revival of socialism in the American Jewish community, however, is not as bleak as these facts may at first appear to suggest. There are two factors that will promote this revival. The first is the existence of organized Jewish radicalism. The second is the peculiar location of the Jews in a maturing monopolistic capitalist society.

Jewish radical organizations, although few in number and in potency at this time, can serve important political functions with respect to any future resurgence of leftism among Jews. The Jewish Socialist Youth Bund, Habonim, Hashomer Hatzair, the Jewish Socialist Community, the Radical Jewish Union, the *Jewish Currents*, the *Morgen Freiheit*, the Bund, and Camp Kinderland all help to keep alive the historical tradition and legitimacy of Jewish socialism. The importance of the availability of radical traditions to groups or nations concerned with dramatic social change should not be underestimated. Such a tradition reduces the time and energy spent in groping for meaningful political alternatives and also serves as a rallying force for those concerned with the radical transformation of their societies. Indeed, this was a fact of which the early fathers [sic] of the Zionist movement were well aware.

This is not the only real or potential contribution that such Jewish radical organizations have to make to a future revival of Jewish socialism. In addition to tradition, they keep radical political people alive. In these explicitly leftist Jewish contexts (as well as in leftist contexts in which Jews do not participate specifically as Jews, such as *In These Times*), a small but not insignificant number are being politically educated. Also, a small but not insignificant number are gaining experience in radical politics. Thus, when a thrust for meaningful change arises among Jews in the future there will be, directly or indirectly available to those generations, men and women who can provide a socialist direction. Sociologists and historians of social movements have often noted that key persons and groups in the rise of new social movements many times are those with experience in the involvement with old ones. And, a handful of astute and experienced individuals can make a difference. Indeed, was it not a handful who made an important difference in the initial successes

of the Bund and the Bolsheviks?

A few individuals and organizations by themselves, however, cannot produce a radical movement. Their potency is circumscribed by larger structural considerations. It is to these structural considerations, namely the occupational and economic structure of American Jewry within this monopolistic capitalist society, to which we now turn our attention.

Jewish Occupations and Industries

Jews, though largely middle class, are not dispersed at random throughout the labor force. Values, traditions, historical experiences, previous successes, and anti-Semitism have all come together to produce a Jewish occupational structure today that is unique. I contend that this special pattern of Jewish location in the occupational and industrial world will play a major part in placing Jews once again in that vanguard of a socialist movement.

To understand this point, it is necessary to look beyond income levels and the glitter of the gilded ghettos. Once this is done it becomes clearer that the occupational roles that Jews currently occupy do not give them access to the levers of societal power. Basically Jews are located in peripheral and dependent positions and stand outside of the politico-economic core where real power is vested. It is this concentration of Jews in these types of economic arenas and the consequential political and economic vulnerability that will revive socialism in the American Jewish community.

Let us commence this brief analysis by sketching a map of the occupational and industrial locations of Jews in the United States today. Industrially, as social analyst Allon Gal has noted, "... the center of gravity of American Jewry's economic life is the *field of trade and finance*," a field in which nearly half of all economically active Jews are employed.¹ This proportion is approximately two times larger than that for non-Jews in the same field. In manufacturing, Jews are disproportionately located in light manufacturing or the consumer-goods industries. Jews in business also differ from their Christian counterparts in terms of the type of enterprise with which they are associated. Jews are more likely to be found in proprietorships and partnerships, while Christians are more likely to be located in corporations.²

Occupationally, Jews are distinct from the rest of the population.

Whereas approximately one-tenth of the national labor force is self-employed, the percentage for Jews is about 50 percent, or nearly five times greater. A similar but not as sharp a disparity also obtains with respect to representation in specific occupational categories. Seventy percent of Jews in the labor force are either professionals (29%) or managers and administrators (41%). The comparable percentage for non-Jews in both these categories is close to 30 percent, or proportionately less than half of that of Jews.³

These current occupational and industrial concentrations of Jews are a product of a combination of various historic and contemporary factors. The positions of Jews today in the economy are in many cases extensions of the types of field and activities that they entered and in which they were successful in earlier decades. These contemporary concentrations also reflect the considerable educational and economic mobility of the Jews as a group. But, most important for our present concern, the nonrandom location of Jews in the economy also indicates the existence of a pattern of exclusion from the central position of economic power.

Jews are virtually absent from the executive suites of the large corporations situated at the core of politico-economic power in this society. (Irving Shapiro, board chairman of DuPont, is a singularly notable exception.) As William Domhoff, a sociological student of the power elite, described the wealthy Jews (and their Cowboy or South-western allies): "The Jewish-Cowboy group is the major fringe group in an overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon power elite rooted in commercial banking, insurance, public utilities, railroads and [heavy] manufacturing—precisely the areas from which people of Jewish background are almost completely excluded. Even where the Jews and the Cowboys are highly visible as in investment banking, oil and real estate, they are decidedly minor leaguers compared to the even wealthier gentiles."⁴ The statistics of Jewish exclusion from the corporate power elite are quite jarring. In the field of commercial banking the percentage of Jews in executive positions at the larger banks is approximately 1 percent. In 1973 the American Jewish Committee found that of the 176 senior executives in the 15 largest commercial banks not one was Jewish. The pattern is almost identical in the auto industry. Not one of the top officers of General Motors, Chrysler, and Ford is Jewish. Those Jews who are highly paid in the auto industry are primarily technicians, engineers, and scientists; and even they are relatively few in number. Again, the

same pattern is found in the oil industry, where Jews constitute from about 1 to 4 percent of all high-level officials. In public utilities, the percentage is less than 1 percent. In the insurance industry, the picture for Jews is only slightly better.⁵

The fact of Jewish exclusion from positions of corporate power is more salient than the reasons behind it. But some brief attention should also be paid to the underlying reasons. Jews in the past (as noted earlier in the volume) were excluded from these industries and consequently sought out other economic arenas more hospitable to them and the talents. After a while a pattern tends to be established, and it is possible that Jews may overlook new opportunities within sectors that were previously regarded as hostile to them. However, the major difficulty with this line of reasoning is that many if not most of the doors closed to Jews in the past remain firmly closed in the present owing to the current locks installed by the contemporary gate keepers. These major corporations apparently do not actively recruit on campuses with large proportions of Jews. For example, one recent study found that the number of visits to campuses by bank recruiters searching out future executives varies *inversely* with the percentage of Jews in the student body. Even when the Jewish students, such as those graduating from the Harvard Business School, appear to be eminently qualified for the trek to the high-level executive suites, they tend not to be chosen. The objectively anti-Semitic policies of the corporate power elite are also reflected in the social clubs that they dominate. More than half of these clubs — in which many of the big business decisions are made—actively discriminate against Jews.⁶

The exclusion of Jews from the corporate power structure means that Jews are in a vulnerable position. Decisions that non-Jews make about the economy and decisions in which Jews do not participate determine in essence the Jewish economic fate. The expansive nature of the American economy in the several decades following World War II up until approximately 1970 and the need then for talents in fields where Jews did have access masked the impact of this power distortion. Income and status success in a variety of economic arenas made the exclusion from a few easier to bear. The anti-Semitic policies and practices of the economic power elite was treated by Jewish defense organizations as more a status irritant than as a major blockage to Jewish economic mobility or a significant threat to the fundamental position of Jews in the economy or society.

These *judenrein* corporations, particularly the oligopolies, constitute an actual threat in the present and an even greater one in the future to the economic and social attainments and security of American Jewry. The simultaneous growth of monopoly capitalism and the contraction of the economy that we are currently experiencing underscore the gravity of the situation for American Jewry. The economic giants will block Jewish mobility and invade traditional Jewish economic arenas, while the competition from other sectors and strata in the society for the relatively few economic plums that exist beyond the sphere or concern of the corporate magnates become more intense. This is the scenario for the economic, political, and status decline of Jews in America of the future. It is also the scenario that will lead American Jewry back to a renewed and vigorous commitment to socialism.

THE ECONOMIC THREAT

Let us now examine the various ways in which the predominantly Jewish economic and occupational arenas and mobility channels are being and will continue to be eroded. First, we will turn our attention to small business—the traditional Jewish economic metier. The economic data clearly reveal that small businesses in America in the last several decades have declined, using virtually any indicator of economic performance. At the same time, the wealth and influence of the large corporations, the conglomerates, and the oligopolies have grown considerably. Between 1950 and 1962, for example, the 20 largest corporations' share of all corporate assets increased from 21 to 25 percent. By 1962 the net profits of the five largest manufacturing corporations were approximately 200 percent greater than those of the 178,000 smallest manufacturing corporations.⁷ Or, to use another example, “. . . The 100 largest firms in 1968 held a larger share of manufacturing assets than the 200 largest in 1950; the 200 largest in 1968 controlled as large a share as the 1000 largest in 1941.”⁸ By 1966 the concentration of economic power had grown to the point where the top four firms in aerospace, motor vehicles, computers, tires, cigarettes, soap detergent, and photographic equipment accounted for approximately two-thirds or more of the total output in each of these industrial groupings. This phenomenon was not only restricted to manufacturing. The same pattern also applied in the banking and insurance worlds as well. Small

businesses' share of assets, output, and profits could not keep up with that of the giants.⁹

It was not only the sheer growth of large businesses that proved injurious to the interests of small firms. It was also the nature of that growth. Prior to the 1960s corporations had tended to expand within narrow limits, generally within the boundaries of their industries or in related sectors. But in the 1960s and 1970s, aggressive corporations moved up and out in various directions ingesting firms in diverse industries.¹⁰ And again where large corporations ruled the roost, Jews were generally not welcome.

It should also be noted that despite the flurry of corporate growth and mergers there was a considerable degree of stability among the owners and influentials who controlled big business. The same or similar family groupings such as the Rockefellers, the Mellons, the Fords, and the Hannas that controlled much of the banking and industrial worlds 50 years ago generally still control them now.¹¹ Jews are generally not to be found in these kinds of family circles. Thus, not even via marriage can Jews get into the charmed circle of the corporate elite.

The decline of small businesses in the 1960s and the 1970s proved especially injurious to the interests of Jews. It was the trade and light manufacturing sectors of the small business world—areas in which Jews were heavily concentrated—that suffered the most economic misfortune.¹² The growing power of the large corporations on the one hand and the increased competition from abroad placed the type of enterprises and occupations in which Jews were disproportionately concentrated in the grips of an ever tightening vise.

A cruel paradox in this situation was that success or relative success provided not [sic] guarantees that the interests of the Jewish community would be protected. If small- or medium-sized Jewish businesses were too profitable, they ran the risk of being bought or taken over by a large and avaricious non-Jewish corporation. Even the growth of a Jewish firm that was not absorbed by outsiders did not necessarily insure its remaining within a Jewish sphere. Both Sears Roebuck and the Radio Corporation of America, for example, commenced life and flourished for many years under the aegis of Jews. As large concerns, however, they have followed, according to sociologist E. Digby Baltzell, the pattern of Jewish exclusion common to large industries in America.¹³ There is also a similar sort

of dynamic at work at the pinnacle of the Jewish business world, the prestigious investment houses. Here Jewish houses will for purposes of business, hire or appoint Christian partners, but Christian investment firms do not tend to acquire Jewish partners.¹⁴ And there is also the problem of the highly successful Jew who, in the process of achieving upward mobility and interacting with Christian peers, either converts or intermarries, or has children who do. A significant percentage of the progeny and spouses of upper-status Jewish families considered by Stephen Birmingham in his book *Our Crowd*, for example, are not part of "their crowd."¹⁵

The general point here, however, is that small- and medium-size businesses are increasingly less able to perform the positive economic functions for Jews that they did in the past. This sector of the economy, which was once a major route of upward mobility and a source of a relatively comfortable middle-class existence for this ethnic group, is suffering in absolute and relative terms. These types of enterprises are evolving, for the most part, into dead-end propositions or fragile economic bases that cannot or will not be able to sustain bourgeois life-styles. As such economic realities intrude into the consciousness of Jews, they will begin to realize that their interests and those of the capitalist system are no longer parallel.

These doubts and feelings of discontent will not be limited to Jewish businessmen. The expansion of large corporations carrying their policies of Jewish exclusion with them into increasingly larger areas of business life and the decline of small businesses within the context of a contracting economy will produce a negative "multiplier effect" upon middle-class Jews who are not the owners and managers of the small- and medium-size firms under attack. The Jewish economy is a highly integrated one, as is the national economy, and both are very much interrelated at this time. It is therefore not possible for one important sector of the Jewish economy to experience assaults without having other parts of it suffer as well.

One of the other Jewish economic arenas that is feeling and will continue to feel the impact of the blows raining down upon small businesses is the professions—an important basis of Jewish middle-class existence. Consider, for example, the case of Jewish lawyers. At the present time, with some exceptions, Jews are generally not found in the higher echelons of major corporate law firms, especially at the level of senior partners. This stems from a variety of sources. Historically, lawyers associated with such prestigious firms have had

a long and not very noble history of animosity toward Jews and other minority groups in the profession.¹⁶ More important for our present concerns, however, is the structural source. The personnel of the large corporate law firms usually are mirror images of their clientele, and the clientele for these law corporations are typically the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants from the world of corporate business. Conversely, Jewish firms, again with some notable exceptions, especially when government contracts and specific expertise are needed, do the legal work of small- to medium-size businesses. (The non-Jews that Jewish lawyers are most likely to serve are those in need of nonmainstream legal services such as those relating to criminal, matrimonial, or personal injury. These Christian clients, needless to say, are not likely to be in the upper or upper-middle classes.) It follows, then, that the fewer the number of profitable Jewish businesses in existence, the fewer the number of clients Jewish law firms will have.¹⁷ This will eventually mean a decline in the number of Jewish lawyers or a decline in the income of Jewish attorneys. There is no reason to believe that the same process will not affect Jews in other middle-class service occupations.

The Jewish professional bastion has also come under attack from another quarter. The growth of big business, the decline of small firms, and the general contraction of the economy have increased the competition among the professions. Blacks, Puerto Ricans, non-Jewish women, and Catholics have become increasingly less willing to concede these positions to Jews either for merit or other reasons. An important focal point in the struggle for these positions has been at the level of admissions to the professional schools. Jewish defense organizations have actively fought against quota systems and other devices designed to increase the enrollments of underrepresented minorities in the professions. Their struggle is informed by a history of anti-Semitic quota systems. But it is also informed by the present-day fact that the more seats in professional schools that go to non-Jews, the fewer there will be available for Jewish students. The briefs submitted by Jewish organizations on behalf of the law school applicant De Funis and the medical school applicant Bakke — alleged victims of reverse discrimination — represent concrete attempts by the Jewish community to protect and preserve admission by merits so that the enclaves that Jews have fought long and hard to establish will not be diminished.

The struggle for professional and middle-class positions between

Jews and non-Jews has not been limited to professional school admissions. In New York City, Jews and blacks continue to fight each other for jobs in the school system. Similarly, Jews are waging struggles to preserve their faculty positions in the nation's colleges and universities, which are being threatened by minority groups backed by affirmative action guidelines and policies.

This competition in the educational sector between Jews and non-Jews is occurring during a period in which the number of teachers at all levels has either reached a plateau or is beginning to decline. For Jews, who are so concentrated in the teaching profession—about 50 percent of New York City's school teachers and approximately 9 percent of the nation's professors¹⁸—this contraction by itself has to be a troublesome development. But the contraction, together with the vigorous competition endorsed and supported by government, means that in the future Jews will lack this important institutional bulwark to their middle-class status that was there in the past.

This same pattern of present and future erosion of the overall position of Jews in American Society is apparent in the sphere of politics as well. Jewish political power is overrated. The prominence and visibility of Israel as the premier Jewish interest in the last three decades has distorted the reality of Jewish capabilities. Support for Israel by American politicians, until very recently, has been, in domestic political terms, a relatively cost-free endeavor. Presidents and congressmen have much to gain in terms of votes and campaign contributions by providing aid to Israel and little to lose except from fringe groups. Political and economic assistance to Israel, furthermore, does not in any way challenge or disturb the socioeconomic status quo on the homefront.

The vaunted political clout of the Jewish community seems to have produced relatively little payoff in Jewish interest areas other than Israel. For example, Jewish political muscle was unable to stem the decline of the domestic garment industry, particularly in geographical locations like New York in which Jews were the strongest.¹⁹ Jewish political strength was also unable to prevent the implementation of affirmative action policies in disproportionately Jewish occupational and institutional arenas. Even in New York City and even during the administration of the first Jewish mayor in that city's history, Jews were unable to prevent blacks and other groups from encroaching on Jewish enclaves in the civil service and educational bureaucracies.²⁰

Politically, organized Jewry has not had much success in its dealings with the corporate elite. Jewish organizations have made no effort to stem the encroachment of big business upon the disproportionately Jewish small-business sector. It is almost as if Jewish political leaders regard this development as an "act of nature" that man cannot stop. Jewish political efforts vis-a-vis the Gentile giants have focused largely upon forcing them to open their executive suites to Jews. This campaign has generally not reaped huge dividends as our previous accounting of Jews in top-level positions in the banking, oil, and automobile industries has made clear. Irving R. Shapiro may have recently become chairman of the board of DuPont, but it is extremely doubtful whether he represents a wave of the future.

Ironically, if Jewish political power has made any significant impact upon the corporate elite, it has been to bolster rather than weaken corporate economic power. This irony stems from the effectiveness of the Jewish lobbying on behalf of Israel. The concern for Israel's security has inclined Jews and Jewish organizations toward a more favorable stance on an ever-increasing United States defense budget. The logic is straightforward. If the American military is to be the ultimate defender of Israel, then the United States armed forces have to be strong. Such strength requires a huge expenditure of funds. Therefore, it follows that Jews should push for bigger defense budgets. *And they are.*²¹

Defense spending may or may not help Israel in the long run, but it most certainly is injurious to Jewish domestic interests in the short, or long, run. This is because these military dollars go largely to a few corporate giants with interests in economic sectors beyond military hardware. In 1968, for example, about 60 percent of these dollars went to 50 such firms.²² This defense money significantly strengthens the overall economic position of those businesses most dangerous to Jewish economic concerns. The Jewish clout exercised on behalf of Israel turns out to be deleterious to other important Jewish interests and to the economic base upon which the clout rests.

Thus, when the major economic and political tendencies pertaining to American Jewry are assessed, the picture for the Jewish middle class in the future is bleak. After several generations and decades of upward socioeconomic mobility, the mobility that will occur among Jews in the decades to come will be downward. The continued multifaceted growth of *judenrein* corporate giants into the

"Jewish" sectors of the business world will have a substantial negative impact upon the economic fate of Jewish businessmen and upon the Jewish professionals who service them. The economic decline of American Jewry cannot but be paralleled by a decline in its political power as well. And as the political clout of American Jewry is diminished so is its ability to protect its economic and occupational interests. What we have then is an intertwined downward spiral.

This bleak future will not be averted by the logic and values that now guide the political strategy of Jewish leaders and defense agencies. In the face of a powerful threat to Jewish interest by the Gentile corporate magnates, the heavy Jewish artillery has been trained against blacks and other minority groups, politically and economically weak strata that are not very capable of severely injuring basic Jewish interests. Jewish spokesmen will loudly and vociferously protest the morality and legality of affirmative action programs in universities and government designed to redress in some small degree a shameful heritage of racial and sexist discrimination. But there is no equivalent campaign conducted against the major financial, legal, and manufacturing corporations that are serious threats to Jewish interests.²³ The Gentile corporate and financial elite are subjected to quiet studies and gentle entreaties to open their doors while the blacks and other minority groups sniping at the heels of the bourgeois Jewish community are subjected to massive and bitter public relations and legal salvos. In a recent study of anti-Semitism done by two eminent and long-time leaders of the Anti-Defamation League, one of the most effective Jewish defense agencies in the country, the authors barely mention corporate anti-Semitism. Instead, the dominant focus is placed almost totally on weak political groups, such as blacks, the radical Left, and the extremist right with some nod also given to the Arabs.²⁴

The problem, however, is more significant than a poor choice of targets and the differential level and intensity of campaigns. When banks, corporations, law firms, public utilities, and insurance companies are targeted by Jewish defense agencies, the nature of their attacks is woefully lacking. The entire emphasis is usually placed upon employment practices and scarcely any attention is paid to the business and economic policies of these shapers of the American economy.

It will do the American Jewish community and the non-Jewish poor, working and middle classes little good if Jewish hands at the

helm of the nation's economy lead in the same disastrous directions as elite Gentile hands. The admission of a small number of bourgeois Jews into the nation's economic elite will not stem the downslide in the more Jewish areas of the economy. It may have been prestigious for American Jewry to have Arthur Burns serve as chairman of the Federal Reserve Board but the conservative fiscal policies pursued by him have not helped Jewish economic interests. Jews, like other people, cannot eat prestige. The entrance of a Jewish bourgeoisie into the ruling economic class will not change the basic policies that have led to high rates of unemployment, inflation, and small-business failures. A Judeo-Christian corporate elite, should one come into existence, will be no more capable than a WASP elite in dealing with the basic contradictions and internal weaknesses of capitalism.

The drive for acceptance into the Gentile corporation suites and clubs is shortsighted in another manner as well. It is based on the premise that the exclusion of Jews stems from personal or individual predilections. If these could be overcome, according to this perspective, then Jews could demonstrate how well they perform as executives and senior partners and thus lower the barriers for other Jews to enter the corporate sanctuaries. But the barring of Jews is not due to individual or personal tastes or prejudices. It is due to economic and institutional considerations. Corporate anti-Semitism protects the vested interests of the strata that occupy the seat of economic power in American society. There is no rational reason why they would have any self-interest in sharing their lucrative and powerful positions with any group of outsiders, except perhaps for a token few, no matter how talented they are. Ethnic and religious distinctions between the corporate elite and potential challengers provide the former with a convenient and popular rationale for protecting the socioeconomic status quo.

The shortsighted and narrow politicoeconomic policies of the American Jewish leadership stem from their bourgeois socioeconomic status and political socialization. It is these leaders' identification of their community's interest with that of the status quo and capitalism that makes them so ineffective in stemming the economic and political decline of American Jewry that is currently under way. This identification and their socialization experiences in America also blind them to the real nature and function of corporate anti-Semitism.

THE REVIVAL OF SOCIALISM

This ongoing deterioration of the economic and political position of the American Jewish community in the context of a society rent by ethnic and class divisions will eventually cause socialism to rise once again as a force in the Jewish community. As in czarist Russia, the Jews' harsh confrontation with the realities of capitalism linked with anti-Semitism will again turn them toward socialism.

There are differences, to be sure, between nineteenth and early twentieth century czarist Russia and contemporary America as there are between the position of the Jewish communities within each. But these differences as they apply to the relationship between Jews and socialism do not overshadow the similarities. In czarist Russia and in contemporary and future America, capitalism confronted, confronts, and will confront Jews in vulnerable economic positions outside the core of the economy. In Russia, the government and the businessmen combined to block the access of Jews to legitimate channels of upward mobility. In America, the powerful corporate and financial elite, as their power increases, will be more effective in denying Jews entry into a declining number of meaningful routes of upward mobility. In Russia, developing capitalism forced Jews from their middle-class or middle-strata positions of artisans and small shopkeepers downward into the ranks of the proletariat or nearly impoverished petty bourgeoisie. In America, maturing monopoly capitalism will force Jews from their small- and medium-size businesses while at the same time creating the conditions for a "squeezing" of the Jewish professional strata. The end results will be, as in Russia, downward mobility, frustrated aspirations, and a turn to socialism.

The contours and social physiognomy of the American Jewish community will come to resemble in some that of the Russian Jewish community in late nineteenth and early twentieth century czarist Russia. Jews in their downward drift will find themselves concentrated in positions as objectively or relatively low-paid wage workers and petty merchants scratching out a living. In their ranks there will be large numbers of frustrated intellectuals and professionals. Thus, once again Jews will be amassed in large numbers, sharing the same or similar occupational plight and economic misfortune, and containing among themselves many intellectuals ready to lead and articulate the demands and aspirations of the masses. These facts

plus their common ethnic origins and experiences will facilitate intraclass communication, the development of class solidarity, as well as hostility toward their common exploiters and oppressors. Finally, this will culminate, I contend, in a revivification of socialism among Jews.

Such a development will not be rapid or smooth. Some Jews will try to seek out alliances with their oppressors. But the institutional and objective anti-Semitism present among the corporate elite and its satellites will frustrate such endeavors. If they barred Jews from their doors when Jews were relatively prosperous and politically influential, why would the corporate magnates be willing to change their policy when Jews were in so weak a position? After much floundering and resisting, increasing numbers of Jews will come to see that their interests as Jews, as downwardly mobile persons, as members of an exploited working class, and as an impoverished, or nearly impoverished, strata of petty traders and merchants are antithetical to the powerful American bourgeoisie. The American Jews of the future will also be confronted by a situation that their kinsmen in czarist Russia did not have to face—the absence of a sanctuary. The world capitalist economy of the future will ensure that American Jews have no supportive and economically expansive capitalist enclave—including Israel—in which to seek refuge.

Thus, at some time in the not too distant future, the elements necessary to produce a new and reinvigorated Jewish commitment to socialism will fall into place. A relative or objective decline in socioeconomic circumstances and the narrowing if not closing of channels of mobility in combination with a living radical tradition and cadre will constitute those necessary elements.

The Jewish socialist movement of the future will hopefully not be an isolated phenomenon. Ideally it will be a centerpiece of an ethnically heterogeneous socialist movement capable of converting the United States into a humane, democratic socialist society.

Notes

1. Allon Gal, *Socialist-Zionism: Theory and Issues in Contemporary Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Shenkman Publishing Co., 1973), p. 22.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 23, 63, 64.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 29; and Will Maslow, *The Structure and Functioning of the American Jewish Community* (New York: American Jewish Congress, 1974), 8.

4. G. William Domhoff, *Fat Cats and Democrats: The Role of the Big Rich in the Party of the Common Man* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 54.
5. Stephen L. Slavin and Mary A. Pradt, "Corporate Anti-Semitism," *Jewish Currents*, 32:2 (February 1978), 29-32.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30 and Irving Howe, *The World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 611-612.
7. U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1976* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 507-526; and Willard F. Mueller, "The Measurement of Industrial concentration," in *Superconcentration/Supercorporation*, Ralph L. Andreano, Ed. (Andover, Mass.: Warner Modular Publications, 1973), reprint 324, pp. 1-19.
8. Edward S. Greenberg, *Serving the Few: Corporate Capitalism and the bias of Government Policy* (New York, John Wiley, 1974), pp. 38-39.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
10. W.F. Mueller, "Measurement of Industrial Concentration," pp. 13-19; and John M. Blair, *Economic Concentration; Structure, Behavior, and Public Policy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972), pp. 41-81.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19; and Maurice Zeitlin, "Corporate Ownership and control: The Large Corporation and the Capitalist Class," in *American Society, Inc.*, Maurice Zeitlin, Ed. (Chicago: Rand-McNally, 1977), pp. 246-249, 256-265.
12. See *Statistical Abstract, 1976*, p. 526, for listings of commercial and industrial failures by industry and occupation of debtor.
13. E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), p. 321.
14. G. W. Domhoff, *Fat Cats and Democrats*, p. 48.
15. Stephen Birmingham, *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* (New York: Dell Books, 1967).
16. See Jerold S. Auerback, *Unequal Justice: Lawyers and Social Change in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), especially pp. 102-130.
17. Jerome E. Carlin *Lawyers' Ethics: A Survey of the New York City Bar* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1966), pp. 27-40, 125-129.
18. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), p. 146; and Seymour Martin Lipset and E.C. Ladd, Jr., "Jewish Academics In the United States: Their Achievements, Culture and Politics," *American Jewish Yearbook, 1971*, 72 (New York and Philadelphia: American Jewish Committee and Jewish Publication society, 1971), p. 92.
19. "Capital's Flight: The Apparel Industry Moves South," *NACLA's Latin America and Empire Report*, XI: 3 (March 1977), 5-12.
20. *New York Times*, January 9, 1978.
21. *New York Times*, January 11, 1977, Saul Bellow, Norman Podhoretz, and Eugene V. Rostow joined together with such military luminaries as

- Admiral Zumwalt and General Maxwell Taylor to push for increased defense spending to meet the Soviet menace.
22. Michael Reich and David Finkelhor, "Capitalism and the Military Industrial Complex," in *The Capitalist System*, Richard C. Edwards, Michael Reich and Thomas Weisskopf, Eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall) 1972) pp. 392-401.
 23. For example, the American Jewish Committee chose not to publicize the fact that the major public utilities between 1963 and 1971 had not changed their exclusionary policies towards Jews. S.I. Slavin and M.A. Pradt, "Corporate Anti-Semitism," p. 12.
 24. Arnold Foster and Benjamin R. Epstein, *The New Anti-Semitism*, (New York; McGraw-Hill, 1974).

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Hannah Davis

David was blinded in the war
in 1948,
Israel's war of independence.
He doesn't walk very well.
His thin legs shake.

At dinner his wife and children sit around him
planning his movements for him
like generals planning battle strategy
quietly moving chairs aside,
whispering instructions.
It's slice of lamb
and broccoli
his wife says
as his hands grope on the plate.
She cuts him his meat.
He touches my arm
thinking its a chair arm.
It's me, I say.
His hands drop.

WASKOWRESTLING

David Forbes

Arthur I. Waskow, *Godwrestling*. New York: Schocken Books, 1978; 199 pp., \$9.95

Socialism, Nietzsche somewhere remarks, is merely a humanitarian religion devoid of superior justification. This characterization implies that although socialism is considered to be non-religious, it is in fact just another belief system—and an inferior one at that. The view that socialism is a kind of "religion," or at least requires a fundamental axiomatic belief to be acceptable, is commonly held by many religious thinkers. Yet this view is flawed and its adoption often leads to futile attempts at an untenable synthesis, religious socialism. According to religious socialists, most forms of socialism aim to abolish spiritual homage to anything other than the highest qualities of humanity itself. They see socialism, especially in its Marxist form, as a method for social change devoid of any transcendent imperative, and for this reason feel it must invariably lapse into narcissism and failure. Consequently, they feel that socialism requires an ultimate symbol of goodness and a guarantor of personal salvation. Thus, in this 'godless' century, some religious believers sympathetic to socialism have felt it necessary to save socialism's soul, or at least to provide it with one.

There are, of course, various forms of religious socialism. One such form seeks to develop socialist proposals from religious texts, and subordinates the Marxist dialectic to a religious worldview. This

Parts of this review have appeared elsewhere under a copyright by Jewish Student Press Service, 1979. I am indebted to Michael Cholden-Brown, Debra Reuben and especially Gary Ruchwarger for their editorial assistance — DJF

is the approach which Arthur Waskow adopts in *Godwrestling*. Waskow's endeavor reflects the need certain Jews today feel to somehow synthesize their spiritual beliefs with a Marxist political perspective. In this sense Waskow does not merely desire to redeem socialism; because, for him, religion needs Marxism as much as Marxism needs religion. Nevertheless, his work lacks a rigorous Marxist analysis and consequently tends to mystify issues such as the relationship between politics and ethics.

Arthur Waskow invites us to wrestle with him, as he grapples to extract a modern sense from a Jewish tradition which has him in a strong hold. As with Jacob's struggle with the angel, Waskow's contest is with a tradition experienced as a personal other—alien and contentious, yet strangely close and familiar like a lost twin. This other does not easily yield up its identity by name but may nevertheless bless and transform its feisty opponent for going all out in the match.

Indeed, Waskow is a formidable partner. His stature is that of a political activist and writer acknowledged in both leftist and Jewish arenas. His intellectual weight is considerable and his insights into biblical stories and the Torah ritual are often cleverly brought to bear on contemporary problems. The range of topics he discusses in the book, including Arab-Israeli relations, women in Judaism, and sexuality, attests to his breadth. Moreover, Waskow displays an appealingly disarming strategy; his stance is compassionate and sometimes painfully open.

Waskow presents us with glimpses of personal issues with which he himself struggles: his ambiguous relationship with his brother, his divorce, and his children's schooling. He also provides us with verbatim group discussions on love, marriage, and sex. These discussions occurred during meetings held by Waskow and other members of the Washington, D.C. Fabrangen, a group dedicated to creating a "modern path of life that draws authentically from Jewish tradition but is expressed in new ways." (p. 3) Unfortunately, some of Waskow's accounts of the Fabrangen gatherings are tedious and unnecessary. One imagines the group—when not immersed in Torah interpretation—off on a woodsy retreat, munching on fruit and self-consciously attempting to wrest joy from an incommensurable ritual.

How does one gain a foothold in dealing with *Godwrestling*? Perhaps by examining the particular Fabrangen aim which forms the underlying theme of the book — the deliberate effort to develop a Jewish tradition responsive to contemporary conditions and

problems. Waskow interprets Torah stories, Jewish holidays, and rituals and applies the insights gained from these interpretations to present concerns. Chapters on the meaning of "brotherly" love* ("Brother's War and Brother's Peace"), equality between the sexes ("In Our Image: Eve and Adam"), the notion of androgyny ("Don't Stir Up Love Until It Pleases"), and motherhood and patriarchy contain novel and illuminating ideas. If Waskow's goal is to enrich the body of Jewish interpretation then he is successful; for he adds to our pleasure and appreciation of particular biblical accounts and affirms the possibility of socially progressive Torah exposition.

However, if Waskow is proposing that solutions to current problems can be found by returning to biblical texts and re-creating Talmudic processes, then he is lapsing into a romanticism which is dependent upon an outmoded source of authority. Thus, he encourages "Diaspora Jewry" to re-examine all aspects of Jewish practice—a laudable goal—but Waskow wishes this self-scrutiny to occur "in light of biblical and rabbinic sources." (p. 148) He suggests that a systematic examination of Jewish tradition allows one to address questions such as the problems of American cities and neighborhoods, unemployment and nuclear weapons. But all the biblical scholarship in the world is unlikely to provide any real assistance in dealing with such phenomena. It is one thing to draw inspiration from the Torah, but it is quite another to adapt biblical teachings to the present. Because Waskow's quixotic musing makes scripture the ultimate source of political analysis he forsakes any critical, let alone Marxist, assessment of current conditions.

Waskow's particular style of wrestling with tradition gets him into some contorted positions. Recognizing that many religious forms are outmoded, he struggles to find new solutions to contemporary problems. Yet he insists that these solutions must arise from contending with the text of Torah. The key problem, however, is not how to apply an approach derived from a past tradition to the present, but, rather, how to use the knowledge developed in this historical period in order to transform society. In effect, Waskow chooses struggling with ancient teachings in order to somehow bring about the messianic age over employing a Marxist analysis and practice which critically examines and strives to overcome the current forms of oppression in the world.

*The "brotherly" love which Waskow here discusses is literally that between brothers — Jacob and Essau, and Waskow and his own brother.



Waskow is long on messianic visions and short on how to get there from here. For example, he takes the ancient concept of the Jubilee year literally and offers it as a basis for a program to share the wealth in land and decentralize control over food.* Such a proposal, however, is the product of a utopian fantasy devoid of any consideration of the concrete historical conditions necessary for understanding the *process* of political and social change.

Waskow's utopianism stems from his conception of means and ends as mutually exclusive. In the chapter "Spiralling Toward the Messiah," Waskow outlines the content of a Messianic age. While he acknowledges that Judaism must necessarily encounter Marxism if such "messianic" goals as prosperity for all and the end of war are to be realized, he vaguely concludes that we must still learn the process of "how to get there." (p. 177) Waskow formulates a dichotomy between what he calls "Necessity," or "Things-As-They-Must-Be," and that which "Ought-To-Be," or messianic values. Accordingly, he believes that religious messianism must recognize the laws of Necessity in order to truly bring about the messianic age. Yet this

*Even at the time it was written, the practical application of the Jubilee year law encountered insuperable obstacles. As Roland deVaux, a leading biblical scholar, observes, "There is no evidence the law was ever in fact applied. . . it was a utopian law and it remained a dead letter." *Ancient Israel*, Volume 1 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965) pp. 175, 177.

manichean formulation obscures the realization that means and ends are always incorporated in the concrete political struggles of the present. It is precisely Waskow's messianic mysticism which prevents him from seeing that the means must be the ends and that the "necessity" of political efforts are from the outset an integral part of "messianic values."

Furthermore, Waskow perceives historical necessity and idealized values as exclusive realms because he fails to adopt a Marxist analysis. First, he confuses an economic system dependent upon technological development (a characteristic of both capitalist and socialist economies) with one based on constant expansion to secure capital accumulation. This error leads him to blanketly reject what he terms an "exploding" economy in favor of a "pulsating" one with no economic growth. The only structure he can envision for this "pulsating" economy resembles that found in biblical societies. Waskow then suggests that in order to work towards bringing about social justice within a new "pulsating" economy, religious tradition must learn whatever is "useful" in Marxism. But nowhere does he state—nor can he—how religion will incorporate Marxism.

Waskow's Distortion of Marxism

According to Waskow, Marxism is valuable because its emphasis on social change resembles that aspect of what he terms the God "who acts in history." At the same time, however, Waskow regards Marxism as limited because it fails to take seriously the other name of God, the "God of Nature" who acts "through the cycles of sun and moon, plants and animals, parents and children." (p. 127) Thus Marxism has necessarily been insensitive to issues "raised by ecologists and feminists—both of whom take seriously the God who acts through the natural world." (p. 127) Moreover, Waskow insists that Marxism cannot hear the anxiety of those who cherish the "cycles, rhythms, and warmths of the family and neighborhood" and has been baffled by issues of nationality and nationalism. He argues, therefore, that the task of religious traditions is to "recapture" Marxism and "bring its insights back into relation with the entire biblical outlook." (p. 127)

It is not easy to wrestle—let alone engage in dialogue—with a partner who insists on distorting another ideology in order to fit it into his own schema. For Waskow's characterization of Marxism is

quite inaccurate. The basic contention of Marxist anthropology is that human beings are at the same time *of* nature and *more than* nature. The Marxist affirmation that human beings are natural means that we are related to the world as a continuation of ourselves. As Marx states in the first of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, "To say that man *lives* from nature means that nature is his *body* with which he must remain in a continuous interchange in order not to die." Moreover, as Marx and Engels recognized, the natural world is progressively transformed by the creative historical activity of humanity, and does not, as Waskow asserts, merely consist of constant cyclical motion.* It is not Marxism which severs human beings from nature; rather, human beings are alienated from nature as a result of the operations of the capitalist system, a system which Waskow never directly challenges.

Waskow further misinterprets Marxism by implying that it ignores the apprehensions of those concerned with the family and other forms of human relationships. On the contrary, Marx strongly defended the nineteenth-century working class family, insisting that it be permitted to reproduce itself under the best conditions possible. Moreover, he pointed out that the capitalist system "creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes."¹ Indeed, the overall aim of Marxism is to work for a society in which people achieve liberation through mutually satisfying relationships in all their life activities.

Finally, while most Marxists in the past have fumbled with the issue of nationalism and nationality, Marxism is not at all inherently unable to handle these questions. Indeed, recently a number of thinkers have successfully begun to develop a Marxist theory of nationalism.²

*One can argue this point against Waskow even from within his own religious framework. A case can be made for the existence of a progressive element within Judaism which calls for the overcoming of traditional interests bound to the "cycles" of nature. This call is expressed as an unconditional demand for righteousness which must take precedence over any allegiance to blood or national ties forged in the past. Paul Tillich argued that it is this prophetic tradition which must challenge and transcend the priestly, conservative strain which, by demanding obedience to the so-called cycles of nature, birth and death, denies that historical progress and transformation is possible. Yet it is precisely this conservative tradition of paying homage to the endless "natural cycles" and to the past which Waskow would have us identify with Judaism. Moreover, Tillich went a step further than Waskow by acknowledging that socialism itself is the only viable form of prophetic expression in modern society. Paul Tillich, *The Socialist Decision*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 18-23.

By casting his interpretations of Marxism and socialism in symbolic instead of historical terms, Waskow lapses into gross generalities which tend to mystify rather than enlighten. Thus, he terms Marxism a "secularized messianism" which can never achieve the kind of society that it desires. For Marxism, he claims, rejects the notion of the "Divine Comrade," a nonhuman Other which is outside human history and the class struggle. Without the love of God it is too difficult to "turn away from the long past of struggle to the love of humanity and nature." (p. 176) Hence, Waskow asserts, instances of "atheist humanist socialism" such as the kibbutz, were "doomed to failure" because they tend to "relapse from humanism into idolatry." (p. 176) It seems useless to suggest to Waskow that the failures of the kibbutz experiment have nothing to do with idolatry and everything to do with the capitalist environment in which these cooperatives developed.³

Waskow also fails to place ethical questions within a social and political context. At one of their retreats, Waskow and the Fabrangen discuss the idea of positing a new Halakhah, or religious code, of sexual ethics. In the course of this discussion they make no effort to link the problem of sexuality with larger issues—the women's movement, the intervention of the state into sexual/personal life, and the effects of capitalism on aspects of the family and alternative forms of relationships. These are issues which socialists address but which Waskow ignores as a result of his narrow religious perspective.

Moreover, with his suggestion to construct a Jewish code of interpersonal conduct, Waskow risks the same error which vulgar Marxists commit: the imposition onto current reality of a rigid utopian vision derived from a narrowly conceived tradition or doctrine. Instead of attempting to update the forms of religious behavior, Waskow should critique the conservative practices of the American Jewish community and the oppressive fundamentalism of orthodox Judaism in Israel. Unfortunately, however, the spiritually-inspired radicalism of his earlier book, *The Bush Is Burning*, appears to have been abandoned for the wistful idealism of *Godwrestling*.

There are at least two reasons why Waskow and others retreat into such idealism. First, this regression results from an approach which seeks to interpret religious texts in order to develop programs for social change. Religious socialists tend to employ the "word of God" as the supreme apology for particular beliefs or actions, and concrete

political and economic analyses of current realities assume a secondary or even irrelevant position. Believers also become politically paralyzed by seeking correct prescriptions in the endless interpretations of religious texts; studying the text and supplying meanings eventually becomes more important than addressing present political needs. It is one thing to draw inspiration from the Torah; it is quite another to adapt biblical teachings to the present.

A second explanation is that people often turn to solutions couched in religious symbols when political and social conditions prevent them from experiencing greater control over their own lives. In his classic study, *The Making of the English Working Class*, E. P. Thompson argues that the belief of industrial workers in a redemption after death waned during periods of collective action aimed at improving their lives; however, these workers returned to religion when the prospects for collective action in this world seemed dim. It is no accident that Waskow's book appears now when possibilities for progressive social change—which appeared in the late '60s and early '70s (when *The Bush Is Burning* appeared)—have been significantly diminished.

Waskow would probably claim that many of the radical changes advocated by socialists fail because their programs were or are not adequately construed in ways which acknowledge people's legitimate cultural needs. But it does not follow that political action must stem from the teachings of a people's past tradition. Socialists neither hark back to a static form of an ancient society, as Waskow would have it, nor do they anticipate a utopia which awaits us once we uncover the correct path to it. Rather, socialists wage an ongoing struggle to liberate people from the systematic oppression of capitalism. Waskow, if he wishes to avoid defaulting from the "wrestling tournament" of socialist dialogue, would do best to keep both feet on the mat.

NOTES

1. *Capital*, vol. I (Moscow, n.d.), p. 460.
2. See Horace B. Davis *Toward a Marxist Theory of Nationalism*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), and Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World Economy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).
3. See, for example A.B. Magil, *Israel in Crisis* (New York: International Publishers, 1950) and *The Other Israel*, edited by Arie Bober (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1972).

GRANDMOTHERS AND GRANDDAUGHTERS: THE STRUGGLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ISRAEL

Gershon Shafir

Sarah Azaryahu, *Association of Hebraic Women for Equal rights in Eretz-Israel: Notes Toward a History of the Women's Movement in Eretz*, with an introduction by Marcia Freedman. Haifa. Hakeren Leezrat Haisha, 1977 (reprint of original book published in 1948, in Hebrew, forthcoming in English); 99pp.

Lesley Hazelton, *Israeli Women: The Reality Behind the Myths*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977; 235 pp., \$3.95.

In 1977 an account detailing some of the struggles of the first generation of Israeli feminists was found. It was written by Sarah Azaryahu, one of the leaders. Now reprinted, this thin volume proudly tells the story of a forgotten aspect of the Zionist movement's progressive phase.

We learn from Azaryahu that an organized women's movement began just after the 1917 Balfour Declaration, during the formative period of the future state, a period of tremendous ferment and agitation, a period of many beginnings. Women's associations were being formed just as the British army was completing its occupation of Palestine. The impetus for a national umbrella organization came in 1919 when it was decided to set up a Jewish Elected Assembly for administering municipal and social services under the British Mandate Authority. While the religious and patriarchal Old Yishuv¹ opposed granting voting rights to women for the Assembly, the main allies of the feminists were the Socialist-Zionist parties. One of the most acrimonious ideological battles in the history of the Yishuv erupted between these two forces.

Under the unique conditions of society in formation, the women activists settled on an original strategy — one which stands alone in the annals of women's rights struggles—the establishment in 1920 of their own party. The party was named "The Association of Hebraic Women for Equal Rights".

During the next five years, the final decision on voting rights for women was continuously postponed. When the religious groups threatened to withdraw from the organized Yishuv if women gained this right, the socialist parties and other progressive circles backed

Many thanks to Hannah Davis for her encouragement and critique.

away from their previous support of the feminists. They were reluctant to force a break with the Orthodox which would weaken the united Jewish front *vis-a-vis* the Mandate. (Women, while involved in various new occupations and responsibilities, were very far from being treated as equals in the Yishuv, even in the projects of the socialist parties.) This hesitancy was especially harmful in 1925 when it appeared that women's right to vote had been won. In the name of 'unity' the socialists and progressives suddenly yielded to the religious parties' demand for a referendum on this intense controversy. The left insisted, however, that women participate in the voting on this referendum.

In order to understand this wavering, it is necessary to place Azaryahu's account of the struggle for women's voting rights in the context of the formation of the New Yishuv. During the 1920s, the Labor-Zionists were sowing the seeds of their later hegemony. At the beginning of the decade, they controlled only 1/3 of the seats in the Elected Assembly. Only after the growth and unification of the two major labor parties under the name Mapai in 1931 did they gain effective control of both the Yishuv and the World Zionist Organization. At the beginning of the decade, the Old Yishuv was still as strong, numerically, as the socialists. In 1922, the Mizrahi, a religious Zionist party, which already had women active in its European branches (as Azaryahu indignantly notes), decided to link forces with the Old Yishuv, represented by the Agudat-Israel party. Once again, unity was forged in opposition to women's suffrage. Mizrahi attempted to develop a countervailing force to Socialist-Zionism and to increase the influence of the Old Yishuv. One of the reasons for Mizrahi's objections to voting rights for women was clearly political: orthodox women would refrain from using the right to vote; thus, equality "might bring about an increase of the left." (p. 31) With a Zionist party defecting to the Old Yishuv, a new alignment of forces around a conservative axis became possible. The acquiescence of the progressive parties to the referendum was already the expression of their potentially diminished stature.

In 1925, the Aguda refused to accept the compromise referendum — rejecting this latest attempt to be drawn into the movement of national revival — and withdrew from the Yishuv. Left stranded, Mizrahi returned to the Zionist fold. The women's party had significant success in the elections: with 6% of the vote, it became the 5th largest party in a field of 25. Altogether, women composed 12% of the representatives (compared to only 7% of Knesset members today).² The Elected Assembly approved voting rights for women. It

also adopted a solemn declaration of equality between the sexes. The hesitation of the Socialists and progressives during the five-year controversy was largely overcome by the militancy and self-organization of the women. It was the women's demand for suffrage which ruled out the possibility of a shift of power toward the Old Yishuv, and indirectly contributed to the ascent of the Socialists to a hegemonic position in a more homogeneous Yishuv.

Azaryahu's book, written just before the establishment of Israel, ends in the expectation that the new independent government will annul the Mandate's practice of giving the Rabbinate jurisprudence over matters of personal life (e.g., marriage and divorce), and in the demand for equal pay for equal labor.

But what is the situation of women in contemporary Israeli society? To what extent were Azaryahu and her sisters' dreams transformed into reality? Lesley Hazleton, an Israeli journalist of British origin, offers some answers in her book, *Israeli Women: The Reality Behind the Myths*. This work includes a great deal of legal and statistical information; a discussion of art and poetry; reports of psychological and sociological research; personal stories and interviews; Biblical analogies and Talmudic exegesis; observations and speculative analysis. These are all interwoven in a surprisingly coherent way. The result is a very readable book, packed with insights — a book I recommend highly as an introduction to this topic.

Even Hazleton's short glance into the objective data reveals the extent of inequality between men and women in Israel. Only 1/3 of Israeli women work outside their homes (over 50% in the U.S.), and they collect 60% of the average annual wage of men. Even when they do the same work, women are likely to be paid an hourly wage of 25%-40% less than their male counterparts. In both the governmental and educational hierarchies, women are concentrated in the lower echelons, and they comprise only about 10% of professional and managerial personnel. (Even the famous Golda Meir was an exception, and, as an anti-feminist, was not surprisingly amazed to observe that she was alone at the top.) Beyond these dry statistics, Hazleton proceeds to picture what the modern "Israela" is like: what shapes her life; what the forces responsible for her secondary status are, where she finds her fulfillment.

According to Hazleton, Israeli women *live* the social expectations that are imposed upon them by three dominant myths. The first is the "myth of liberation": women, by sharing duties, rights, and responsibilities with men during the heroic era of the Zionist struggle for an Israeli state, achieved an equality which they still enjoy. This

myth is contradicted by a myriad of facts. The second is the "biological myth": women's child-bearing capacity is the prime channel for their fulfillment as human beings and the major determinant of their abilities and desires. This myth claims that since women have different aims, modes of thinking and feeling than men, lack of equality stems from their need for protection. But the reality is that many women are made vulnerable by this dependence, acquiring a type of "security" very different from the one achieved through independence. These two myths, antidotal as they are, form a double bind for Israeli women; both are a far cry from reality.

An element of "choice" is introduced through the third myth: "the myth of the real women" This myth claims that women "do not avail themselves" of the liberated option because their true commitment is to the fulfillment of "femininity," — of being placed on a quasi-mystical pedestal men cannot attain.

Hazleton also points to three factors that perpetuate the oppression of Israeli women: the "Judaic yoke"; "the cult of fertility"; and the Zionist emphasis on "masculinity."

I. Israel is saddled with a *Judaic yoke*, a "partnership of synagogue and state," which provides the state of Israel with a legitimation of Jewish peoplehood. "Judaism prevails," declares Hazleton, "because it has provided, and still provides, the mainspring of Israel's energy." (p. 57) As far as the state is concerned, Judaism is only a *teudat kashrut* (a certificate of being kosher); and, for Israelis, it is but a subconscious force. Israelis are pagan Jews, attached to religion emotionally while detached from it intellectually. Judaism, for most Israelis, is not a matter of belonging but of "cut-and-dried laws, rules and regulations." (p. 58) The burden of this "marriage of convenience" is borne above all by Israeli women, since the *quid pro quo* involves continuing the Mandate precedent of giving Rabbinical courts jurisdiction over all matters of personal status (*dinei ishut*). Two fundamental principles of Jewish patriarchy render wives the property of their husbands and make polygamy permissible. Wives who "trespass" or wish to terminate marriages become entangled in anachronistic laws that stem from these principles and place them at the mercy of the Rabbinate.

II. The *Cult of Fertility* is based on the last three decades of military conflict which have followed the destruction of a third of the Jewish people. These traumatic experiences make the Israelis "as a nation... aware of the fragility and tenuousness of life" and render the concern over "the next generation" a major preoccupation. (p. 65) Consequently, the national calling of Israeli women is viewed as the

task of bringing children into the world. This demand is heightened by the so-called "demographic threat": the higher birthrate among the Arab population of Israel and the occupied territories as well as in the Arab countries. Thus, women's existence, already defined by the womb, also becomes the core of personal and national continuity.

This emphasis on the biological carries with it, however, a long chain of destructive tendencies. For example, the womb is seen not as a privilege, but as an enemy by Oriental Jewish women who are "blessed" with many children. Nearly a third of Israeli children are now born into "deprived families", and another third into "culturally disadvantaged" ones. It is no wonder that Israel has a high rate of illegal abortions.

III. The sexism which Israeli women encounter is heightened by the emphasis on *masculinity as the highest value of Zionist revival and Israeli society*. This is probably the least developed link of Hazleton's causal analysis, but it is also one that contains some of the most provocative food-for-thought. The creation of an Israeli identity, as Hazleton correctly notes, is connected with a deep-seated shame about the Jewish past. Zionism is not the restoration of the Jewish people, but the creation of a new one, in the words of Judke, a pioneer in Hazaz's story *The Sermon*. The Sabra is the prototype of the "reborn Jew." His personality involves the rejection of the "feminine passivity" of the Jewish past through the affirmation of "manly" action in shaping one's own destiny. Thus, emotional expression (on any subject other than Israel) means loss of control and "terrifies the Sabra" by invoking "the specter of being controlled, and therefore persecuted, by others." (p.104) The Sabra seeks security in outward acts of independence and bravado rather than in true autonomy.

Women, Hazleton observes, are encouraged to show emotions, but the more they do so, the more they violate the norms of Israeli society. They share in this double-bind with Oriental Jews whose emotional freedom is a constant embarrassment to Ashkenazi (Western) Jews. The emotional discomfort of men is reflected by an ethos of pragmatism. As a result, sexuality is characterized by a mechanical attitude, a lack of communication of feelings, and even ignorance about intercourse among teenagers. The common attitude toward marriage is to take no risks and to be intolerant of divorce. This pragmatism contributes to an ideological impoverishment among young Israelis; their aim is "to get the best out of what exists, not to change it," thus moving them toward conformism and automatism. Israelis also accept sexist stereotypes, viewing occupations and personalities as either "feminine" or "masculine." The lack of a

tendency toward "psychological androgyny" among Israelis, studies have shown, is linked to a high level of anxiety as well as to a low level of analytic and creative ability and general intelligence. The obsession with masculinity also impoverishes all human relations and deprives social and political life of imagination and dissent. Thus, a whole society acts below its potential.

Hazleton's book also suffers from a number of shortcomings; three in particular deserve attention.

First, Hazleton warns that we cannot generalize about "Israelis" because we will be speaking only of one-half of the population — Israeli men. In other words, we cannot comprehend any social group in isolation from its counterpart. Yet, she proceeds to do just that in regard to the Israeli-Arab conflict. Placing herself within the "Jewish mainstream," she argues that the 15% of the Israeli women who are Arab have to be omitted from the scope of the book since "theirs is a unique situation." (p. 12). The political reality for Israeli-Jewish women, however, is that they are pitted against Palestinian-Arab women in competition to produce children. (p. 72) Ironically, as giving birth and raising children has been a major charge for Jewish women the social interests of the two "rival" groups of women coincide on this matter. Were Arab citizens of Israel able to enjoy life chances and occupational opportunities on a par with Jewish citizens, Arab women would be able to follow many other options for self-fulfillment than "mothering", and families could ensure their economic security by other means than investment in raising children.

Second, as Azaryahu's account demonstrates, the potential for conflict between state and synagogue is no weaker than the tendency for partnership between them. Zionism, after all, emerged as a secular movement, and its most powerful factions since the early 1930s were the socialist parties. They evolved the unique Socialist-Zionist synthesis which saw the Jewish workers as the vanguard of the national movement of rebirth. During the progressive phase of Zionism, the socialist parties either exerted hegemonic influence over other parties (in 1931, both the middle class General Zionist and the religious Mizrachi parties were split between larger pro-labor and smaller anti-labor factions) or excluded them (e.g., the right-wing Herut Party and the Communists) from any significant positions of responsibility. During this stage, the fledgling Israeli society needed no religious legitimation. In fact, in the Proclamation of Independence, the ambiguous "Zur Israel" ("Rock of Israel") was invoked — not God Almighty. Moreover, in the early years, coalition

governments collapsed over the reluctance of Ben-Gurion to give in to the religious parties. And when concessions were given, they were seen as just that — concessions.

With the break in the Socialist-Zionist synthesis — that is the decline of socialist pioneering as the vital ideological component of secular Israeli identity-religion again arises as a potent force. The ground is thus laid for a regression into the narrow and archaic conception of identity defined through a barren and lifeless Judaism. Hazleton also admits that only now, with the coalition agreement between Begin's right-wing Likud and Agudat Israel (part of an Israeli government for the first time), has the conflict of interests between religious and secular parties disappeared. (p. 196) This means, however, that Hazleton's analysis is applied retrospectively. This is dangerous since it describes religion per se as the enemy rather than calling for an updated socialist practice and ideology in order to create a new Israeli society and identity.

Third, by attributing the source of sexism in Israel to Zionism, Hazleton fails to acknowledge the progressive aspects of Zionism as well as the deeper roots of sexism in the economic and political system. Azaryahu, for example, opens her book by pointing to the institution of female suffrage at the World Zionist Congress as a source of inspiration to women. And many of the male attitudes which Hazleton attributes to the Zionist mentality, such as lack of emotional sincerity, manipulation of female partners and conformism, are equally typical of the capitalist ethos which has permeated Israel since the late 1950's.

One could argue, in fact, that the very existence of "the myth of the liberated woman," the legacy of the revolutionary era of Socialist-Zionism, is a potential tool of struggle; it resonates with an ideology which is already part of Israeli consciousness. Israeli feminists' consciousness-raising efforts can look back to this heritage. The real task, of course, is to translate this ideal into a reality not only for Jewish women, but for Palestinian women in Israel as well.

Hazleton's study of Israeli women embraces the problems of the nature of Zionism, the relationship of state and synagogue, the Israeli-Arab conflict, and more. But she explores these issues on a cultural level only; she stops short of investigating the social and economic structure of Israeli society. Only such an inquiry can explain the persistence of sexism in Israel and its changing character and impact.

In the last chapter of her book, Hazleton examines the *political challenge* of feminism in Israel. In January, 1977, a few dozen

"granddaughters" — mainly well-educated, upper-middle class feminists (including Israelis born in the U.S. and Western Europe) — discussed the political options available to Israeli feminists. Two major issues generated disagreement among the participants: whether women should run their own list of candidates in the upcoming national elections, and if so, whether their party program should be devoted to feminist concerns only, or to national issues as well.

These issues represent both the on-going problems of feminists in Israel and the changing circumstances in which feminists operate. The debate over independent electoral participation re-enacted the "many hesitations" of the 1920 Women's Association over the same question (Azaryahu, p. 18.) Debate concerning the scope of the political program, on the other hand, may be seen as a new contribution by the current generation of Israeli feminists. It is necessary to compare the strategies of the old and the new versions of feminism in order to understand the current challenges facing feminists in Israel — as well as the challenge Israel faces from its feminists.

Concerning the earlier controversy, the position of Azaryahu's generation is unequivocal: a women's party is mandated by the realization that "in the war women are waging for extension of their rights they have to rely primarily on their own strength." (p. 18) The qualification, "primarily", is accurate, since a women's party could indirectly influence other parties to support feminist policies. In the 1920s, the socialist parties shared a common ideology with the feminists. The existence of a women's alternative party — faithful to the principle of sexual equality — meant that the socialists could be pressured to put women's issues on a par with "national interests," lest they lose potential supporters. The strategy of the Women's Party *vis-a-vis* their socialist allies can therefore be best described as the position of a vanguard toward the main column. In 1932, Ada Maimon, a socialist-feminist, tellingly pointed out that she did not see the possibility of women's liberation within the framework of socialism, but saw the potential for socialism within the context of the liberation of women.³

In the 1977 elections, a segment of the feminist movement decided to run a list of candidates, thus, unknowingly rediscovering the method of their "grandmothers." It was during this election campaign that Azaryahu's book was found. In a classic case of historical necessity, the feminist "granddaughters" first discovered the "grandmothers' " political practice and later their consciousness.

Two percent of the women's vote was required in order to gain one seat in Israel's 120 member Knesset. The election results were quite different in 1977 than in 1925. The Women's Party received only one-half of one percent. Throughout the campaign, the Women's Party was criticized as an "import," not connected to any Israeli experience. Yet this party is in fact the authentic heir of the women's 1919-1951 party. So how can this accusation be made? The answer lies in the major difference between the two periods, a difference which is reflected in the *second* controversy among the feminists.

The party of Azaryahu and her sisters, as we have seen, was in the vanguard of an entire social movement. Therefore, it could devote all its efforts to women's issues, while allowing its members to vote according to their private conscience on other issues. The same position was advocated by some of the opponents of the Women's Party in the January 1977 meeting. Hazleton reports a major disagreement over whether or not there is a distinctly feminist foreign policy concerning the occupied territories: "it was pointed out that two feminists could quite validly argue for contradictory policies — one for moving not an inch, the other for withdrawing from the whole area" on the basis of the same humanitarian principle of the wish to avoid war. (p. 187) To follow the exclusively feminist political practice of their "grandmothers" was not acceptable to many of the "granddaughters" who live under distinctly different historical circumstances.

Today, a women's party stands isolated from any progressive mass movement. To take positions on women's issues alone makes it even more isolated. But here the problem is not just one of ideological purity, as Hazleton concludes, but of narrowness of perspective. Tamar Eshel, one of the leaders of the women's council of the Labor Party, expressed the opinion that women's issues are now seen as secondary to national issues. Many inside the ranks of Israeli feminism also argue that "voters are concerned first and foremost with war and peace." (pp. 187, 194) This does not at all mean that feminism is not crucial for Israel, but merely indicates that Israeli feminists have to create the water they can swim in. Namely, there *must be* feminist solutions to problems of foreign and domestic policy because the feminist activists possess a more advanced consciousness than that found in the other parties.

Just as the feminist "grandmothers" demonstrated originality by setting up an independent party amid the conditions of 1919, so the "granddaughters" display ingenuity by offering feminist positions on a broad range of political questions under the overwhelming burden

of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As Hazleton declares: "Israeli women will not escape the limitations of femininity nor be ready to demand and enjoy full equality until there is some form of peace for Israel." (p. 205) Practically speaking, this means that a feminist movement in Israel must also be a peace movement. The "peaceniks," meanwhile, have to be equally conscious of the necessity of feminism. Indeed, in 1977, the Women's Party supported a very pronounced "dovish" position: the potential acceptance of Palestinian self-determination and the affirmation of Arab women inside and outside Israel as sisters. The Women's Party has attempted co-operation with both the "Peace Now" movement and the left-wing Sheli party. Neither has yet shown a similar understanding of the problems of women on the West Bank or of feminist issues. (p. 193)

Hazleton's otherwise excellent treatment of the Women's Party suffers from a major defect: it does not provide a detailed explanation of how the Women's Party came to prefer a "broad" rather than a "narrow" political program. Why did the feminists insist on adopting such a unique and, at this moment, unpopular stand, placing it in a category with the Communists and the Left-Socialist parties? Hazleton's brief reference to this question may leave the false impression that feminist support for the Palestinians is just a reflection of humanitarian sympathy. In fact, it is more likely that this support stems from a clear vision of joint interests and solidarity—a vision which would be a key part of any socialist-feminist strategy.

Though the Women's Party was short-lived, its broad program is likely to survive among many feminists and affect their sympathizers. A position which is still widespread in Israel — to be progressive on all issues without supporting equality for women — was openly challenged and the necessity for a truly *comprehensive* progressive social movement was postulated. Embarking on the arduous process of forging alliances is the solution to the dilemma of feminists in Israel — a solution posed as an authentic contribution by this generation of "granddaughters."

NOTES

1. The term "old Yishuv" refers to the long-standing Jewish orthodox community in Palestine; the "New Yishuv" includes the Zionist immigrants and pioneers, while 'Yishuv' means both.
2. Moshe Burstein, *Self government of the Jews in Palestine Since 1900*, Tel Aviv, 1934, pp. 110-1.
3. Quoted in Marcia Freedman, "What is a Lovely Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This", *Emda*, no. 13 January, 1976, p. 17 (In Hebrew)

JEWISH SOCIALIST CRITIQUE

A quarterly journal which presents a non-sectarian but rigorous socialist perspective on Jewish affairs. Issues are devoted to political, social, and economic analyses of the American Jewish community, Israel, and other Jewish communities abroad.

Jewish Socialist Critique

Room 1366

2000 Center Street • Berkeley, California 94704

Subscription Rates

\$8 for one year (4 issues)
\$10 outside the U.S.
\$15 for two years
\$17 outside the U.S.
\$25 or more for a sustaining contribution (a two year subscription, and a place in our hearts).

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____

Total Enclosed: _____