

Jewish Socialist Critique



Jewish partisans from the Vilna Ghetto

Holocaust Consciousness
Interview with Maxim Ghilan
1930s New York Intellectuals

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Photo on page 21 by Jane Scheer

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LETTER FROM THE COLLECTIVE

Dear Readers,

We are at a crucial point in our short history. As a new journal we are still struggling to establish a broad readership and a firm financial base. In addition we share the general fate of the left press which has been hit hard by the current economic crisis.

We have received an encouraging response with the publication of our first two issues. Readers have sent letters of support, manuscripts, and offers to help in distribution of the JSC in their communities. Some have even proposed the establishment of support committees which will solicit subscriptions, articles, and organize for discussion and development of ideas along the same lines as the JSC is working.

While we have been heartened by these developments, we still need a great deal of additional support and involvement in order to survive — especially financial. If most of the 1500 copies which we print were sold through subscription, we would meet our costs. Currently, however, most of the copies are sent to commercial distributors and, when sold, we receive only a small part of the cover price. Also, we have learned the hard way that distributors often fail to meet the expectations of their clients.

Clearly, we need more subscriptions. So, if you bought this issue at a bookstore, please subscribe. If you already subscribe, get all of your friends to follow you in your wisdom by sending in their own subscriptions.

The Bay area group is suffering some loss in membership with some going off to concentrate on other interests and others moving across the country, hopefully to put in their efforts for us there.

While we are seeking more people to work with the collective in the Bay Area, we also want people around the country to give the journal wide publicity, distribution, and political impact. If you are interested in helping out, please write and we will get you in touch with others in your area.

Contributors:

JACK EISNER lives in Toronto and is a member of *Canadian Friends of Pioneering Israel (MAPAM)*.

MADELYN KATZMAN has recreated papercuts in silk screen form, using traditional styles and motifs from throughout the Diaspora. The ones reproduced in the *JSC* are a sample of the designs available from her.

IRWIN ROSEN from Brooklyn is living in San Francisco. He wrote a book of poems, "The Land Of Dress Me Up Nice," is currently developing a one-man show of it for The Julian Theatre and teaches a community center workshop in How To Perform Your Own Poetry.

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JACK ZIPES is on the Editorial Board of *New German Critique* and teaches at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

We would like to apologize to Jan Heller Levi for leaving her name off the page on which her poem appeared in our last issue.

INTRODUCTION*Rise of Fascist Party*

There is ample evidence of increased activity on the part of racist and reactionary groups in this country. For many, this situation is directly related to social/economic conditions. Jack Eisner, leads us through the *Anatomy of a Fascist Party*, first offering an analysis of Fascism and then describing the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Originally a "leftist" party, NCLC/US Labor Party has become a growing and dangerous fascist organization.

Holocaust Consciousness

Jack Zipes' quest for a "holocaust consciousness" is more a probing exploratory search than a systematic analysis. Charging that the holocaust continues to be exploited and mystified, preventing a real understanding of it among West Germans and Jews as well, he suggests that we must examine the holocaust in light of contemporary political and personal forces. Zipes highlights some of the post-war events within Germany and the West which have contributed to the repression of its real meaning: in particular the collaboration among many Jews and West Germans in order to combat the "new real enemy", the communists. In the interests of rising German capitalism, leftists have become for West Germans the "new jews." Instead of simply holding up the holocaust as a moral lesson to German youth, Zipes feels, an analysis must be made of the political role of Anti-Semitism within Fascism and Capitalism, which led to the holocaust itself, in order to combat the resurgence of Fascism today.

New York Intellectuals

The New York Intellectuals, that vague corps of 1930s writers which Irving Howe attempted to define for the world, undergo a reanalysis and evaluation by Alan Wald. While the conventional wisdom is that this group represented an assimilationist and national nihilist orientation, Wald argues that in fact they held a cosmopolitan and revolutionary internationalist perspective. Taking ten writers who worked on the *Menorah Journal* in the late 20s and early 30s, he demonstrates how a new political literary form emerged from the interplay of their politics, Jewish identity, and literary modernism. In his ensuing book on this topic it would be interesting if Wald expands on the interrelation between political stance and artistic/literary experimentalism in this period and how that developed over the following decades, including a further exploration of the connections between *Menorah Journal* and *Commentary*. Alan Wald's article leaves us with the challenge set forth by Isaac Deutscher: to integrate Jewish identification into the service of internationalist politics.

Maxim Ghilan

Maxim Ghilan is editor of *Israel & Palestine* a monthly review widely respected for its detailed coverage and analysis of events in the Middle East. In an extended discussion, Ghilan covers a wide range of subjects, from the current political situation in Israel to the possibility of yet another war in the area. Ghilan's perspective is that of a non-Zionist Jewish socialist who desires a "two-state" solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although he admits such a solution would be an "imperialist peace," he prefers it to what he sees as the only other alternatives — a "limited" war or a nuclear war between Israel and its Arab opponents. Ghilan's account of the Israeli political scene reveals a deep scepticism concerning the Labor Party's desire to withdraw from the occupied territories and details the growing strength of chauvinist/religious elements in Israel. Although Ghilan is convinced that only a two-state solution can avoid disaster in the Middle East, he seems much too sanguine about an imperialist peace; seeing only the possibility of "incredible development" after such a peace. However, one has to consider another possibility: should the United States foster a two-state solution it would surely be to strengthen the hands of the dominant forces in dealing with potential threats in the area.

ANATOMY OF A FASCIST PARTY

Jack Eisner

Part I: What is Fascism?

A discussion on Fascism seems relevant at this moment because of disturbing trends in the western world which parallel similar trends existing in Europe before World War II.

The increasing conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and continuing economic stagnation is symptomatic of a more generalized economic crisis resulting from the search for new markets on the part of the big powers; the breakdown of the old markets; and the re-alignment of the power blocks. Since the end of the Vietnam War the American economy has been sluggish and in recent years the Soviet Union has made significant inroads into Africa, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia.

Internal developments within the United States are symptomatic of the present condition of instability. There is increasing austerity, political repression, and racism.

The tax rebellion of the California Proposition 13 type are eliminating many social welfare, health, and education programs which mainly effects low income groups. Real wages are being cut by inflation and taxes (because the government will not index tax rates to the inflation rate.) Consumer debt is doubling and tripling because credit is the only means by which the standard of living is being maintained.

The Kennedy-sponsored judicial reform bill 1722 is a foreshadowing of increased government control over people's lives. This bill will make such activities as anti-draft conselling and anti-government protests illegal.

There is a marked increase in the extreme right. The Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan are receiving more media coverage than ever before. David Duke of the Klan has appeared on over 600 television and radio talk shows in the past two years. The January 12, 1979 Waxman Poll found tht 51.1% of the people polled were not opposed to Nazi groups being given permits to march. Last summer 4 labour organizers were killed in Greensboro, North Carolina by a Combined group of Nazis and Klansmen. And Scientists such as Arthur Jensen, William Shockley, and Edward O. Wilson are once again reviving racial theories.

All these trends are symptoms of a society going through stress, and allowed to continue, will develop into Fascism. Fascism is capitalism's last resort to survival in a period of intense economic and political crisis. It is a tool used with conscious intent by those who control the economy and have the most to lose through a serious challenge to the status quo.

There are four conditions which give rise to Fascism:

1. An intensification of an economic crisis and class polarization.
2. Disillusionment with parliamentarism.
3. The existence of a large middle class and sections of the working class who identify with the middle class.
4. The absence of an independent class-conscious leadership of the mainstream of the working class.

Our society is based on Liberalism and the parliamentary system. Liberalism can exist only when economic conditions are relatively stable and successful parliamentary institutions exist only when the general population sees these institutions as serving their interests. The general economic security which capitalism has brought the western world mad eit possible for the bourgeoisie to enter a partnership with the working class on the basis of concessions the bourgeoisie was willing to extend such as the right to organize trade unions and setting up social welfare. These concessions were necessary to ensure political stability. As long as capitalism can continue to provide these benefits, faith in the parliamentary system will continue.

In a period of economic stress austerity must be implemented and productivity maintained or increased to meet the new challenges of

international competition. The first sectors to be effected by austerity are social welfare programs, and to increase productivity levels, workers' rights begin to be ignored. As the erosion increases, those most effected by it, the working class, becomes more militant and begins turning to more radical solutions.

At the same time, the middle class is also affected by the economic situation. Small independent businessmen are forced to close down by increasing interest rates or competitions from the big corporations. Government employees, teachers, and social workers become unemployed as a result of government budget cutbacks. Pensioners and others living off their savings are wiped-out by inflation. These people begin to see the government as a coalition of big business nd the labour bosses that is constantly squeezing them with increased taxes to subsidize big business and social welfare programs.

The middle class becomes easy prey to the demagogery of the right. They begin to blame the labour unions and ethnic minorities. They begin to look for their own radical answers as expressed through a political movement.

Normally the middle class does not play an independent political role. It has to ally itself either with the bourgeoisie or the working class. In a period when the working class is divided, however, the middle class takes on a more significant role. The working class experiences a major split when there is a strong Social Democratic movement (those who believe that "reformism" can ensure workers' rights in the capitalist system) and a strong Communist movement (those who have lost all faith in the capitalist system and seek total revolution).

Both the working class and the middle class are experiencing serious economic dislocations and begin to express their frustration through political movements. Both classes have in common a desire for radical change and increased government control over private industry. In the 1932 elections in Germany, on the eve of the Fascist takeover, 74% of the vote went to parties proclaiming socialism as their aim. Some of these parties, however, such as the **National Socialists (Nazis)**, espoused anti-capitalist policies but in reality represented capitalist groups.

Today we see that you don't have to be a socialist to demand more government involvement in the private sector of the economy.

Petrocan is a clear example of the majority of Candians wanting public ownership of oil resources rather than private ownership. We

also have the government involved in subsidizing ailing corporations; wage and price control; and marketing boards.

The results of the 1932 elections in Germany posed a direct threat to the continued hegemony of the German bourgeoisie (the industrialists and Prussian junkers) over the economy. Their response was to use the Fascist parties to absorb the dissatisfactions of the middle class and turn it against the working class. The ideology of the Fascist movement satisfied the call for radical change but in reality hid the true nature of the Fascists.

Fascist ideology was vague and ambiguous but contained enough essential elements to appear to be fulfilling the desire of a large number of people. The "national" principle against private egoism and capitalism but in reality represented the control of private capital over the workers. National planning boards and economic councils were proposed as a means for the state to intervene on behalf of the unemployed and to control inflation but in reality these institutions became the means by which the bourgeoisie could completely subordinate the workers to the needs of private capital. Revolutionary slogans such as the "conquest of power" falsely presented the Fascists as the political vanguard of the people seizing power from the ruling class but in reality they were the agents of the ruling class.

The development of a Fascist party is a complicated process involving much trial and error in the early stages. The awkwardness of the early stage tended to make most people laugh at the Fascists. But more important in this initial stage than the specific Fascist movements is the direct tendency within the leading circles of the bourgeoisie towards open Fascism, and therefore towards the creation of a Fascist movement or towards the support of the most effective Fascist movement already existing.

Once in power, Fascism becomes the expression of the most violent policies of capitalism in crisis. The violent suppression of all socialist and pacifist opposition; the militarisation of labour; the centralised dictatorship; and the glorification of war reproduced the conditions of a country at war in the pre-war period. These tendencies are not peculiar to Fascism. They are common, in greater or less degree, to all imperialist states. They only receive their most extreme expression in Fascism.

Part II: The National Caucus of Labour Committees: American Fascism

There exist today in the United States at least a dozen neo-Nazi parties. The NCLC, however, is unique in that it evolved into Fascism from its beginnings as a leftist party and has emerged in the last two years with resources and political skills unseen since the heyday of the German American Bund in the 1930's.

NCLC and its electoral front, the **U.S. Labour Party**, have their national headquarters in New York. They have an estimated membership of 2,500; cells in 33 cities; an election machine in more than a dozen states; an active press which includes the bi-weekly **NEW SOLIDARITY, THE CAMPAIGNER, FUSION**, (an annual subscription costing \$400); and an estimated annual budget of well over \$2 million. NCLC is led by Lyndon Hermyle LaRouche, a 58-year-old management consultant; The organization has a tightly unified command and members who are far better and more highly motivated than those of smaller Nazi sects and the Ku Klux Klan.

The effectiveness of NCLC is seen most clearly in electoral activity and in the organization's success in building single issue alliances with forces as diverse as the ultra-rightwing and anti-semitic Liberty Lobby, the Black Muslims, and conservative-oriented Teamster union officials.

In the 1978 elections in the U.S., USLP fielded 72 candidates in 17 states — more than any other minor political party. In at least a dozen election races since 1974 — ranging from Congressional level to the municipal school board level — USLP has polled between 8 and 30% of the vote. LaRouche is presently running in the Democratic primaries and is the third presidential candidate to qualify in 1980. He has received \$327,864 in federal matching grants for his campaign.

In July 1978, LaRouche and Black Muslim leader Wallace Muhammed formed an "Anti-Drug Coalition" which has spread to at least 8 cities. The coalition is based on LaRouche's theory that Jews are responsible for the drug traffic. The coalition's activities include mass rallies in ghetto churches; intensive and effective lobbying for stronger narcotics laws; and seminars in inner-city high schools. Wallace Muhammed has repeatedly refused to break-off this alliance despite appeals from Jewish organizations and responsible Black leaders. The coalition has attracted an amazing range of clergy, businessmen, mayors, law enforcement officers, state legislators, Masonic leaders, and trade union officials. In an article in the **Los Angeles Times** of February 16, 1980 it says, "The Anti-Defamation

League of B'nai Brith, which LaRouche condemns as 'a treasonous conspiracy against the U.S.' contends in a 25-page report that LaRouche's group is an anti-semitic political cult. . . LaRouche denied that his organization was a cult and blamed such changes on 'the drug-running networks of organized crime'.

NCLC has earned the gratitude of powerful gangster-connected Teamster officials thanks to effective attacks on the TDU and PROD (two reform movements in the Teamster Union) in several election battles for control of key locals. **The Los Angeles Times** article says, "LaRouche said his group had helped fight PROD because it was an intelligence operation 'aimed at union-busting' ". These officials are placing no obstacle in the path of a recently formed 'Teamster Committee To Elect LaRouche'".

LaRouche has created a new tactical basis for "reasonable fascism" which allows white neo-Nazis to ally with anti-Semitic Blacks. NCLC members do not wear uniforms or swastika armbands American neo-Nazism has been taken beyond the simple agitational level by merging the traditional demagogery of the ultra-right with the highly sophisticated "united front" tactics used by American communists since the 1930s. By proposing joint action around specific issues with groups not yet pro-Nazi, access is gained to constituencies and the focus of the joint activity is gradually shifted in the direction of confrontation with Jewish groups.

Discredited racialist theories of traditional Nazism have been revised by LaRouche and presented in behavioural terms as a theory of a culturally-based "criminal mind" (the Jewish mind). LaRouche spurns the traditional neo-Nazi practice of mindless, undifferentiated anti-Semitic propaganda carefully tailoring his anti-Semitism to fit each audience. Blacks are told the Jews control the drug traffic; Law enforcement officers are told Jews are radicals and terrorists; Industrialists are told Jewish bankers are looting the economy. LaRouche does, however, attempt to make a distinction between anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

NCLC anti-Semitism is presented in the form of anti-Zionism and they point to Jewish members in their ranks as proof and they are not anti-Semitic. These Jews in NCLC joined during the group's leftist period and, after having been brainwashed to believe that by continuing to work for NCLC they would be spared from the coming holocaust, remained after the group moved to the right.

Lyndon Hermyle LaRouche was born into a New Hampshire Quaker family in 1922. A veteran of World War II, he joined the

Trotskyite Socialist Workers' Party in 1947 and remained a member through the mid-60's while working as a computer systems designer. In 1967, using the name Lynn Marcus, he formed the **Labour Committee of SDS** with a handful of radical students. Its name was changed to **The National Caucus of Labour Committees** in 1971.

Frustrated by their inability to seize "hegemony" over the American Left, NCLC developed cultist trappings and in 1973 launched a series of more than 60 violent attacks on members of rival groups. This was followed by a period of psychological terror within NCLC with LaRouche charging that members of the group had been brainwashed by the CIA to assassinate him. The cadre were forced to undergo security checks and hypnotic "deprogramming".

This year-long reign of lunacy isolated NCLC from the Left. LaRouche soon cleaned-up his act by halting the violence and deprogramming but was only able to recoup his political losses by moving to the opposite end of the political spectrum. In 1976 NCLC announced that it was abandoning Marxism and henceforth would be a patriotic organization in the tradition of Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin. (This shift has precedents in the history of Fascism. Both Mussolini and Mosely — the English Fascist — began their political careers as Marxists). The move to the right was consolidated by an alliance with the anti-Semitic ultrarightist Liberty Lobby. In 1977 LaRouche officially adopted the Liberty Lobby's anti-Semitism declaring war on the Jewish lobby, the international Jewish bankers, Jews in the U.S. government, and the Anti-Defamation League.

In the December 8, 1978 issue of **NEW SOLIDARITY** LaRouche dismisses Hitler's murder of 6 million Jews as "a commonplace delusion of the American Zionist or Zionist fellow traveller". NCLC also resurrected the "**Protocols of the Elders of Zion**" and charges of "blood libel" but substituting ritual murder with ritual dope-pushing to Gentiles.

NCLC has a corporate-style headquarters in Manhattan staffed by over 30 persons. It has an intelligence and political operations in 26 foreign cities; newspapers in several languages; an international telex system with six circuits (including an audio voice date model between New York and LaRouche's European headquarters in Wiesbaden, West Germany); and year-round consulting and training services from an industrial espionage firm based in Powder Springs, Georgia.

NCLC and USLP are funded by LaRouche's multimillion dollar computer softwear corporation — Computron Technologies Corpo-

ration — which is estimated to take in revenues of 3½-5 million dollars per year. A 1979 Computron sales brochure lists among its clients AT&T, Mobil Oil, Colgate-Palmolive and Bristol-Meyers.

Computron was founded by NCLC in the mid-70s and between 1975-77 was listed in the Manhattan phone directory at the same address as NCLC. In 1977 Computron moved to different premises and began to conceal its connection with NCLC.

In 1974, according to FBI documents, NCLC operated a training camp near Argyle, New York where cadres and members from West Germany were reportedly trained in explosives and demolitions, small arms, and small-unit tactics.

During the past year trainees selected by NCLC's security divisions have been sent to a school in Georgia called "the farm" (after the CIA training facility in Virginia with the same name) owned by Mitchell Warbell III, a well known supporter of the Liberty Lobby.

Warbell is celebrated in counterinsurgency circles as the "Wizard of Whispering Death". In the 1960's he developed the Ingram M-10 submachine pistol and invented the world's first submachine gun silencer.

At "the farm" NCLC trainees are given instruction in martial arts, pistol shooting, the use of shotguns, rifle countersniper activity, countersurveillance, and the control of 3-car caravans.

The parallels between the NCLC and the National Socialist Party (NAZI) in Germany in the 20's and 30's is striking. The NCLC blames the present economic crisis on the Jews; has co-opted a progressive-sounding name while maintaining a strong line on American nationalism; perpetrates violent attacks on leftist groups and labour organizations; is connected to corporate slush-funds and intelligence agencies (in several issues of NEW SOLIDARITY LaRouche has strongly supported the CIA); has an articulate front-man; and provides a practical service to corporate executives through its corporate intelligence operation. More important, however, than these specific parallels is that a situation now exists in American society which contains the forces allowing for such an organization and party to come into existence and fulfill a political role. The question is will NCLC remain a marginal factor or will conditions allow it to play a more prominent role?

This article is based on an investigative series on LaRouche written by Dennis King for the local New York City newspaper Our Town

IN PURSUIT OF A HOLOCAUST CONSCIOUSNESS JEWS IN WEST GERMANY

Jack Zipes

Ever since the TV film Holocaust was produced in the spring of 1978, great concern in the extermination of the Jews has been expressed *again*. I stress the word again because public furor and shame about the holocaust are stimulated and occur only periodically. General commotion about the holocaust is most often prompted by opportunism. Not long after 1945 the holocaust became a marketable item, and investors in "holocaust productions" learned that they could draw upon a certain indignant and horrified response for monetary profit or political gain. Just as soon as the allies used the holocaust to divert attention from their previous indifference to the fate of European Jews, it became transformed into a spectacle which had little to do with recapturing the essence of planned extermination to prevent further genocide but more to do with distraction and exploitation.

Even Jews have not been able to resist the temptation to exploit the meaning of the holocaust. When Eichmann was captured and tried in 1961, the purpose of the mass-mediated event was not to punish the Nazi but to unite Israelis and Jews in the diaspora behind the state of Israel. The memory of the holocaust became a political means to legitimize Zionist policies. Though there was still something noble here in the exploitation of the holocaust as a marketable item, the holocaust was nevertheless both reified and exploited. In 1978 there was nothing noble about the use of the holocaust to increase the TV ratings of a mass media corporation. This is not to imply that such

projects should not be undertaken by the culture industry. The discussions in America about the topic revealed that even more education about anti-Semitism and the holocaust were needed. Moreover, one could point to the sober effect it had on the West Germans. The 1979 telecast struck like a bomb in the Federal Republic, and it seemed that the Germans went into national mourning for the crimes of their past. But this was all an illusion partially projected by the mass media again. Real grief over the holocaust is impossible after 35 years of prosperity and abandonment of responsibility.

There is something perverse about how the holocaust is used as a cultural commodity or means of legitimation throughout the world. It is obviously connected to social and political manipulations which fosters thinking about the past in emblematic ways that actually prevent a differentiated understanding of the past and how it is used to justify the policies of hegemonic groups controlling a state. The holocaust emblematicized is non-thinking. The result is a lack of holocaust consciousness even while the holocaust appears to the mind to be a vital concern and theme.

It seems to me that we never recognized the power and rapacity retained by the banality of evil after 1945—the insidious banality which had produced so many commonplace Eichmanns. Thus, it became possible and still is possible to exist as Jew or German without a genuine holocaust consciousness. We have seen “holocaustic” events continue right after World War II up through the present. Jews and Germans have even collaborated in orchestrating some of them.

Evidence pointing to *the formation of a lack of holocaust consciousness* among Germans and Jews and can be seen in the political reception of public figures and state policies. When the West German government was established in 1949, Chancellor Adenauer harbored ex-Nazis such as Hans Globke and Heinrich Lubke among others in important positions. This precedent allowed West Germans unconsciously to bestow their respect on other prominent ex-Nazis such as Kurt Kiesinger (Chancellor), Hans Filbinger (Minister President of Baden-Württemberg), and Karl Carstens (President of the Federal Republic), who have all strengthened West Germany as an authoritarian state. Then there are the East Germans, who supported their government’s policy of non-reparations for Israel and Jews as Jews since the communists had suffered just as much as the Jews while fighting fascism. Thus, East Germans do not find it difficult to support the unqualified anti-Zionist policies of their state which in

turn docilely approves the anti-Semitic policies of the Soviet Union.

However, Germans are not the only ones who evince a lack of holocaust consciousness. This lack can also be seen in the way Israelis treat Arabs in Palestine and exhibit racism in their own social hierarchy. In the United States it has been grossly manifested by the way Jews and Americans respect one of the most representative heroes of our times, Henry Kissinger, a German and Jew, who sought to legitimize genocide in Vietnam and condone mass murders organized by the ex-Shah of Iran, the military junta in Chile, and other dictatorial regimes while in the office of Secretary of State. Again, there is something perverse and yet typical in the figure of Kissinger and in the reverence accorded him: it is precisely this perverse typicality which indicates how far we are from learning about the consequences of the holocaust and how close we are to generating a new and perhaps greater kind of holocaust.

Yet, isn’t it asking the impossible to learn from the holocaust? What does it mean to say that there is something like a genuine holocaust consciousness? The verities of the holocaust elude us in the present, and it seems that the only possibly way to develop a holocaust consciousness is by discovering why one does not have a holocaust consciousness. That is, to talk about a genuine holocaust consciousness does not mean talking about a mass-mediated consciousness, but about a socio-psychological *lack of awareness* concerning the complex role played by Jews and Germans in the world events of the 1930s and 1940s and the political ramifications of Jewish extermination for the present. It means talking about the failure and repression of a genuine historical holocaust consciousness in order to gain a sense of those present conditions which breed anti-Semitism, racism, and exploitation in order to surmount them. It means making the holocaust living history which also necessitates overcoming the holocaust as legend. Claude Lanzmann, a French Jewish critic, has remarked that “one does not kill legends by opposing memories to them, but by confronting them with the inconceivable present of which they are the origin. The only way to achieve this is precisely to resuscitate the past as present, to reconstitute it in an atemporal immediacy. The Holocaust today is legendary, tied to television show titles and extended to the dimensions of a mythic narrative; it is the knowledge of non-knowledge, blurred, vague, stereotyped.”¹

Lanzmann’s proposal “to resuscitate the past as present” to un-

cover the meaning of holocaust sets the framework for an immense task. Yet, the past has become so distorted and mythopoeticized by historians that we cannot reconstitute it without a demolition of these present social forces which influence our view of history. The pursuit of a holocaust consciousness demands that we explore the means and ways we have been prevented from learning about the political and social developments which gave rise to the holocaust. The machinations of prevention, hindrance, and repression which constitute part of our socialization must be explored and demobilized if the grounds for the formation of a genuine holocaust consciousness are to be prepared.

Formaton as deformation. Resuscitation as demolition. Here the personal—the lies our parents have told us—is mixed inextricably with the public—the lies our state has told us. The starting point for an excavation of a genuine holocaust consciousness appears almost impossible to find. Rational prescription does not help so much as traumatic discovery. It is only where the lack is felt, the uneasy fear, that the point for digging beneath the surface into sub-history will be found.

Sometimes it helps to alienate ourselves to find our submerged history. More precisely, as American Jew and socialist, it is often beneficial to view how others alienated from their own people and history respond to the memory of the holocaust and enter into conflict with the forces which have deprived them of the opportunity to seize history with their own hands. I am thinking now of Jews in Germany and even more concretely of a recently published book *Fremd in Eigenem Land*, a collection of approximately 40 essays written by Jewish intellectuals who articulate why they still feel alienated in their own country.² Most of these Jews are socialists and are not part of mainstream Judaism. As their individual stories unfold, a common history is related which bears upon *all* Jews in pursuit of a holocaust consciousness. This common history is demolished history, not alternative history. It is anatagonistic history in need of a voice and continuity.

What is the situation of socialist Jews in Germany in pursuit of a holocaust consciousness? What has recently occurred in West Germany that has urged a small minority of "pariah Jews" to speak out in opposition to the majority of established Jews and Germans in the Federal Republic? The biographies—the personal diggings—of these Jewish intellectuals suggest the broad framework for further excava-

tion. Since they all make West Germany their reference point, I want to return to 1949 and move to the present to demonstrate why they stress the importance of their alienation. By *choosing* to live in a country notorious for its lack of holocaust consciousness, alienation becomes the only positive means to separate themselves as Jews from the German-Jewish collaboration which has stifled a resuscitation of the past. It is impossible to piece together the fragments of their alienated history, but fragments taken from their biographies reveal how Jews and Germans have contributed to their alienation.

In 1949 there were approximately 25,000 Jews in West Germany who can be divided into three broad categories: 1) The majority were older Eastern European Jews, not German Jews, who were penniless and stateless. They remained in Germany and formed the base of traditional, conservative Jewish communities, mainly in Berlin, Munich, Frankfurt, and Hamburg. 2) There were a small percentage of European Jews, who sought revenge at any cost. They exploited their positions as Jews for great personal profit and generally did not remain in West Germany. 3) There were numerous re-immigrants or German-Jews who returned to Germany in different waves for different reasons. As was the case in the Weimar Republic and Nazi Germany, Jewish councils were formed to represent Jewish interests. And, as we already know from Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, those councils had the dubious distinction of appeasing and complying with fascist orders which resulted in mass extermination. Unfortunately, the Jewish Councils in West Germany continued to fulfill this complicitous role of appeaser. The leaders of the councils, ignominiously known as "professional Jews," sought reconciliation and ingratiated themselves with the Adenauer government. Viewed as reliable partners, the councils came to represent the official position and politics of Jews in Germany which have rarely differed from the official policies of the state.

Such a starting point meant repression, non-friction, and avoidance of the holocaust's meaning on both sides. A new common enemy for Germans and Jews alike had to be found, and the Cold War provided the easy solution. The Communists became the real threat to the future of a "free Germany" (though deep down most Germans at that time knew that those communists were actually Jews). The Adenauer regime, which lasted from 1949 to 1965 and distinguished itself by its anti-communism and philo-Semitism, paved the way for the restoration of capitalism. Thus, there was no real de-nazification

or coming to terms with the holocaust, no real re-education of the populace to democratic practice and tolerance. Most Nazis were able to resume their public lives in civil service and private corporations without the fear of retribution since they were needed to fight "totalitarian" communism. Most Jews were simply content to be left in peace and to receive monetary reparations. They were also pacified by the pro-Zionist and philo-Semitic pronouncements of the Adenauer government and pleased that the federal government voted to pay reparations to Israel. Yet, everyone knew that the hatred for the Jews, that the stereotype of the Jew, had not been purged in the 1950s and 1960s. Only the Jews themselves had been purged, and, whether out of shame or fear, silence became the fitting attitude when the subject of Jews was raised. A consciousness of holocaust had been made impossible. Neither in homes nor in schools, German or Jewish, were there concerted efforts to prevent conditions for breeding a neo-fascist mentality in post-war Germany. The holocaust did not end in 1945—it continued through repression and complicity.

Jews in Germany experienced anti-Semitism in the form of allusion, suppression, and complicity, and this is clearly documented by the Jews in *Fremd in eigenem Land*. But what is even more ominous is that these Jewish intellectuals testify to the other side of the perverse typicality embodied by the reverence shown to Henry Kissinger in the U.S. The reason why *Fremd in eigenem Land* was published in 1979 is due to the fact that many Jewish socialists fear a resurgence of fascism in West Germany; and this has occurred because the left opposition has been stamped as terrorist and serves the legitimizing function which Jews used to serve. In other words, progressive and radical students in particular, or leftists in general have become the Jews of the present; the state and conservative parties have conjured a threat of terrorism through the mass media to justify the build-up of an enormous police bureaucracy and fortification of authoritarian regulations in all public institutions.

It is not only the fact that leftists are treated like Jews—witness the extermination of Ulrike Meinhof, Andreas Baader, and Gudrun Esslin and the vicious treatment of Peter Zahn — but that an ex-Nazi like Carstens can be held in esteem as President which makes for both sides of the typical perversity in Germany today. Thus, to talk about the holocaust without talking about how the *Jew* still functions socio-politically to divert the public from the destructiveness of capitalism is to strengthen the authorita-

rian tendencies of the state and private industry. Tragically, even the Left has overlooked the centrality of anti-Semitism in fascism and how anti-Semitism still functions subconsciously and consciously to cause confusion about who the real enemy to the general welfare is. Admittedly, the younger generation grew up in ignorance of Jews and anti-Semitism and in close contact with the guilt and repressive tactics of their parents. To expose the hypocritical philo-Semitism of their parents, West German support of imperialist Israel, and full-fledged restoration of capitalism in West Germany, the Left assumed an undifferentiated anti-Zionism after 1967 which has strong anti-Semitic overtones. In many respects, young German radicals have been backed into a corner: by seeking to link the philo-Semitism of the Nazi-tainted government and older generation to capitalism, they have indiscriminately branded Israel as imperialist and associated Jews with imperialist warmongers. Strange how the theme of the Jewish international conspiracy keeps reemerging in various forms.



Jews against Nuclear War rally to commemorate Warsaw ghetto — Berkeley.

Yet, who is to blame?

In West Germany the connection between the Jewish international conspiracy and German proto-fascist capitalism *appears* to be verified in bizarre ways. For instance, when the ex-Nazi Hans Filbinger, former Minister President of Baden-Wuerttemberg, was forced to resign in 1978 because he had belatedly been exposed for criminal ac-

tions in 1944-45, he was defended by President of the Jewish Council Werner Nachmann as an honorable man. This was done despite the fact that Filbinger publicly stated that "what was correct then cannot be incorrect today."

If a prominent Jew can defend a prominent unrepentant ex-Nazi in 1978, or, to generalize, if many German Jews can seek to condone genocide in Vietnam which many established Jews did, then many other grotesque phenomena of the late 1970s in West Germany become understandable. According to the book *What Have I Heard about Adolph Hitler?* based on a national poll of youngsters between the ages of 10 and 16, many boys and girls believe that Hitler liked the Jews and was not to blame for their extermination. Their ignorance of fascism and the history of the Jews was so abysmal that the book caused a minor national scandal. Yet, how can one blame them when there has been a wave of films and publications during the 1970s such as Hans Joachim Fest's *Hitler, A Career* which tended to exculpate Hitler or play down the Nazi atrocities? In many respects the *reactionary* tendencies of young Germans reveal the hypocrisy of all Germans: Christians and Jews. It is as a result of this hypocrisy that young Germans find it fashionable to buy and sport genuine Nazi emblems acquired in second-hand stores and at flea markets, and that there has been a strong increase of young members in the armed neo-fascist Viking Youth organization. Right before the showing of the 1979 TV film "Holocaust" in West Berlin, a Jewish teacher was greeted by the writing on the blackboard of his class "Jewish Swine! You should have been gassed!" This was not an isolated incident, nor is the propagation of anti-Semitic sick jokes confined to a small area in Germany. In response to these ominous signs among the youth, many educators have set up school programs to deal with fascism and anti-Semitism—after 35 years of waiting.

However, to hold up the holocaust to young people as a "lesson" is no way to achieve a holocaust consciousness. The young know this and rebel against it. If some kind of holocaust consciousness is to be achieved today among Jews and Germans, the political connections for the young must be drawn more clearly and honestly. Gunther Anders, a renowned philosopher, who was forced to flee "McCarthy America" in the 1950s after having fled German fascism, pointed to this when he directly addressed the younger generation of West Germans in a statement about his Jewishness: "What we the last Jews and you the grandchildren of the murderers of Jews have to learn

from all this is that the existence of Jews is not at all necessary for the outbreak of anti-Semitism, that there is an *anti-Semitism without Jews*. I want to warn you about this anti-Semitism without Jews. And this is due — please believe me — to an ominous sign of general animosity, of a possible fascist or fascistoid mentality. Whoever wants to beat up Jews and no longer finds them at hand will probably name other groups as 'Jews' — today students, tomorrow demonstrators against nuclear reactors."³

Obviously there is a danger in generalizing about the meaning of anti-Semitism and the holocaust. The planned extermination of Jews was specifically directed at Jews and carried out because millions of Germans and Europeans believed in an international Jewish conspiracy and the myth of the powerful diabolical Jew. However, as Anders and many other German Jews have noted, significant transformations of anti-Semitism have occurred since the holocaust was discovered in 1945 which makes it necessary to talk about philo-Semitism and about an anti-Semitism without Jews. For German-Jewish intellectuals who have been pursuing a holocaust consciousness, there are many parallels which can be drawn between the specific persecution of Jews and oppression of dissidents and minority groups in West Germany today. This is one form of actualizing history with the holocaust in mind. *Fremd in eigenem Land* recalls other ways Jewish intellectuals have sought to resuscitate the holocaust by trying to uncover the lack of a holocaust consciousness, the reasons why they and other Germans have been prevented from excavating history to guarantee a freer future. The extent of their alienation from their own history has made them aware of how they have been deprived of a holocaust consciousness. As long as such deprivation continues, their alienation is a desirable state and should make us reflect upon gaps in our consciousness. To fill in the gaps means that holocaust as a past cannot be retrieved. It is a future to be avoided.

Notes

¹"From the Holocaust to the *Holocaust*," *Telos*, 42 (Winter 1979-80), 143.

² edited by Henryk M. Broder and Michel R. Lang (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1979).

³ *Mein Judentum*, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz (Stuttgart: Kreuze Verlag, 1978), pp. 60-1.

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REDISCOVERING PAPER CUTS—A TRADITIONAL JEWISH FOLK ART

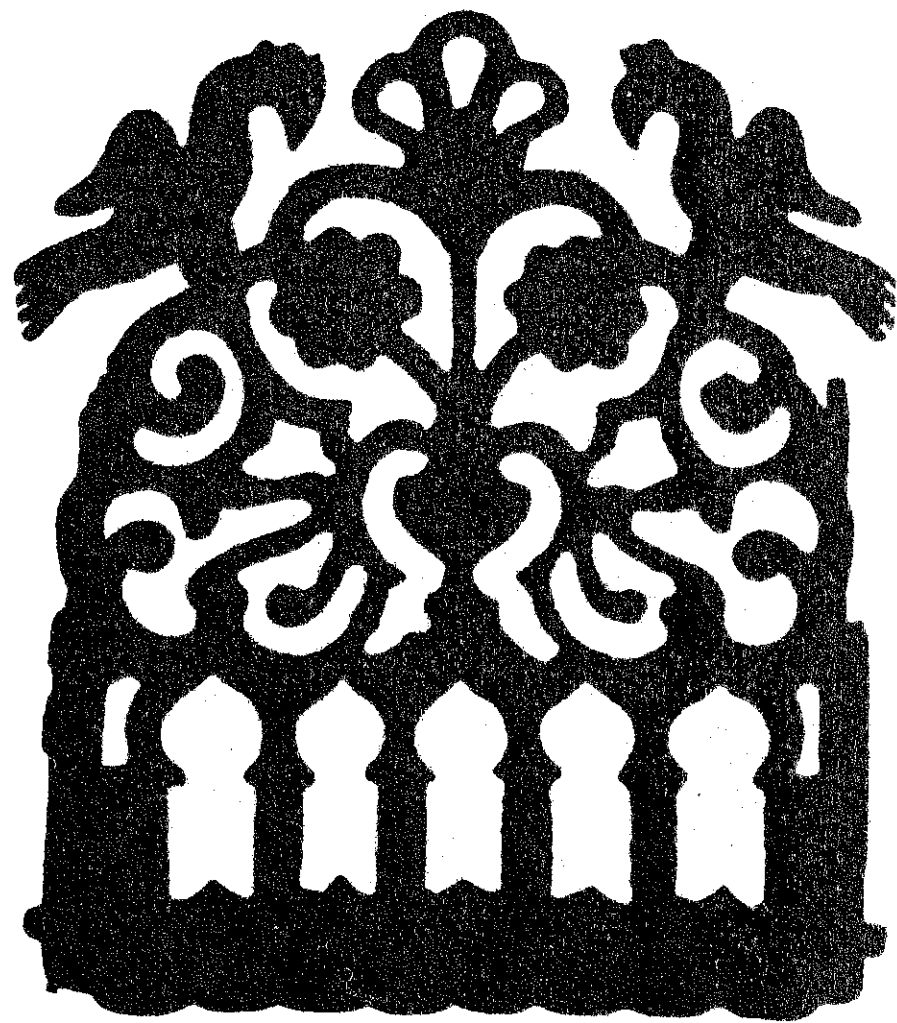
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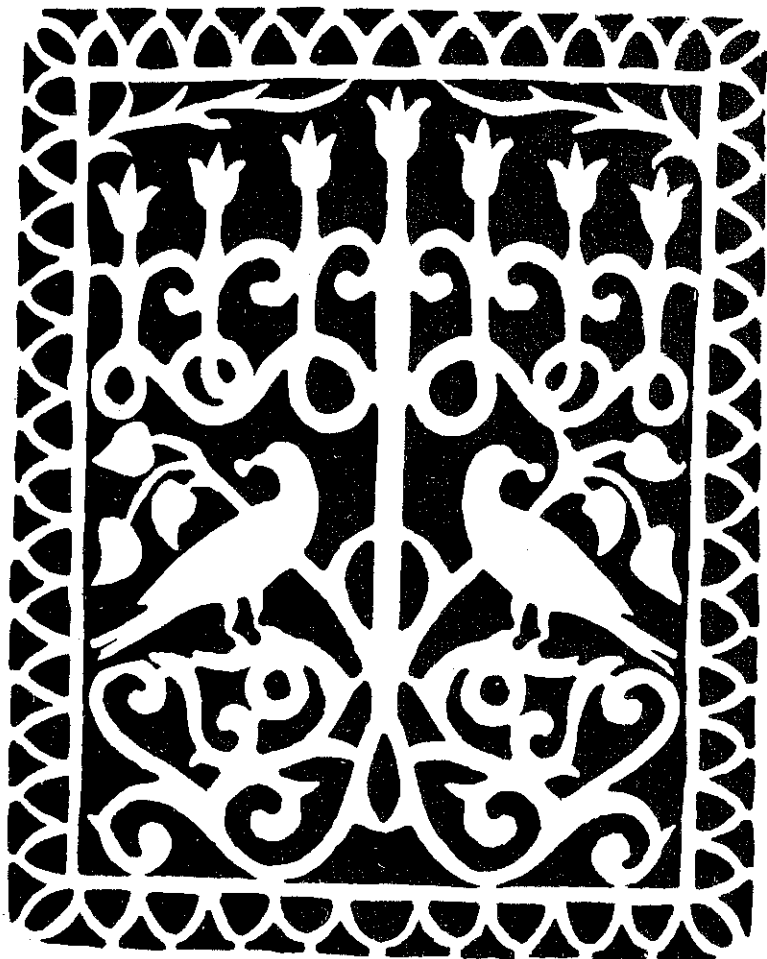
Papercuts represent a distinctive form of traditional Jewish folk art which has been almost lost to us in the contemporary Western world. These intricate designs once served both a decorative as well as a religious function in Jewish homes throughout Eastern Europe and in parts of North Africa and the Middle East.

Several forces on Jewish life affected the development and direction of Jewish artistic expression. Jews were excluded from virtually all the professions, including the artisan and craft guilds. Jews rarely had the security, wealth, or power to create immense works of art. Finally, the influence of orthodox Judaism, which followed literally the commandment of "Thou shalt have no other images", did not allow any artistic creations using human forms.

Consequently, Jewish artistic expression found its distinctive outlet in synagogue decoration, calligraphy, and the creation of ritual objects for the home. Most of these works of art were done in perishable materials, such as wood, brass, paper, and clay. This factor, combined with the effects of the Holocaust, has meant the destruction of the vast majority of Jewish religious and decorative art objects as well as the loss of skilled knowledge of these crafts.

Papercuts were created primarily by women and sometimes by children as well. They were an art form which was accessible to Jews who lived in poverty, who were unable to train in the arts or engage in any art form which required expensive materials. Found in the Jewish communities of Poland, Russia, and Hungary in the 19th and early 20th centuries, they were also known in Germany and Holland, and decorated Italian marriage contracts (*Ketubbot*) as early as the 17th century. In North Africa and the Middle East, they were done in a different distinctive style. Few of these pre-World War II papercuts have survived. Now it is only older European — and North African — Jews who remember this art form and its use.





FROM CULTURAL PLURALISM TO
REVOLUTIONARY INTERNATIONALISM:
JEWISH IDENTITY AND THE NEW YORK
INTELLECTUALS IN THE
EARLY 1930s

Alan M. Wald

I

When Irving Howe published his essay "The New York Intellectuals" in 1968, his title quickly became the standard designation for a specific group of intelligentsia mostly born at the turn of the century, markedly Jewish in composition, and based in New York City.¹ Some of the writers and scholars discussed by Howe began to coalesce around the magazine *Menorah Journal* in the 1920s when Elliot Cohen was its managing editor. Then, in the early 1930s they were drawn to left-wing political activities. In 1931 they departed from the *Menorah Journal* and developed associations with other intellectuals who collaborated with the Communist Party. The high point in the cohesion of this expanded circle came in late 1937, when most of the figures associated with it identified with the magazine *Partisan Review* at the time it broke with the Party and was relaunched on an independent basis by Philip Rahv and William Phillips.

I am grateful to the following individuals for reading and commenting on this manuscript: George Breitman, Sidney Hook, Irving Howe, Ralph Levitt, George Novack, Morris U. Schappes, Mark Shechner, and Haskell Wald. I also appreciate permission to quote from a 1977 interview with Felix Morrow and from letters by Sidney Hook, Felix Morrow, George Novack, Meyer Schapiro, Herbert Solow, and Lionel Trilling.

The appearance of the new *Partisan Review* made it clear that this unorganized and independent-minded group of New York intellectuals initiated a distinctive tradition of politics and culture. This tradition was largely characterized by its blending of anti-Stalinist Marxism with a sympathy for literary modernism (that is, for art which self-consciously seeks new forms of expression). During the Great Depression, many of these New York intellectuals also contributed to publications such as the *Modern Quarterly* (which became the *Modern Monthly*), the *Symposium*, *New International*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, and the *Marxist Quarterly*. At various points in the course of the Second World War, figures associated with this group became deradicalized. With only a few exceptions, they abandoned the role of anti-Stalinist Marxists and declared themselves "liberal anti-communists" during the Cold War and McCarthy eras.

I will concentrate on the subject of Jewish identity—the feelings of these intellectuals during the late 1920s and early 1930s about their Jewish origins. My thesis is that in both the 1920s and the 1930s their main attraction was to cosmopolitanism and universalism. In the liberal atmosphere of the 1920s these values could coexist with a general concept of cultural pluralism as expressed through the *Menorah Journal*, and some of these intellectuals did explore Jewish identity or at least write on Jewish topics. However, the social catastrophe of the early Depression unmoored these intellectuals from their liberal perspective. It seemed as if the goals of cosmopolitanism and universalism could only be realized through the revolutionary reconstruction of society. Their main concern became the defense of the vanguard politics of Marxism and the vanguard culture of modernism against the "philistine" elements in both the capitalist United States and Stalinist Russia. The issue of Jewish identity seemed to have no special relevance to that struggle.

Irving Howe had the following to say about the historical importance of the development of this group:

The New York intellectuals comprised the first group of Jewish writers to come out of the immigrant milieu who did not crucially define themselves through a relationship to memories of Jewishness. They were the first generation of Jewish writers for whom the recall of an immigrant childhood seems not to have been unshakable. They sought to declare themselves through a stringency of will, breaking clean from the immediate past and becoming autonomous men of the mind. If this severance from immigrant experiences and Jewish roots would later come to seem a little suspect, the point needs nevertheless to be emphasized that when the New

*York intellectuals began to cohere as a political-literary tendency around Partisan Review in the thirties, Jewishness as an idea or sentiment played only a minor, barely acknowledged role in their thought.*²

This essay is intended to begin the process of fleshing out and interpreting this development by offering an analysis which I think most directly applies to ten of the New York intellectuals. They are Elliot Cohen, managing editor of the *Menorah Journal* from 1926 to 1931 and founder of *Commentary* magazine in 1945; Herbert Solow, journalist and, later, an editorial board member of *Fortune* magazine; Felix Morrow, radical journalist and author of the Marxist classic *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain*; Lionel Trilling, Columbia University professor of literature; Diana Trilling, literary critic; Meyer Shapiro, Columbia University art historian; George Novack, Marxist author and prominent American Trotskyist from the 1930s to the present; Sidney Hook, New York University professor of philosophy—first a Marxist and then a pragmatist; Louis Berg, journalist; and Elinor Rice biographer and novelist.³

These ten were selected because they have the following in common: 1) they were personal friends and political allies in the early 1930s, with some degree of mutual influence on each other (Solow and Hook being, perhaps, the most politically aggressive); 2) they were Jews, but by 1930 they were non-Zionist or anti-Zionist and atheist by conviction; 3) they shared intellectual roots in the 1920s—although Hook and Schapiro had been socialists, the others had been liberals, a number of them studied at Columbia University and wrote for *Menorah Journal*, and all had serious commitments to both literature and philosophy; 4) between 1931 and 1935 they moved first toward Communism and then toward Trotskyism; 5) except for Cohen and possibly Berg, none of them developed ties to Jewish institutions or publications after the early 1930s.

The attitudes to be associated with these ten figures may also prove useful in understanding the intellectual formation of critics and authors such as Philip Rahv, William Phillips, Lionel Abel, Harold Rosenberg, Clement Greenberg, Alfred Kazin, Leslie Fiedler, Tess Slesinger, Anita Brenner, and lesser-known individuals involved in radical politics in New York City during the 1930s. However, this attempt to locate some common denominators should not mislead anyone into facile equations of the views of one person with those of another; nor does the necessity of my having to designate the exis-

tence of a specific "group" of individuals signify a tendency toward conformity or imitation on their part.

The complexity of the question of Jewish identity is reflected in the plethora of sociological concepts which have arisen in endless discussions. Most common are the following three: 1) assimilation, a socio-cultural fusion in which the minority group loses its distinctive features and embraces the habits, attitudes and modes of life of the majority; 2) acculturation, a process of intercultural borrowing resulting in new and blended patterns; 3) accommodation, a process of functional adjustment to the conflict among cultures within a society (and which is, in the view of some, the reality of American Judaism).⁴

In addition, there are many other terms which are used, especially in tracts and polemics, such as Jewish self-hatred, Jewish postivism, cultural nationalism, cultural chauvinism, particularism, and national nihilism. But it is my view that none of the above is the most useful concept for understanding the evolution of these New York intellectuals in the early 1930s. Instead, I think the key terms are cosmopolitanism, universalism, cultural pluralism, and revolutionary internationalism.

The first term, cosmopolitanism, has two meanings, one positive and the other negative. These New York intellectuals were attracted to cosmopolitanism because they believed that it meant the absence of narrow loyalties and provincial prejudices, and that it encouraged a readiness to borrow from all cultures to achieve the richest possible blend. Those who use the term cosmopolitanism pejoratively believe that it stands for an excessive admiration of the cultural traits of other groups at the expense of one's own. The second term, universalism, means the use of an impersonal code to evaluate behavior. The third term, internationalism, is a political perspective that transcends national limits. The last term, pluralism, is the participation of different groups in developing their own cultures within the confines of a common civilization. I will attempt to show that in the early 1930s these New York intellectuals underwent a significant transition which may help us to understand why the tradition they established did not emphasize their identity as Jews.

II

In the century after the French revolution, European Jews appeared to have the possibility of assimilation within their grasp in parts of the West, while in the East they seemed to be fated to persecution, oppression and isolation. In the United States, however,

there emerged an alternative perspective for the future of Jews through the theory of cultural pluralism which was put forward and defended by Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne, and other liberal and radical intellectuals just before the First World War.

One historian commented that as a theory cultural pluralism suffers from "chronic indistinctness"; and if we take an overview of the work of Kallen and Bourne we can see that it embraced two ostensibly contradictory theses.⁵ First, cultural pluralism was opposed to assimilation and the concept of the "melting pot." Second, it was equally opposed to cultural and ethnic parochialism, positing as an alternative the future achievement of cosmopolitan values. The essence of pluralism was articulated even before the turn of the century by figures such as William James. Bourne's additions were partly motivated by his opposition to the national chauvinism he saw engendered by the beginning of World War I.

The anti-assimilationist side of cultural pluralism is emphasized in Kallen's famous description of society as an orchestra with multiple ethnic groups serving as various instruments in order to "make up a symphony of civilizations."⁶ The anti-parochialist and cosmopolitan side was developed by Randolph Bourne who, in accord with Kallen's perspectives, praised some Zionist Jews for their ability to incorporate the latest advances in knowledge into their outlook. Bourne excoriated the melting pot thesis—which he took to be a mere euphemism for assimilation to the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture—and argued instead for what he termed a "spiritual welding" which would, rather than dilute humanity to a single strain, create a rich and powerful blend.⁷

The *Menorah Journal* was the main publication to respond to this particular combination of anti-assimilationism and cosmopolitanism. Horace Kallen was a founder of the Menorah Society, and one of Bourne's most famous polemics against the melting pot thesis appeared in *Menorah Journal* in 1916.⁸ The vital atmosphere created by combining cultural pluralism and the cosmopolitan ideal was part of what united such diverse sponsors as Henry Hurwitz (the official editor throughout the magazine's life), Harry Wolfson, Adolph Oko, and Waldo Frank. Historian David Hollinger summarized this perspective quite accurately in a recent essay:

The [cosmopolitan] ideal is decidedly counter to the eradication of cultural differences, but counter also to their preservation in parochial

form. Rather, particular cultures and subcultures are viewed as repositories for insights and experiences that can be drawn upon in the interests of a more comprehensive outlook on the world.⁹

When Elliot Cohen made his debut in the *Menorah Journal* in 1923, his views showed an awareness of cultural pluralist thought when he told younger writers that the study of the Jewish people was valuable not only in itself but also, "for the light it is sure to lend to those pressing problems of adjustment among all self-conscious racial, national, and cultural minorities in the modern state."¹⁰

In the same essay Cohen endorsed the other element in the *Menorah Journal's* distinctive editorial policy—its commitment to Hebraism. From its founding in 1915, that magazine identified far more with the Jewish cultural tradition that began with the Hebrew Bible than with either Jewish theology or *Yiddishkeit*. Yet Elliott Cohen was a complex if not contradictory person; his own monthly columns, which began in 1924, were mainly attempts to recreate the satirical, debunking spirit of H. L. Mencken's *American Mercury*. Lionel Trilling, one of the assistant editors, later recalled that, "When it came to the Jewish present, we undertook to normalize it by suggesting that it was not only as respectable as the present of any other group but also as foolish, vulgar, complicated, impossible and promising."¹¹

Cohen showed himself quite capable of drawing around him young intellectuals to whom he taught the skills of writing and editing. However, some of these did not necessarily share Cohen's warm feelings about the vitality of the contemporary Jewish experience and they responded to the opportunities afforded by the *Menorah Journal* from diverse motives. At one extreme was Herbert Solow, a Columbia graduate who became assistant editor of the journal in 1928 and a contributing editor in 1929. That year he wrote Cohen that

Being a Jew might, in my case, have evolved from the category of unpleasant facts in which I placed it in my early youth, into the category of utterly irrelevant facts. That it achieved interest and significance for me is solely due to the Menorah Journal . . . once I met the journal my interest was deeply stirred.¹²

But even though the *Menorah* experience was vital for Solow at that time, it was the beginning of the end of any association on his part with organized or cultural Judaism. What remained afterwards was only a lifelong admiration of Judah Magnes and his *Ihud* movement for a binational Palestine.¹³

Lionel Trilling never identified himself as having been a cultural pluralist in his youth, but he was closely associated with Cohen's *Menorah Journal* when it was functioning under that inspiration. However, Trilling's feelings about Jewish identity were very different from those of Solow. Trilling wrote explicitly about this subject three times in his later life, and twice he referred to the pleasurable recollections he had of his Jewish rearing. On one occasion he noted that his parents, "although . . . orthodox in the form of their religion . . . had a strong impulse to take part in the general life and to want it for me."¹⁴ Nevertheless, Trilling was acutely sensitive to the way in which society attempted to exclude Jews—to the point where, from early childhood on, he felt a strong emotional reaction every time he saw the word "Jew" in writing. Consequently he decided to fight enforced exclusion through participation in a literary movement that he later called "the literature of Jewish self-realization" and which he identified with the novelist and critic Ludwig Lewisohn. The thrust of the movement was to attack the "sin" of "escaping" one's Jewish heritage; and Trilling wrote in 1966 that in the 1920s he felt a special antagonism toward groups such as the Ethical Culture Society, which he saw as a haven for genteel German Jews who were proud of their degree of acculturation.¹⁵

In several of his short stories for the *Menorah Journal*, Trilling explores the negative feelings that acculturated Jews can have toward other Jews who are less removed from the shtetl and ghetto environment. In his 1925 story "Impediments," Trilling uses the first person narrative to probe the mind of an assimilated Jewish college student repelled by another Jew who is "too much of my own race."¹⁶ In "Chapter for a Fashionable Jewish Novel," published in 1926, Trilling presents several scenes in which two Anglophilic young Jewish women, Janet and Julia, display a virtual anti-Semitic revulsion against the lower-class and less assimilated Eastern European immigrant Jews of New York.¹⁷ These stories show a remarkable honesty on Trilling's part in confronting the various internal conflicts experienced by young Jewish intellectuals in the 1920s. A year before his death he wrote to me that:

*To speak of the Menorah Journal as a response to "isolation" isn't merely enough—you must make the reader aware of the shame that young middle-class Jews felt; self-hatred was the word that later came into vogue but shame is simpler and better.*¹⁸

Future biographers of Trilling will no doubt debate among themselves as to whether these early stories reflect a transcendence of feelings of shame on Trilling's part, or, as passages in Alfred Kazin's book *New York Jew* might suggest, a sense of guilt stemming from a suppressed desire to escape his Jewish past.¹⁹ In my reading, the purpose of these stories was simply to depict the existence of such psychological conflicts among Jews in the hope that the recognition of them would lead to greater understanding. Trilling's overall participation in the *Menorah Journal* seems to me to be within the terms of the cultural pluralist and cosmopolitan perspectives associated with Kallen and Bourne. What is pronounced in Trilling's writing is a desire to divest the treatment of Jewish subject matter of any form of parochialism or chauvinism. His discussions of Jewish novels—including those by Ludwig Lewisohn — were usually harsh and his criticisms focused on the narrow horizons of the writers.

Trilling's opposition to parochialism also comes to the fore in his last fictional contribution to the magazine, called "Notes on a Departure." In a significant episode the protagonist—a young Jewish teacher in a mid-western community—admits that he intentionally cuts himself off and isolates himself from participating as fully as possible in the world around him by cultivating an excessive Jewish self-consciousness:

*Once he had held that the town was going to make him do things he must not do. It sought to include him in a life into which he must not go. To prevent this he made use of a hitherto useless fact. He had said, "I am a Jew," and immediately he was free. He had felt himself the embodiment of an antique and separate race . . . and was unable to partake of what he thought the danger that lay in the town and university. He had made a companion of the solitude he had gained, gazed fondly and admiringly at it; he had made an exorcizing charm of it and when he touched it the town became harmless.*²⁰

This passage may provide a clue to Trilling's rejection of the Lewisohn movement about that time and his later remark that Lewisohn's kind of literature, made "easier the sin of 'adjustment' on a wholly neurotic basis. It fostered a willingness to accept exclusion

and even to intensify it, a willingness to be provincial and parochial."²¹ When Trilling left the *Menorah Journal* in 1931, he never again established official connections with Jewish institutions or organizations. Throughout the rest of his life he maintained that even though his Jewish identity had influenced his intellect and temperament, he was unable to pinpoint precise Jewish ideas which had inspired him and that he did not regard himself as a specifically "Jewish writer."²²

Material about the childhood experiences of others in the group of New York intellectuals under consideration indicates that neither the case of Trilling nor Solow could be said to be typical. The pattern shown by three of the others is that they came from families in which the fathers all had heretical attitudes toward Judaism and consequently the children were not given a traditional Jewish rearing. Felix Morrow, the only lone of these to write for the *Menorah Journal*, was from a Chassidic family but his father had become disillusioned at the age of fifteen and fled his home.

George Novack, who was raised in the Boston area, recalled that Judaism had even less of a presence in his youth. From an early age he showed a streak of independence in religious matters, exemplified by a calculated act of defiance when he was thirteen. On Yom Kippur eve he simply left the house and stayed out all night until 5:00 a.m.; visiting some Irish girls who were babysitting in a neighboring town. Although Novack's mother was outraged, it was difficult for his father to enforce conformity because of his own unusual situation—he was a professional gambler who led a very irregular life. Nevertheless, while Novack was a Harvard student, and later when he began working in the publishing industry in New York, he was drawn into liberal Jewish circles for social and intellectual reasons. He also recalled that "Ludwig Lewisohn's cult of Jewishness was a reference post for literati like us maturing in the '20s and we felt the impulse to come to terms with his challenge. It sharply posed the questions: what am I and what should I become?"²³ Around 1931, Novack and his first wife, Elinor Rice, began to associate with Elliot Cohen, Herbert Solow, Lionel Trilling, and others who had written for the *Menorah Journal*.

Because none of these figures was commanded by their Jewish origins and background, they did not appear in the 1920s or 1930s to be "Jewish" in terms of the conventional stereotypes. For example, Mark Van Doren described Herbert Solow, Lionel Trilling and

Meyer Schapiro in his memoir "Jewish Students I Have Known," and in his perception all were "hopelessly different from one another—and none of them, in any sense that seems to matter, Jews."²⁴

Elliot Cohen, however, should probably be differentiated from the others in terms of the degree to which Jewish self-consciousness shaped his outlook. Tess Slesinger, who was married to Herbert Solow in the early Depression, wrote a tendentious satire about these New York intellectuals called *The Unpossessed*. In this novel she presented the character suggestive of Solow as a Calvinist, while the one suggestive of Elliot Cohen was portrayed as a Jewish professor. Felix Morrow also separated out Cohen from the others in his recollections of the group. He felt that Solow and Trilling, like himself, were drawn to the *Menorah Journal* because it was a special kind of forum, and not because they were motivated by a distinctly Jewish *weltanschauung*. But of Cohen, Morrow recalled:

*In some way that I never quite understood, he managed to make some positive affirmation of his Jewishness play the role of a vision, of a weltanschauung; then, for a short time, that was replaced by a communist weltanschauung—which was, by the way, coupled with a thorough immersion of himself in the Cold War*²⁵

III

Why did revolutionary internationalism come to dominate the thinking of the New York intellectuals, and how did it replace the influence of cultural pluralism on Cohen, Trilling, and the *Menorah* writers? Even though the revolutionary internationalism which dominated the 1930s repudiated adherence to particularistic traditions and cultures, it shared with cultural pluralism a hostility to assimilation by the dominant culture. Capitalist society was seen as the creator of a false consciousness with values that had to be countered by a socialist-internationalist consciousness and values.

Morrow's observation provides a transit to the second and culminating phase of the New York intellectuals' development in the early 1930s. The new attitude of "revolutionary internationalism" was the perspective of those drawn to what they thought were the highest ideals of communism represented by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. However, one feature of the interaction between revolutionary internationalism and the radicalized Jewish intellectual in the 1930s is that Jewish identity ceased to become a topic of discussion. In Sidney Hook's recollection, "We took

ourselves for granted as Jews and were concerned with the Jewish question primarily as a political one."²⁶

And George Novack remembered that

*we were motivated by the conviction that the socialist revolution and its extension held out the only realistic hope of saving the Jews, among others, from destruction. The cultural and religious heritage of the Jewish people that might have been essential to its past survival in the diaspora and the ghetto contained very little that was usable and capable of further development once we learned about the internationalism of scientific socialism.*²⁷

Revolutionary internationalism shared with cultural pluralism a "cosmopolitan ideal" of sorts, although the means proposed for its attainment were different. Certain revolutionary figures personified this ideal, as the Marxist scholar Isaac Deutscher explained in his study called *The Non-Jewish Jew*. Deutscher groups Trotsky, Marx and Rosa Luxemburg with Spinoza and Freud as examples of rationalist Jews who lived "on the borderlines of various civilizations, religions, and national cultures" and who are shaped by the cross-fertilization that took place among all of these.²⁸

With these two elements—hostility to assimilation and the cosmopolitan ideal—as a bridge, it is not difficult to see how the New York intellectuals moved from cultural pluralism to revolutionary internationalism under the impact of the Great Depression. As a theory, cultural pluralism presupposed a relatively stable if not a static society; it was not designed to cope with intense class conflict and economic collapse. Cultural pluralism came of age in the Progressive Era and was linked to a liberal view of the prospects for democratic capitalism. When the Depression began, the New York intellectuals abandoned the cultural pluralist perspective because it appeared insufficient from the vantage point of the intense radicalization they underwent after the stockmarket crash.

When the *Menorah* writers around Cohen became pro-working class, they saw that the outlook of the magazine was actually identified with the interests of the middle class. In his 1931 letter of resignation from the *Menorah Journal*, contributing editor Herbert Solow accused the official editor, Henry Hurwitz, of obstructing the work of Elliot Cohen because Hurwitz allegedly wanted to make the publication into the organ of "small manufacturers, tradesmen, professionals, and executives with comfortable but 'modest' incomes." Furthermore, Solow regarded the magazine's program of "Jewish education" as the program of the petty bourgeoisie and he

argued that such a program was inadequate to meet the needs of the "suffering masses (especially East Europeans)."²⁹

From the perspective of revolutionary internationalism, the prevailing culture could only be transcended, and the cosmopolitan ideal achieved, through the abolition of class society. And in this process the key role was assigned to the industrial proletarian. Therefore, for the revolutionary internationalist, the responsibility of the intellectual became to advance the interest of the working class and, hence, exploration of Jewish identity lost its special significance.

While the more activist-oriented intellectuals—such as Solow, Morrow, Novack and Hook—became involved with organizations, Lionel Trilling left a record of his changed orientation in several magazines. This included the *Modern Quarterly*, an independent revolutionary magazine edited by V. F. Calverton. In the 1920s Trilling had advised the Jewish novelist against parochialism; in 1931 he urged the left-wing novelist to "make at least part of his function to be a propagandist for political decency against obscurantism if he is to continue to have any function at all."³⁰ In place of his careful examination of the antinomies of the Jewish Intellectual, Trilling has scrutinized the dilemma of the revolutionary intellectual:

Today, when so many of our middle-class intellectuals are swinging left, it is well to remember that the position of the bourgeois intellectual in any proletarian movement has always been an anomalous and precarious one. However sincere he may be, the mind of the intellectual is apt to be overlaid with conflicting values so that it is impossible for him to be sure of his position; having so many values, he is likely to betray one to defend others. In this dilemma the recognition of his own training and nature can be his only safeguard against confusion and eventual missteps.³¹

Trilling's analysis adumbrated many of the problems that his intellectual associates would confront as they struggled to construct a genuine revolutionary tendency in the face of obstacles such as a growing Stalinist movement with only tiny oppositional groups, and the military victories of fascism while the economics of the bourgeois democracies were wracked by the Depression. For almost all of the New York intellectuals the period in which they subscribed to revolutionary internationalism was short-lived. Between 1931 and 1933 there was some collaboration with the Communists, although most of the intellectuals stayed at arm's length from the Party because of tactical differences. After the triumph of Hitler in 1933 the differences became more principled and the intellectuals shifted their allegiance in the direction of rival revolutionary parties such as the Trotskyist

organization (Communist League of America) and A. J. Muste's American Workers Party. By the time of the Moscow Trials (1936-1938), association with any revolutionary group was mainly on a civil libertarian basis; and this disillusionment that had set in, caused by degeneration of the Russian revolution, was soon intensified by the defeat of the Spanish working class and the first salvos of World War II. Their subsequent movement to the right was in accord with the evolution of their generation and in no sense a logical outcome of the left-wing anti-Stalinism to which they once subscribed. The anti-communist hysteria at the 1950s overwhelmed ex-Trotskyists and ex-Communists, anarchists and liberals, intellectuals and workers without distinction.

Only a handful of writings of Jewish matters were produced by the New York intellectuals throughout the 1930s. In theoretical inquiry, the national question remained undeveloped; in culture, their primary endeavor was the fight waged on behalf of modernist literature. So not only was the promise of this group as a movement of revolutionary intellectuals never fulfilled, but also the tradition they established seems to have a gaping hole in it—for they failed to see that "the Jewish question" would continue to play a central role in world politics.

Many of the new generation of left-wing intellectuals who are attracted to the outlook of the New York group in the early 1930s may wonder whether this low priority for Jewish history and culture was an inevitable consequence of a revolutionary internationalist perspective. One circle of writers today which represents the legacy of the New York intellectuals in a debased and reactionary form—those who write for *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*—implicitly holds the view that the two (revolutionary internationalism and Jewish scholarship) are mutually exclusive. These scholars and journalists pay greater attention to Jewish affairs than the 1930s movement, but they are the backbone of the Neo-Conservative tendency and are marked by prejudice in favor of Zionism and a pro-Israeli bias.

However, in his 1966 essay "Who is a Jew?", Isaac Deutscher provided an alternative model to the Neo-Conservative orientation—one that is more consistent with the aspirations of the New York intellectuals in the early 1930s. He said:

*Only if the search for an identity can help the Jewish intellectual in his struggle for a better future for the whole of mankind, is that search at all, in my view, justified.*³²

Deutscher's point here is not that the issue of Jewish identity is irrelevant to internationalists; rather, what he advocates is that it be explored in an internationalist spirit, as he himself tried to do in this study and elsewhere. Jewish scholarship seeking to fulfill the promise of the most admirable phase of the New York intellectuals, and to contribute to the resurgence of Marxist theory in the United States, must be forthrightly based on Deutscher's premise.

FOOTNOTES

1. "The New York Intellectuals," first published in *Commentary* and reprinted in Irving Howe, *Decline of the New* (New York: Horizon Press, 1970), pp. 211-265.
2. Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), p. 599. Some material from "The New York Intellectuals" was reworked into the section called "Journeys Outward." This quotation is partly from the original and partly from the new.
3. I have concentrated on these intellectuals in "Herbert Solow: Portrait of a New York Intellectual," *Prospects: An Annual Journal of American Cultural Studies*, 3 (December 1977), 418-460; "Memories of the John Dewey Commission Forty Years Later," *Antioch Review*, 35 (Fall 1977), 438-451; "The Menorah Group Moves Left," *Jewish Social Studies*, 38 (Summer-Fall 1976), 289-320; "Revolutionary Intellectuals: Partisan Review in the 1930s," *Occident*, 8 (Spring 1974), 118-133. Additional information is contained in *James T. Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years* (New York: New York University Press, 1978).
4. Charles S. Liebman discusses the widespread support given to the "accommodationist thesis" in "American Jews: Still a Distinctive Group," *Commentary*, 64, no. 2 (August 1977), 57-60.
5. John Higham, *Send These to Me* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p. 196.
6. Horace Kallen, "Democracy Versus the Melting Pot," *Nation*, 100 (1915), 191-194, 217-220. Allen Guttman discusses the possible influence of Horace Kallen on Mordecai Kaplan and others in *The Jewish Writer in America* (New York: Oxford, 1971), pp. 93-100.
7. Randolph Bourne, "Transnational America," *Atlantic Monthly*, 128 (July 1916), 86-97.
8. "The Jew and Trans-National America," *Menorah Journal*, 2 (December 1916), 277-284. This was a speech to the Harvard Menorah Society.
9. "Ethnic Diversity, Cosmopolitanism and the Emergence of the Liberal Intelligentsia," *American Quarterly*, 27, no. 2 (May 1975), 135.
10. "The Menorah Summer School," *Menorah Journal*, 9, no. 4 (October 1923), 339. In this report on school activities, Cohen refers to Kallen as one of the teachers.
11. Lionel Trilling, Afterword to *The Unpossessed* by Tess Slesinger (New York: Avon, 1966), 320.

12. Herbert Solow to Elliot Cohen, December 23, 1929.
13. Solow's views on Zionism and his relations with Magnes are described in Wald, "Herbert Solow: Portrait of a New York Intellectual."
14. "Under Forty," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, 7, no. 1 (February 1944), 15-17. The other discussions can be found in Trilling's introduction to Robert Warshaw's *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Atheneum, 1962) and his afterword to Tess Slesinger's *The Unpossessed*.
15. Afterword to *The Unpossessed*, p. 316.
16. "Impediments," *Menorah Journal*, 11, no. 3 (June 1925), 286.
17. "Chapter for a Fashionable Jewish Novel," *Menorah Journal*, 12, no. 3 (June July 1926), 275-282.
18. Lionel Trilling to Wald, June 10, 1974.
19. Alfred Kazin, *New York Jew* (New York: Knopf, 1978), pp. 45-46. Kazin writes: "For Trilling I would always be 'too Jewish,' too full of my lower-class experience. He would always defend himself from the things he had left behind."
20. "Notes on a Departure," *Menorah Journal*, 16, no. 5 (May 1925), 421-434.
21. Trilling, "Under Forty," *Contemporary Jewish Record*, 7, no. 1 (February 1944), 17.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 15. Trilling wrote: "It is clear to me that my existence as a Jew is one of the shaping conditions of my temperament, and therefore I suppose it must have its effects on my intellect. Yet I cannot discover anything in my professional intellectual life which I can specifically trace back to my Jewish birth and rearing. I do not think of myself as a 'Jewish writer.' I do not have it in mind to serve by my writing any Jewish purpose. I should resent it if a critic of my work were to discover in it either faults or virtues which he called Jewish."
23. George Novack to Wald, December 24, 1978.
24. See the descriptions in Mark Van Doren, "Jewish Students I Have Known," *Menorah Journal*, 13, no. 3 (June 1927), 264-268.
25. Interview with Felix Morrow, June 1977.
26. Sidney Hook to Wald, December 28, 1978.
27. George Novack to Wald, December 24, 1978.
28. Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 27.
29. Herbert Solow to the Board of Directors of the *Menorah Journal*, October 12, 1931.
30. *Menorah Journal*, 19, no. 4 (June 1931), 472.
31. *Modern Quarterly*, 6, no. 2 (Summer 1932), 109.
32. Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew and other Essays*, p. 59.

THE MONONGHELA RIVER

The following poem, translated from Yiddish by Ida Cohen Selavan, was written about the Homestead (Pennsylvania) steel strike of July, 1892. The Homestead works were part of the Carnegie Steel Company's (now United States Steel Corporation) monopoly in the steel industry.

On July 6, 1892, 300 armed Pinkerton agents, sent by Henry Clay Frick of the Carnegie Company to break the strike of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, arrived at Homestead on barges towed up the Monongahela River. A shot fired by an unknown person gave the Pinkertons their excuse to open fire on the townspeople waiting for them. By the end of that day, in addition to the many wounded, three Pinkertons and seven workers were dead.

From all your waters, America,
 From all your broad rivers,
 From all your flowing streams,
 From all your waterfalls,
 I choose the river with the magical name, Monongahela.
 It's a filthy, muddy river
 Only its name sounds romantic
 And even though no poet has celebrated it
 And even though it does not reach the shores of the Atlantic
 And even though it cannot vie with the Hudson
 It will yet be written up in your water history
 As one of the greatest rivers
 And then even the children will know
 Who is the Monongahela

No forest absorbs the sound of its waves
 No blue skies are mirrored in its depths
 The taste of heavy anchors is foreign to it
 As is the glory of mighty ships.
 No willows overhang its banks
 Nor do bushes adorn its brink
 But when a school child will one day be asked
 "Which are the best known rivers of the land?"
 He will not have named them all
 If he does not mention among them
 The Monongahela River.

And when I see, America,
 The web of your myriad rails
 The steel-and-iron arteries
 Which fan out to all your cities
 And when I see, America
 The smoke-and-spark-spitting throats
 Of your puffing locomotives
 Hauling your endless caravan of opulence
 I am reminded of Homestead's humpbacked huts
 I am reminded of Homestead's hungering houses
 I am reminded of that furious crackle of gunfire
 Of that battle which raged
 By the Monongahela

And when I see, America
 The iron maws of your cranes
 Which sharpen their teeth on your scrap metal,
 And when I see the derricks,
 Your steel giraffes
 Which unload your riches at the ports and harbors
 And when I hear the hammer blows of your mighty workshops
 Which form your metallic might
 I am reminded of Homestead's humpbacked huts
 I am reminded of that battle, which raged
 By the banks of the Monongahela

And when I see, America
 The steel girders of your giant bridges
 The steel spinal cords of your sky scrapers
 The steel locks of your canals
 And the iron gratings on your banks
 The steel doors and steel cashboxes
 I am reminded of that day
 When Homestead's aroused laborers
 Met your steel magnates
 Eye to eye and bullet to bullet
 I see blood on the foul slimy water
 Of the Monongahela

The Monongahela is filthy
 With a layer of soot covering its body
 Sparkling where the sun's rays strike
 The scummy oil rings left by barges in their wake
 It's a river of toil and trouble
 There's no holiday among its days
 And like an army of clouds
 The smoke from the tall chimneys at Carnegie Steel
 Is drawn up on its banks
 Recalling the battle there
 Recalling the heroic past

I will not reckon its length in miles
 And I will not measure its depth like a diver
 For the river has a tale to tell
 Even deeper and longer than it is
 Over Homestead's humpbacked houses
 There remains still the pall of gunsmoke
 Writing the story of the awaited massacre
 And the story goes on from generation to generation
 And the story smolders in memory

And the sooty smokestacks of Carnegie
 Will not cover the writing of the gunsmoke
 As long as the Monongahela River
 Tells this story to its banks.

Yuri Suhl

Translated by Ida Cohen Selavan

INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN BIRNBAUM

Paul Buhle

Martin Birnbaum is one of the outstanding poets of the Left, too little known, his work appearing regularly (in Yiddish) in the Morning Freiheit and Yiddische Kultur. He is also a distinguished translator, a painter, a teacher in New York's progressive Jewish shuls. Author of several collections of poetry, his most recent, Lieder Fun Haint un Nechten was published by the I. L. Peretz House in Tel Aviv, Israel in 1978.

The interview was conducted in New York, Fall, 1977, and is transcribed and edited by the interviewer, Paul Buhle.

PB: How did you start writing for Left publications in the U.S.?

*MB: I had come to this country in the early 'twenties from Vienna. I was drawn to radicalism emotionally rather than on the basis of any particular knowledge. As a Jew, I had gone through so much in Europe that I was naturally drawn to the idea of social justice. But I didn't really know what Communists were. And I started reading newspapers because of the subway. I noticed the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, which had a fine literary section. Its constituency was *alte-deutsch-proletariat*, every day obituaries appearing in the paper, like the Yiddish press today: its readership was either dying out or assimilating. But its editor, Ludwig Lore, was very erudite, a serious, passionate man, a Communist with equivocations, whose taste in literature was very good. He drew widely from the European press. So I began to publish poetry there, since my first language was a mixture of Yiddish and German, all reading in German.*

Three Yiddish poets wrote for them, including me. I moved on to another Communist paper in German, *Der Arbeiter*, but at the same time I discovered the Yiddish environment around the *Freiheit*.

PB: How did you meet Moshe Nadir?

MB: I began to read the Yiddish press more, and I discovered him. He wrote a series, "Teg fun meine Teg", and I still remember something he wrote about the Caucuses. I translated it into German for the *Volkszeitung*. Nadir lived in Seagate, a resort at the tip of Coney Island, where many Jewish intellectuals and artists lived. In the summer, I met Nadir on the beach there, and he was very glad to see himself translated into German. And we became good friends.

He was a highly sophisticated person, very versatile compared to many young provincial Jewish writers. Here was a *landsman* from Galicia, who had translated him and whose poetry he likes. He helped me discover the beauty of Yiddish. He did things in the language that, I don't think, anyone else could do then or now.

PB: Of the people who came directly out of, or around Di Yunge, or literary experimentalism of any kind, in America, Nadir seems to have made the most remarkable transition from Art-for-Art's-Sake to Revolutionist. But he does not seem to have deserted his literary techniques, to have become aesthetically constrained like many English-language Left writers.

MB: In theme he often made compromises with the Left. Even in personal conviction, he was not completely convinced that the left was correct, but he had the belief for a long time that the Party could not be wrong, and he had to serve it. In terms of style, language, and skill, no, he did not compromise, because these were the tools he worked with. I remember once we were in camp, and for some reason he had no light or heat in his room. He came to my room, and I had to go out. I came home towards evening, and there was a stack of papers, a book-length poem called, in English, "Hand Over the World, Bourgeois!" It was fantastic what he packed into this. But he wrote out of the conviction that the Revolution was about to happen. He was writing about the same time, what will hang in Union Square first, "I or the Red Flag?" So there was a bending to ideological demands, to "Die Linie", the line. To deviate from it, you had trouble publishing. Nadir often did. They would edit and he would submit. In 1929, an incident in Palestine caused the Left to actually defend the Arab pogroms against Jews, with ideological reasoning, of

course. Nadir was in a terrible predicament. Almost all his colleagues from *Di Yunge*, Leivick, Opatashu and Moshe Leib Halpern, all left the *Freiheit*. Nadir didn't know what to do. He withdrew to a farm in Peekskill. He *felt* the Party was wrong, but he decided that as a Marxist he cannot leave, he has to stay in the movement. He became a fierce defender of the indefensible. Later on in the 'thirties he wrote devastating attacks on the Jewish intellectuals who ridiculed Communists—he would find the weak spot, and his wit was devastating, he could ridicule them and make people feel they were ridiculous. But I knew that he was still skeptical—when it came to the acid test in 1939, the German-Russian Pact, he couldn't take it. He was a broken person.

PB: How did he make his living during this time?

MB: When he came to America he was a paperhanger, I think. Early in his literary career he was an insurance agent, later he had a hotel in the Catskills with his wife, and sometimes he lived hand-to-mouth. He also had patrons. He thought nothing of staying as a guest with a patron for months and write. To them it was an honor, to him, convenience.

PB: So did you get further into the milieu of the Yiddish Left?

MB: I met many writers in cafes—there were always discussions going on in the Royal, the Europa, the Crusader and other gathering places, with lots of shop talk, a bubbling, dynamic group.

PB: Did they have contact with non-Yiddish radical writers?

MB: Many of the Yiddish writers I met were quite provincial and removed from the American scene. Not Nadir or a man like Aaron Kurtz, but the majority were steeped in their Yiddish and Russian background and had no time or inclination to go outside—the ghetto was very warm, they worked for a living in shops, and you had your environment, your recognition, and your readers. Quite a few Yiddish books were still being published. There were audiences outside New York, too—Chicago and Philadelphia, a little bit of San Francisco, and there was Los Angeles.

PB: And this led to the formation of a distinct Left writer's group?

MB: In 1929, when the important writers of the *Yunge* left the *Freiheit*, it was politically expedient to have an organization of writers who could be depended upon. Under Olgin's urging and probably with the encouragement of the Party, an organization was formed,

the Proletpen. It was a very dynamic organization, with a few sections mostly in New York, a poets' section, a journalists' section, a prose section. Nadir and Isaac Raboi, the only other notable to stay with the *Freiheit*, were founding members. I was a junior member in the founding. My Yiddish was full of Germanisms, they called me "der Deitchuk", but I guess they recognized something there.

PB: *How did the Proletpen operate?*

MB: The aim of the Proletpen was to guard the Party line. To guide the writers against the enemy from the Right, to educate the masses, to serve the workers. We would have meetings, sometimes separately as journalists, poets, and so on. Mostly what was discussed was ideology. Someone would speak on a book, an *Einleiter* would lead the discussion. We would talk about what should be stressed—Evictions, Angelo Herndon, the Scottsboro Boys, American subjects rising reaction, the shop and the workers, the *shtetl* that we were urged to leave behind. The urgings were successful in terms of themes. But they often negated the basic gut things that really bothered us.

All of this may sound negative. But people with creative talents, whether you want it or not, often break out of these confines. We had nothing to gain by being in the Left except scorn, contempt, and perhaps danger. We had ideals, and even if we were wrong, we were motivated by the ideals. The Left wing did give us the *opportunity* to grow and develop. We learned much from older writers—in spite of hampering, political demands and urgings.

PB: *How did you personally fit into this?*

MB: First of all, I was really a proletariat poet. I was a furrier, sort of a poet laureate of the furriers. I'd go meet a reader and hear him say, "Martin, read your article in the *Freiheit*, 1-A, A-1, if I was a writer, I'd do it just like that." When I wrote about the shop and speedup, it was real to me. It was a gut thing to me. I really was angry. But I wasn't like Rosenfeld,* a poet of tears. I was basically a lyricist, that's where they had trouble with me. I was also by instinct a pacifist, and that gave me trouble too. Bloodshed didn't appeal to me.

Politically, my contact with the Party was minimal, and I was intuitively skeptical about its so-called democracy, because I never saw any of it. If I stayed in the environment, it was not the political leadership that kept me there. I sometimes smarted under things, and I was at times sharply criticized. A Yiddish literary magazine, *The Signal*,

*Morris Rosenfeld, great Jewish ghetto poet,

in one issue opened with two poems of mine—one on divorce, another on the "Darkness" in the shop. In my poems, no rays metaphorically penetrated the windows of the shop, and the workers were not as militant as propaganda claimed. *The Signal* placed the poems prominently, with my photograph. But in the discussion of the poems, with the participation of the *Freiheit* leaders, I was bitterly attacked, not artistically, but ideologically. Why was I writing about divorce and "darkness" in the shop? The two editors of *The Signal* were sitting there, embarrassed. I stood up to the leaders by myself, I risked my standing by making a sharp attack on their repressiveness. I was rebellious in that sense. *The Signal* then failed for lack of money. It had the audience but the Party decided whether it was necessary or not. Since all these publications were guaranteed by contribution, anything new was in competition to the old ones.

PB: *It would have occurred to me to publish my own magazine . . .*

MB: But there was moral pressure against it. Aaron Kurtz stood alone in his style and techniques. He wrote long poems and had trouble publishing them. So he published his own magazine, *Naie Lieder*, by himself. In the beginning, he was attacked for draining off energy, an attack was published in the *Freiheit*; but Kurtz was stubborn, he fought but felt lonely. Even at the best times you felt there were watchdogs of the line. I called them Circus Masters, and one of them, a friend of mine, I once in an argument told, take off your red circus pants and put your trainers' whip away.

PB: *How did you evaluate the literary results in the Freiheit and the Hammer with, say, the English-language Daily Worker and the New Masses?*

MB: The *Daily Worker* was so dry and brittle. I barely read it. I thought at first it had something to do with my lack of mastery of the language. But when I could read better, it still never warmed me up.

The *Freiheit* had more literary quality, better writing. But they wanted daily topics, and adhered closely to that demand. Only reluctantly did they give you room for something outside that.

The *Hammer* changed with the editorship. In literary terms it was higher than the *Freiheit*, and made more allowances and gave you more freedom. But in terms of literary talent, the *New Masses* seemed to me on a higher level. It had Mike Gold, Isadore Schneider, Joshua Kunitz, even occasionally Kenneth Fearing and other well-known writers, people with a great deal of talent, a larger circle than the Yiddish writers.

PB: Then, in a sense, it was the eclipse of Yiddish more than anything else that destroyed this milieu . . .

MB: "Destroyed" is too strong a term. The division among Yiddish writers after 1929 became much sharper. But shrinkage seemed inevitable. The audience diminished from the Right, Left and Center. Few if any writers tended to leave Yiddish. We are in a shrinking world . . .

PB: Did the Yiddishness itself make you alienated from American life?

MB: To a degree, probably. The Party "line" contributed to that. I remember the Workers School teaching us that Lincoln was a reactionary, Washington a slave-holder, and so on. Much of the American history interpretation seemed to be an insult to America, and I said to myself, not quite clearly, what is there left? Can you make friends with a people when you go out to destroy and negate every value they have? Later on the Party began to veer away from this interpretation of history.

PB: I want to end by coming back to Moshe Nadir. I don't think any other "American" writer since Mark Twain had such a glimpse of what Andre Breton called black humor, and the literary ability to weave it into his writing so beautifully.

MB: He was the most literate, devastating voice in Yiddish radical literature. His importance was his wealth of language, a language accessible to the reader. His wit was anger. He wanted the "official" thing to be true, perhaps he sometimes believed it. I knew he was still a skeptic deep down. He wanted it to be true, but he was too intelligent.

PB: And today he belongs to nobody?

MB: He deserted the Left, but his audience was a political-minded audience and stayed there. It was a great victory for the Right to have him, but he never wrote much more. He died a sad man—I was told. After he went over to the Right, I never saw him or spoke to him again. I was deeply grieved by his death.

Yes, he does belong! To all of us—to Yiddish literature.

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SWEATSHOP BARD

Rosenfeld wrote a number of poems
on love and nature, the Appalachian
miner's daughter, death and life
and the like.
But when the tear hit the iron,
real steam, Morris, real steam.

Shrugging: I am an empty spool. And:
I should speak?—a machine—I only know
my yungele's always asleep,
dreams of his penny
I lay here each night
when I finally climb home.
Singing: Zion, Zion, Helfen, Zion.

And the others: You're a complainer, Morris.
Kfetch, kfetch.
If you worked as much as you kfetch, Morris ...
It wouldn't help, Morris.
Zet gornisht helfen ...
helfen ... helfen.

Weiner found him.
Professorious Havardius of Judeo-German
found him, published him,
proclaimed him: Dante.
A Yiddisher Dante.
Sweat shop bard.

Rosenfeld made a bundle
left the job
and wrote a number of poems
on love and nature, the Appalachian
miner's daughter, death and life
and the like.

Took the podium with the Zionists,
a desk at Der Forverts
raved and proclaimed and
missed deadlines.
I should sing?—a typewriter—
a slave of the ink?
Cahan fired him.

Rosenfeld wrote a number of poems
in English.
Rosenfeld wrote prose.
The son died. Herzl died.
The Yiddisher Dante had a stroke.
I am an empty pen:
Rosenfeld wrote.

Mark Stein

ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE

Was it on Orchard Street
 the piecegoods promenade
 where a crowd of little signs
 pinched at my elbows?
 Or handed me on Essex in wax paper
 by the man behind the barrels
 with the voice like a half dozen hands?
 East Broadway maybe, the boulevard
 where Der Forverts stands
 ten stories empty,
 was it there that I found Yiddish,
 you won't believe this,
 lying in the street.
 At least, it seemed like Yiddish
 but then, how would I know?

I found Yiddish lying in the street
 on the Lower East Side.
 Bits of it anyway
 scattered all over the place,
 swept down deserted Ludlow
 where tenements whispered
 ...thousands...talzunds...
 Saw it between salamis up on Houston Street.
 It beckoned through the window of a landsmenshaft.
 It was written in the bricks fronting Lower Broadway
 leading uptown to America.
 I found Yiddish
 across the street from the Alliance
 its bleached hand swaying like a chazan, like a flame.

Was it off Henry or Delancey
 I spotted it
 just lying there,
 dusty tubes and wires loose,
 incomprehensible contraption.
 Could it have been on Hester by the gutted shul
 I stooped to check it out?
 Speak to me, it said, and I:
 I don't know how.
 You begin, it said, Look here:
 Place your palm against the ground.
 Still breathing, I found Yiddish
 lying in the street.
 And with some cunning and a few new parts
 I'll make it speak.

Mark Stein

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INTERVIEW WITH MAXIM GHILAN

Just after the bombings of the two West Bank mayors on June 2, 1980, *Israel and Palestine*, a small review published in Paris, received considerable attention from the news media in Europe and the United States. An "investigative report" in the May issue of that publication had revealed that a "nationalistic, fanatic underground had been created in Israel by religious settlers and soldiers," and that terrorists in this underground were planning to blow up the El Aqsa and Omar mosques in Jerusalem. This report also stated that Israeli settlers were planning "to assassinate several of the West Bank mayors known to be aligned with the PLO, starting with Khalaf and Bassam Shaqa."

Maxim Ghilan is the editor of *Israel & Palestine*. He lived in Palestine/Israel for more than twenty years but left in 1968, disheartened by the brutalization that the occupation was engendering — even then — on Israeli politics and public morale.

Ghilan covers a wide range of topics in this interview which was conducted on June 20, just after the Europeans declared that the PLO should be "associated" with future Middle East peace negotiations.

Jewish Socialist Critique: What is your reaction to the European initiative?

Maxime Ghilan: The first thing I would like to stress is that there wasn't a unified European initiative. The Europeans gave into each other and found some formula which was acceptable to all of them.

You must understand that, unlike the United States, Europe is not yet one single republic. You have a number of European states with different but not necessarily contradicting interests. France, for instance, is very much influenced by the fact that Saudi Arabia is its main oil supplier and by the fact that it sells a number of nuclear and other technological defenses to Iraq. It is also influenced by its African policy which coincides very closely with American policy in Africa. This means that France needs the United States to some extent in Africa but has not so much use for American policy in the Mideast. England is the closest ally of the Carter policy now but it is very worried about what America is doing to its Middle Eastern interests. Germany dearly would like to have NATO troops guard its borders. But on the other hand, the latest research of the German *Bundesrepublik* has proven that if there were a limited conflict in Europe (as the American military doctrine now goes), two thirds of the total German territory — both West and East Germany — would be destroyed in the first five days. So they are not very keen on that happening — they are not keen on winning the war and losing Germany physically. Italy is a non-problem now because they are in a terrible mess. They are trying to align their economic policy, at least to some extent, with development plans in Africa and the Middle East. So, to begin with, you have a consensus which is not really a consensus.

Second, nobody in the Middle East is happy with the European statement. For Israel it is a stab in the back; for the Palestinians it is just not enough because they had been promised more than that. Khaled Al-Hassan [a member of the Palestine National Council] was promised that the PLO would be made the *only* representative and that was not said in the statement. Finally, The New York Times has defined the European move as a stab in the back of America, but that presumes that you have somebody standing up front and somebody behind their back. I made a tour of Europe in March. I saw a number of leading European officials, including one head of state and a number of Jewish leaders. And the Europeans I talked to all told me the same thing as far as American policy is concerned. They said, "Listen, it's not so much that we are against a strong American posture—it's not so much that we are against the Carter administration's line. We simply believe he doesn't have one. We can't go along with that. We can't sit back and wait until the American elections are over because the whole thing is going to blow

up and then we are going to lose our oil supply as we did in '73—we and the Japanese—not the Americans. The Americans had enough

I read a recent article in the Journal of Palestine Studies which also concludes that the Carter Administration and the American government in general doesn't really have a line for an overall solution in the Middle East—even one that would meet American interests. Do you agree?

Yes, I think that Carter is basically trying to keep everybody happy. He is a weak president, a bad president in American terms and I am not talking about his politics. I'm talking about his ability to rule. He doesn't rule very well. He has surrounded himself with bad advisers. And I think that all this has brought about the ability of various economic sectors of the pyramid of power in this country to pull the blanket to their own side. There has been—and I've written so a number of times—a contradiction, a struggle between what used to be called the military-industrial complex, which means really domestic industry on the one hand including the armaments industry, and the aeronautics industry and banking and oil interests on the other hand. This is not as clear-cut as I'm putting it because it overlaps and changes and so on. But basically Kissinger's doctrine was that of the great banks and oil companies, which was to control the Third World through the people on the spot: sell the people in power whatever they need and they will do the job for us. But then a crisis developed here, a crisis of rule, a crisis in the economy of this country. and then of course there were people who said, "Let's go in and do it ourselves because it will develop our army, because it will develop our presence, because we have not been able to do the things we wanted indirectly" — forgetting that happened because Carter is weak. They got in the ascendancy again. That's why we have a cold war again in this country. That's the way I see it. I mean, I'm generalizing to a dreadful extent, but that's the way I see it.

*Apart from what your feelings may be toward George Habash or his ideology, what do you think of his worries and those of the PFLP in general? They seem to foresee that in the near future the Labor Party will come to power and try to work out a deal along the lines of the Allon Plan.**

Well, you don't have to be a Habash follower to say that—I've been saying that for a long while.

But from their perspective they expect the Palestinian Resistance Movement to be sold out. And they also think the European initiative may be along those lines.

There is a short cut being used here which is intellectually dishonest and, as a political proposal, not very helpful. First of all, let us understand that I am not attacking the PFLP—they have one viewpoint and I have a different one. Let's see what they believe in: they believe in an Arab socialist revolution which will ultimately go farther than the Palestinian revolution. And this is based on a strategy of a generations-long struggle. They say that whatever is done now is incomplete, we have to go on. Now, for anybody holding that kind of ideology the temptation is great to see anything happening as justification of the fact that they have to go on struggling for generations. And for anybody hoping for the creation of a Palestinian state beside Israel, as I do, the temptation is great to see any development in that direction as conducive to such a solution. I will only apologize for my views by saying that even when the Camp David initiative began I said that it is only a good thing provided the PLO is included in the negotiations — which it was not — otherwise it will be a disaster — which it is.

But George Habash is quite correct in analyzing Peres' policy as something which is not going to lead to Palestinian rule even over a part of Palestine. I don't think that he is justified as seeing either the European or any other initiative as something which is an instrument of American policy because it is not. It might be if there *was* an American policy. I think that what's happening is that the Europeans are striking out for themselves because they have no choice. I am sure they would like things to happen without the Palestinian national movement. I'm also quite convinced that they believe that cannot be done. This belief is a result of talks with people — I am not stating my opinion. But I am saying that the Europeans believe the Palestinians will have to be included. They would be happy if that happened in as minimal a form as possible — through Hussein and so on — and I think they are aware that it is not going to happen. So insofar as Habash says the initiative is a European conspiracy to further the Camp David accords he is wrong; but insofar as he says they are kidding themselves that Shimon Peres is going to accede to a Palestinian state he is right. In fact one might say that the two

arguments of the PFLP are contradictory.

What do you think will be the line of the Labor Party if and when they come into power next year?

The Labor Party has not changed its leadership, has not changed its ideology, has not changed its inputs. It has added a number of people who before were not in it and are now in it out of despair — because they have seen that the alternative is Begin. So that doesn't argue for a great change. Moreover, I will tell you why I don't believe that Labor's policy is going to be different in essence from Begin's towards the PLO and towards self-determination for the Palestinians.

If Shimon Peres and Labor wanted to bring about the downfall of Begin, they could do it now, today, *in three days' time* with a general strike on economic matters in which all of the people would participate. And then in sixty days' time we would have new elections with a huge Labor majority — at least 60%, according to the statistics in the current polls. Now why won't they do it? If they can take power now—why don't they do it? And the answer is very simple: If they do it that way, they will not have any way to associate the National Religious Party with their next cabinet. And they will be forced to create a cabinet of the center with Ezer Weizmann and with the Liberals — and I'm talking about a very right-wing center cabinet. But one which would indeed be pragmatic. Now, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin and most of the other people — including the Mapam people — don't want such a cabinet. Why? Because they would have to deliver to the American administration which backs them and do all the things which they have promised to do. To avoid that, they need to have a "tough cop." They need to have a considerable amount of people in their cabinet who prevent them from doing what they have to do—namely, get out of the territories, talk to the PLO, and accept some kind of self-determination. I'm not even talking about going out of all the territories.

You're saying they want to maintain the National Religious Party — that's the tough cop that will watch them?

Of course, because then the Mafdal [The National Religious Party], of which Gush Emunim is a part, is going to scream their heads off: "We'll go out of the cabinet. NO! NO! DON'T COMPROMISE!" And then Labor will go back to America and say: "Listen, we can't do that because we're going to have a parliamentary crisis."

But then that brings up the question of why the Labor party doesn't want to put itself in the position of having to make a serious compromise.

Because they really are not different from Begin as far as the occupation of the territories is concerned. Chaim Bar-Lev [chief of staff under Golda Meir] said the other day: "Our basic policy is to keep as much territory as possible and settle on it as many Jews as possible." That's labor *today*. That's the man who might be the Minister of Defense of a Labor government.

What are the reasons behind the desire of the Labor Party to keep the West Bank? They point to security but critics claim that Israel benefits tremendously from Arab labor, and also from selling goods to the West Bank and Gaza. Is it a combination of reasons — economic, political and military?

It is a combination of reasons: ideological, of course, because they really would like as much of the "Land of Israel" as possible. Economic, political, security — all of it. They really do not believe they can live with Palestinians. I mean if you are a complete exclusivist you don't believe that you can really live in peace and freedom with the "sons of Nazareth" let alone the "sons of Arabia." But there's another element which you have not mentioned which is also economic. If a Palestinian state is created beside Israel and forced to sign a realistic peace agreement which would be enforced by the two superpowers, then Israel is going to lose the rationale for the foreign aid which comes from America. It will lose the justification for asking \$2.2 billion in military and other aid. And it would probably lose a great part of the economic support through the United Jewish Appeal for two reasons: because the Israelis couldn't justify the current level of demand and also because many Jews would not identify with a state which is getting more and more involved in the Arab world.

Peace would allow both the Arabs and the Jews to develop to an incredible point technologically, economically, culturally, even militarily, although I dislike the idea. Nobody in Israel wants to think about this. Because the point is that they really don't want to get involved in the Arab world. They want to keep the State of Israel as if it were some tiny island of Europe in the Middle East, which is idiocy anyway because most Israelis are not Occidental but Oriental. So there is *this* economic and sociological reason too. They are afraid of losing their sources of income and they are not sure they will be able

to enter into such economic relationship with the Arab world which will replace them with something else.

I can't help but bring up something. The last point you made seems to be an essential point made by what I call intelligent critics of Zionism: how can a Zionist Israel, which is dominated by European Jews with a European mentality who don't want to assimilate into the Arab east and who want to maintain an exclusively Jewish state, survive? Would you agree that Israeli Jews must in effect de-Zionize Israel in order to survive in the Middle East?

Yes. But you made one point which is wrong. The Oriental Jews at this stage are far more anti-Arab than the Occidental Jews. And not only because they have been conditioned; but also because historically they were in direct relationship with the Arabs at a lower position — exactly as some Blacks in this country are anti-Semitic because so many slumlords are Jewish. This is not a basic side of the problem, but it is a cause.

But there are some exceptions—a fair percentage of the Iraqi Jews were not in uncomfortable positions in Iraq, for example.

Yes, there are many exceptions.

It seems obvious that you're pessimistic about the Labor Party wanting a genuine peace in the Middle East. Is it correct to say that it would be impossible to expect them in the near future to concede to a two-state solution?

In the near future, yes. It would not be impossible if outside the Labor Party—on its left as it were—a substantial amount of the population could push Labor in the opposite direction. But what is happening now — and what they are trying to create — is exactly the contrary: people pushing from the right so that they cannot move. So in the immediate future my pessimism is total.

And the right in Israel is much stronger than the left.

Much stronger. The left doesn't exist as a popular movement. But you do have people to the left of Labor. Some Europeans told me they would like all of Peace Now and Sheli to go into Labor in order to force it to adopt a more reasonable policy. I told them that that was a very unrealistic approach. Because what I would ideally want is for part of the Peace Now Movement to go into Labor in order to push from inside—and part to remain on the left to push from the outside. And then you would have some counterforce. That may happen.

But are they organized to consciously follow that strategy, It's not going to happen consciously. It's going to happen along the lines of a split: the most opportunistic elements are going to enter in order to go into the Knesset and to partake of the cake. And the less opportunistic — or more idealistic — are going to remain on the outside. And that wouldn't be a bad thing. I mean I wouldn't mind if that happened. I'm quite aware that Peace Now cannot remain a movement on the outside of Labor as things are now. After Begin, too many people are going to vote for Labor for them to become another Democratic Movement of Change. That's not going to happen. But if some of Peace Now remain on the outside, along with the Zionist left—Sheli and so on—they might produce some kind of momentum.

How independent is Peace Now of the various parties—the Labor Party and those to its left?

Independent. They have inputs but they are independent.

Even two years ago some people in Peace Now told me they were worried that some of the young leadership of Peace Now would "sell out" by running for parliament.

Yes, sure—that will happen. I don't know if its a "sell-out." I think some of them considered that their best strategy in the first place. So that's one of the things they were about all the time. Yes I think that's going to happen.

What is your reaction to Uri Davis [an anti-Zionist Israeli] who some time ago wrote that Peace Now isn't nearly as militant as Gush Emunim in pushing their aims and that that is one of the main reasons they are not so influential in Israel. They're an irritant and they are a growing movement, but it is obvious that they are not willing to take the militant action that Gush Emunim is willing to take.

I think that's a totally irrelevant and unrealistic statement. Because anyone in Israeli society and in the Zionist camp — which is most of Israeli Jewish society — knows that there was no way that Peace Now could develop such a *faith* approach as Gush Emunim—Gush Emunim coming basically from the National Religious Party.

No, I mean couldn't it be militant in the sense of sustained demonstrations?

There's no way. Peace Now is composed mostly of people who have

been goaded into finally doing something. In Gush Emunim there are self-motivated people who have finally found a channel for their beliefs. It's not the same thing.

But the point is that doesn't it take self-motivated people — people who really believe that Israel is in danger — to stop what some Israelis are calling fascism?

Yes, but first of all I don't think that they are going to stop fascism if fascism is going to appear. If fascism is going to be stopped it's going to be stopped by the fact that enough people are going to realize that suddenly Jews are killing Jews. That's how it's going to be stopped, if at all. Second, you have a long tradition of the left being less effective than the right. This happened in many, many countries — this happened in Germany, it happened in Chile. We saw that Allende was not able to put down the fascist elements which were coming up. And he knew it—he was simply physically unable to use their methods. And he died for it.

And Me'ir Pail said that he will defend Sheli with his fists and not with guns.

And Me'ir Pa'il would play Israel's Allende. I find Allende an admirable historical figure, but I think that he also lost Chile for the left and for democracy. And what I'm saying is that when the conflict comes, Peace Now is going to be the followers and not the initiators of something.

But you said that what will stop fascism if it succeeds in Israel — or at least increased right-wing violence — is the realization that Jews were killing Jews. What practical steps can be taken, and who will take them?

That is difficult to say. Those who are going to take them are not going to be people who are now organized in any specific movement. I mean it's going to be a new political situation. The day somebody arrives at the conclusion that there is facism, there's going to be an anti-fascist front. Whether it's going to be effective or not depends on many elements including the international situation. And including also the willingness of such an anti-fascist front to meet—force by force—which I am afraid is going to happen. I think it's also going to be—much as I deplore it—the only means of stopping it. Because you

now have an organized right-wing underground in Israel, besides the government and all the rest.

Do you think that there can arise in Israel a militant anti-fascist front?

At this stage, no.

Then how great are the dangers that Gush Emunim and their allies or people to the right of them will go even further before Begin falls?

Quite considerable—which amounts to saying that if we are not very careful, this means the end of the State of Israel and of the Jewish movement in Israel. Because the day you have a confrontation between Gush Emunim and all of the Palestinians' movements, the day there are no moderates left in both camps, then that's the day before the last day. And I think that that's a very realistic danger for the State of Israel.

Do you think a realistic danger is one expressed in an article reprinted in Israel & Palestine which, without using the name Gush Emunim, discussed it as a group which would attempt a coup d'etat and has the organization and the ability to do so? Do you think that's a realistic possibility?

I think that things have evolved for the worse since that article was written. We have discovered this underground in Israel—I&P was the first in fact to publicize its ability, its desire to blow up the El-Aqsa Mosque. And this caused international reaction — happily enough — which caused the government to react a bit stronger. The fact remains that the Israeli authorities have tried to represent this underground as a tiny band of fanatics led by Meir Kahane. And that's only the top of a far more serious thing. You have now an ideology which is that of "Throw the Arabs out" as Meir Kahane wrote in the *Jewish Post* in this country without anybody putting him on trial for that. We have a whole series of colonies all united around this ideology, all with arms, with a military structure which is supported logistically and otherwise by the army and trained by the army.

There is now a doctrine of local, regional defense which has evolved into the creation of a parallel armed settlement base in the territories. We have the *Yeshivot Ha'esder* — the "arrangement yeshivas" — from which these people go out and come back in the territories as well as in the State of Israel. This means they have strategic logistical bases both in Israel and outside it.

On the other hand, all these people are outside the mainstream of Israeli consciousness. They have a different mentality and a different ideology. They have arms and they are supported at a high level by cabinet ministers. I can name two: Zevulun Hammer who is Gush Emunim man in the NRP and Ariel Sharon, Minister of Agriculture, who supports the settlements. Which means really that for a variety of reasons they have all the elements necessary for raising hell. This would not be enough to make a *putsch* to take over, except that the Israeli army is getting increasingly politicized. And you have now various elements going according to various trends. You have paratroopers going with Rafi Eytan the chief of staff who is a supporter of Gush Emunim. You have the air force supporting Ezer Weizmann for a number of reasons, some of which are economic. The more you give to regional defense the less you give to the air force, for instance. I am generalizing — it goes deeper than that. And you have a variety of other generals — some of them are Labor and some are others. I would say there is a good likelihood of a right-wing underground in Israel and I believe ultimately that there could be a clash, not between Peace Now and that underground, but between the Labor Party, its generals and its sectors of the army, and those supporting such an underground or such a movement.

You're saying the underground movement exists now?

Yes, I know it exists.

And it includes chief sectors of the Israeli military?

No, but it is supported and tolerated by them. You see it's a complex thing—it's not a united movement.

Among the military and political leaders in Israel who may be at least sympathetic to the right wing — aren't there any who feel that a right-wing takeover and an authoritarian state could also mean the end of Israel?

Yes, all the people aligned with Labor believe that.

But what about people in Herut?

Probably some—it doesn't go along party lines in the army; you have people who are more radically militant and less radically militant. But it is certain that the mainstream of the army at this stage would be against such an underground, would be against such a takeover simply because it takes the power away from where it is now. And also because it is a dangerous thing — it destabilizes the State of

Israel. This is not yet a majority trend by any means. It is simply for the first time important enough to be noted.

How possible is it in the near future for the underground and the settlers in the West Bank—with some of the military—to arrange some kind of series of incidents or incident that will drive out a considerable number of Palestinians from the West Bank?

I predict that a series of incidents will happen. I don't think they will drive out any considerable number of Palestinians. I think that in order to do that you need a small war and I believe that such a small war may well be in the offing before the presidential elections in this country.

What could be such a scenario for a small war before November?

South Lebanon and perhaps all of Lebanon in order to kill off as many of the Palestinian cadres and leadership as possible — take over the water [the Litani river]. And also some kind of struggle against Jordan because the PFLP or somebody else launches attacks from Jordan—a pretext can be found. Any kind of struggle against Jordan in which the West Bank may be involved in order to "sweep out" two or three hundred thousand Palestinians. Now I've been told by a Palestinian activist that very few Palestinians would go out. But that's a moot question — we don't know what would happen during a war. It also depends on the means being used by the military in such conditions. That is the minimum scenario. The maximum scenario involves Saudi Arabia and Syria. But I would say that that is unlikely at this stage for two different reasons: Saudi Arabia because the Americans would interfere, and Syria because the Russians might interfere and America doesn't want a Russian-American military confrontation in the Middle East.

This scenario involves Saudi Arabia and Syria attacking Israel?

No, I would say Israel attacking Syria at least to take over Damascus and prove they can liquidate the Syrians, that is, destroy part of the Syrian military machine which is very powerful and considerably dangerous. But then, of course, the Russians might mass some of their troops, Russian troops, behind the Syrians which would immediately call a stop to the whole thing. But that's really a scenario, it's not something which I'm predicting. What I'm saying is that given the two candidates of the United States, given the economic situation in Israel, given Begin's short political future, given his sincere desire to keep all the colonies, the only way he can

maneuver is through a blow-up or by forcing Carter to his knees. But he's not been able to do this in the last few months. That means it's almost inevitable that somebody is at least going to try to do something before the elections. And that will have an influence on the results of the national campaign of course.

Even the mini-scenario you envisioned seems to me to involve a fairly colossal conspiracy. I mean, I can't even see the PFLP actually engaging in acts from Jordan in the next few months.

They have. They have. And Jordan, in fact, allowed the Palestinians to start operations from Jordan.

I heard that they said they would. I didn't know they did.

There were four incidents or three incidents.

So they're allowing them to cross the Jordan?

No, Jordan is not *allowing* the PFLP to cross because they are their enemies. But they are crossing from Jordan.

The PFLP alone?

And so are the pro-Iraqi groups.

The Arab Liberation Front?

Or whatever. But more the PFLP than the Iraqis. The Iraqis are launching from Lebanon showy operations like the hostage-taking and so on.

So you're saying there could be a genuine pretext for Israel to fight Jordan?

Sure. The extremists help each other. It's always been the case, right? Let's put it this way: it's in the interest of the PFLP strategy that Israel should go on taking territory because then there is movement. All of the PLO is going to become more radical if that happens. And we don't know to what extent.

Let's go back to the PLO. In an open letter, "Mr. PLO Representative," you tell a European PLO representative that by returning to a hard line, "you are missing the one and only opportunity to convince the only people who must agree to your independence before it becomes reality." Wouldn't you say that in light of your view that contemporary Israeli Zionists are divided for the most part into the "purists" — the ones who want a purely Jewish state — and those who want a "Jewish superiority state," isn't it*

naive to believe that Israel will give a positive response to any PLO overture?

I say that exactly as the PLO will finally and ultimately be forced to make a deal with the Israeli Jews, the Israeli Jews will ultimately be forced to make a deal with the PLO. I don't think either side wants it. I grant you that among the Israelis, people who envisage such a possibility are fewer and farther between than among the Palestinians and there is a reason behind that. Up to now, the Israelis have been winning, comparatively speaking. Not winning, but keeping the upper hand. But ultimately both sides will be forced into it. So it's not a question of naivete. It's a question of judging what can be done to preclude nuclear destruction of both peoples.

I guess the charge is that it would be naive for the PLO to make concessions now, given that Begin's in power. Do you think it would be really to the advantage of the Palestinians to make a major diplomatic move at this time?

Yes. Because through that policy the Palestinians have been able to organize international support to a degree unknown in their entire history. As long as they had a "revolution until victory exclusively through military means" policy they were not able to get 114 states to recognize them. They were not able to have India backing them and so on. Many things have happened because of their willingness to talk sense. And also Begin has certainly reinforced the tough line inside the Palestinian camp as we can see by the last resolutions of the Fatah Revolutionary Council in Damascus in June. It is also true that the people who still want some dialog with the Israelis have continued to be active, often at the risk of their lives. And this could not happen if the supreme leadership of the Palestinians disagreed.

Could somebody make an argument that precisely under Begin it would be better for the Palestinians to sound more conciliatory?

I don't think it is a matter of Begin or not because I, and I think most Palestinians will agree with me on this point at least, don't see such a basic difference between Begin and Peres. I think it's a question of having a sincere desire to make peace provided they get the ability to create a state in the occupied territories. For once I don't think it's expediency; I think it will be based on truth and I happen to believe it's the only way of doing it, if at all.

What would your response be to a left-wing Palestinian who says: "If the PLO led by Fatah agrees to some kind of diplomatic solution that

allows us a state it would only come about under conditions in which we have severely limited sovereignty, where we are dominated economically and politically, where we are demilitarized, where we are in effect a neo-colony in the area"?

It is certain that a Palestinian state in the beginning is going to be severely limited. I would make the point that the Palestinians are even more limited now since they don't have a state. I would also like to make another point — if you want to create a Palestinian State as a trick, then it's a trick that is not going to work. But if you want to create a Palestinian state in order to defuse the Jewish-Arab conflict, then the creation of a Palestinian State beside Israel is guaranteed by the two super powers will at least accomplish this. I hold that this is going to be an imperialist peace, that it *has* to be an imperialist peace because it is imposed by the Soviet Union and the United States. But I also hold that only when both the Arabs and the Jews have the same rulers can we work together. That's on the level of Socialism.

What do you mean "the same rulers"?

The Americans and the Russians. As long as the contradictions between the local rulers and the contradictions between the great rulers are manipulated by everybody there is no chance at all of getting together some kind of solidarity. Furthermore, on the economic level, such a solution would impose an economic renaissance in the Middle East which, it might be argued, may even be favorable to America and Russia. Therefore they might — perhaps at some stage in a detente economy and world — encourage such a solution. If that happens the development of the area will certainly raise the consciousness of part of the working classes of both the Jewish and Arab sides. This means really the development of some kind of regional consciousness as in Europe, not a united consciousness but something substantial. So there are good possibilities for the future — it's not a hopeless situation, neither from the national nor the social viewpoint.

It's obvious you're pessimistic in the short run. Barring fascism in Israel or some kind of terrible war in the Middle East, what do you think could happen between now and the time the superpowers may impose a two-state solution?

I am very pessimistic in the short run in any case and I will tell you why. For me there are four realistic possibilities in the next few years.

One of them is an absolute military thumping, a military victory by the Israeli army which will bring about another period of hate and ultimately nuclear revenge. I am talking about revenge — not about war — by a small group, possibly Palestinians, possessing a nuclear device. The second alternative would be a peace imposed on Israel and the Palestinians by the two superpowers after some series of bloody wars. The third possibility is nuclear destruction of the area. And the fourth one—which I would call only conditionally the “best”—is a very undecisive, but very bloody war between Israel and the Arabs bringing about such a loss of human life on the Israeli side that people would suddenly decide that it’s not worth it to go all out for a Jewish superiority state. So we have four scenarios the best of which is mass death for Jews and Arabs and the worst is nuclear destruction of the area. I don’t know if you can call that “pessimistic” and “optimistic.” The only other alternative, really, is a peace imposed by America and Russia, but the present polarization due to the world situation makes this possibility a very remote one. But this still could happen.

But you think it is more likely that there will be an imposed peace after some conflict, some war?

Yes. The only question is whether it’s going to be a conflict between the Israelis and the Arabs or the Soviet Union and the United States — which is a different kind of conflict altogether.

Film Review

FREE VOICE OF LABOR: THE JEWISH ANARCHISTS

Victor Treschan

Directed by Steven Fischler and Joel Sucher—Produced by Pacific Street Films. Edited by Kristina Borden. Research by Erika Gottfried and Maria Gil. Cinematography by Judy Irola. (1980)

Since its New York opening in April, overflow crowds across the country have been attending showings of an important documentary on Jewish life. *Free Voice of Labor: The Jewish Anarchists* recreates the history of the American Jewish anarchist movement. The film draws upon archival material, interviews with activists of the movement, scenes from the Yiddish film *Uncle Moses*, and the commentary of Paul Avrich, a professor of history at Queens College who has written extensively on anarchism.

The film represents a vital contribution to an understanding of that particular experience of the Jewish working class, and the Jewish secular progressive movements during the years of the massive immigration from Eastern Europe in the last decades of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth century. Fischler and Sucher’s film, obviously a work of love, fulfills an important educational function, providing a historic context for Jewish radicals today to contend with their Jewish and political identities by presenting a significant aspect of American Jewish history associated with the development of the Yiddish language, the creation of unions, and the growth of the socialist movement among the Jewish immigrants.

The film establishes a rich sense of the environment of the period: the brutal conditions of the sweatshops, the strikes in which Jews were on both sides of the line, the lectures and dances of the movement on the Lower East Side.

There are major weaknesses, however, in the presentation of the background data. A person with little historical information on the period leaves the theater with the impression that the Jewish anarchists were the only group active in the unionization of the immigrant Jewish workers in America, and the only movement which carried the torch of secular Jewish progressive culture in America. Louis Levine, in his book *The Women's Garment Workers*, a history of the early development of the ILGWU, pointed out that Jewish socialists bitterly opposed the anarchists in the 1890's. The anarchists denounced all socialists as opportunists, despising the political efforts of the socialists to improve the lot of the workers, and wanting to prepare the unions exclusively for the impending social revolution. Although the film discusses at length the ideas of the anarchists—rejection of the centralized state, anti-authoritarianism and anti-clericalism, the advocacy of freedom in love relationships—there is no mention of strategy or tactics for attaining social goals. According to Irving Howe in *The World of Our Fathers*, the Jewish anarchists had very little concern with political steps to ameliorate the conditions of the Jewish workers.

While the production takes its name from the Yiddish anarchist weekly, *Freie Arbeiter Shtimme*, there is no mention at all of other progressive Jewish publications such as the *Forverts* and, beginning in the 1920's, the *Freiheit*. The archival material and the interviews provide little understanding of how the anarchists viewed themselves in regard to the greater Jewish community. The only elements of *Yidishkeit* in the film appear in the form of Yiddish labor songs, not necessarily originating from the anarchist movement, the film *Uncle Moses*, and the Yiddish headlines of *Arbeiter Shtimme*. While there are scenes of a reunion of graduates of the Jose Ferrer school in New Jersey, named for the famous Spanish anarchist pedagogue, we do not learn whether the curriculum of the school included Jewish subjects, or whether the anarchist schools tried to educate the children in the historical significance of Jewish life as did the *shules* of other groups in the Jewish radical community.

The two important American Jewish anarchists, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, are hardly mentioned, and that is

surprising in view of the significant role that Emma Goldman played in the anarchist movement. Moreover, there is no attempt to connect the Jewish anarchists with their counterparts in the American Spanish and Italian communities. It would have been interesting to know the reaction of the Jewish community and the Jewish anarchists to the executions of the two martyrs of the anarchist movement: Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

The interviews with the elderly activists and Professor Avrich's commentary deal exclusively with the experience and struggles in the earlier period, without probing the ideas and stands of the activists concerning the contemporary scene. I was curious to know their stands on the state of Israel, their positions on the Palestinian question, and their attitudes toward the American Jewish establishment. The filmmakers are present when Ahrne Thorne, the last editor of the weekly, closes the publication in December 1977, and this scene illustrates the emphasis of Professor Avrich that the Jewish anarchist movement and ideas are solely part of the past.

For the young people who lined up in the streets an hour before the performance and punctuated with applause the scenes and comments in the film, the material presented was relevant to and important for their lives and not only an era which has ended. One wishes that the same producers or others would make a longer film recreating the spectrum of the Jewish radical tradition in this country; until then *Free Voice of Labor* will stand as a valuable but partial message.

THE GRANDMOTHER

May 1910

Hurricane

at a cranky slant
 a bench slid past
 the furious spray
 the messman's trunk crashed
 over the side
 with Sadie in a raft
 tossing in the immigrant sea
 and an S.O.S. flashed through the night
 "SOMEONE PLEASE
 WRITE MY HUSBAND AND TELL HIM I'M FINE
 !"

2

The Tailor

...and on the first night
 in full redmoon and rain
 Sadie Gold took off with a goat
 of her own
 in the black Russian snow
 in hope of a two cent's plain

...and on the second night, the iceman
 did her portrait in coaldust
 from park bench
 to bright faces and low ceilings
 on edge of a land
 where no-one could sleep

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...and on the third night
 in red blur of Winterlight
 she dunked black bread in lung-soup
 STEAM half dollar cemetery plots
 the unplucked necks of kosher hens
 and whites of horseradish steam

...and on the fourth night, I arrived
 the buba put me in Friday's jar
 and left it on the shelf
 to gather INTEREST
 between darkness of now
 and maybe tomorrow won't be so bad

...and on the fifth night
 she wept soft soft snow
 on the hand-stitched lapel
 of the blue suit
 I wore
 in my thirteenth year

...and on the sixth night, bent over
 under a twelve watt bulb
 sat the same woman fast-stitching
 and fixing someone's silk shirt
 stuck in one place thirteen hours
 doing idiot's work for W.W. Two wages

... and on the seventh night
 I saw my grandmother all right
 waiting in line for the bus
 to go home
 between brick dark of day
 and the green lady Liberty

...when/
 but all I could do was watch
 and record her clumping
 up the black and whitebread stairs
 to a place
 where she could stop
 and rest for a minute.

3

At Rest

In black lace

on Joan Crawford shoulders

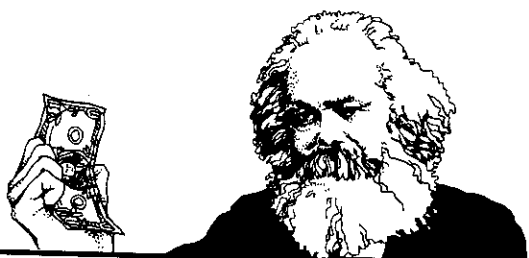
under a heavily-rouged face

neat arrangement of hands

and that mouth/

her faint mustache

on the smile of a bride.

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