

BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Anti-Semitism in America

MICAH L. SIFRY

IN SEARCH OF ANTI-SEMITISM. *By William F. Buckley Jr. Continuum. 207 pp. \$19.95.*

THE SOCIALISM OF FOOLS: Anti-Semitism on the Left. *By Michael Lerner. Tikun Books. 147 pp. Paper \$10.*

The public discussion of anti-Semitism in America is a case study in how words lose their meaning and struggles their moral authority. That is not to say that anti-Semitism has ceased to exist or that the fight against it has stopped mattering to people. Anti-Semitic incidents appear to be on the rise, and they are certainly getting more media attention; anti-Semitic attitudes are still widespread. But it is not so easy to rally people around the cause anymore: Whenever the issue arises, people start questioning one another's motives, arguing interminably whether this phrase is anti-Semitic, that criticism of Israel is legitimate or over the line, that person's act of condemnation or contrition is sincere or merely politic. A lot is at stake: Whose sensitivities should win out, which leaders should carry weight, who should be branded and who should escape branding? For all the attention anti-Semitic incidents get, it is not even clear that exposure and denunciation are the most effective ways to pursue the cause, or that it makes sense to treat anti-Semitism in this society separately from other forms of prejudice, such as homophobia, racism and sexism. And long-standing political and ethnic conflicts and misunderstandings only confuse matters more.

In Crown Heights, Brooklyn, for example, no one imagines that the mob chanting "Kill the Jew" picked out Hasidic scholar Yankel Rosenbaum for any reason other than his Jewishness. Nor is there much question that anti-Semitic feelings run hot and deep among many of the Hasidim's black neighbors, nursed along with real grievances about unequal treatment and racist attitudes among Jews. But think of the angry rhetoric that has reverberated around New York City in recent weeks. Did the jury of six blacks, four Latinos and two whites that acquitted Lemrick Nelson, Rosenbaum's

accused murderer, make that decision for anti-Semitic reasons? (Recall that a grand jury—also majority black—declined to indict the Jewish driver of the car that struck and killed young Gavin Cato.) Does Mayor David Dinkins's cautious behavior make him a "blatant" anti-Semite, as Norman Rosenbaum, the victim's brother, has charged? A "Jew-hater" and "as dangerous as Farrakhan," as other Jews have shouted? Or are people who make such charges "the dregs in the street," in the words of (of all people) former mayor Ed Koch? Did the Hasidim embrace Al D'Amato in last November's senatorial election because he, more than Orthodox Jew Robert Abrams, was seen as their best friend and defender, or, as reported by Wayne Barrett in *The Village Voice*, because he was willing to attack Dinkins viciously over the handling of the disturbances, while Abrams would not hold the Mayor personally responsible? With these sorts of cross-currents running through the controversy, it shouldn't be surprising that people of good will have had such difficulty in finding any way to focus on the central problem exposed by the Crown Heights riot: that interethnic distrust and resentment have passed the boiling point.

Where is anti-Semitism in America coming from today, and how should it be fought?

Why, in the last decade or so, has the public consensus about anti-Semitism in America unraveled? I think the answer is found in several places: first, the politically biased use of the charge of "anti-Semite," which has damaged the moral authority that is needed for any successful act of shaming and undermined any shared agreement about the meaning of the word; second, the right's assault on the broader fight against all forms of prejudice, which some leading anti-anti-Semites and some prominent black anti-racists have assisted; third, the collapse of Jewish identity into a reflex-

ive survivalism, which has made some Jews paranoid and hypersensitive about any incident or criticism; and finally, the avoidance of a serious analysis of why anti-Semitism occurs in the first place, which might cause some to rethink their strategy for fighting it.

It's not that people disagree strongly about how to define anti-Semitism in the abstract, as two recent books on the subject from opposite ends of the political spectrum show. For Michael Lerner, editor of *Tikkun* magazine and author of *The Socialism of Fools: Anti-Semitism on the Left*, anti-Semitism is "the systematic discrimination against, denigration, or oppression of Jews, Judaism, and the cultural, intellectual, and religious heritage of the Jewish people." In the words of William F. Buckley Jr., founder of *National Review* and author of *In Search of Anti-Semitism*, "anyone who gives voice, especially if this is done repeatedly, to opinions distinctively, even uniquely, offensive to the security of settled Jewish sentiment involving religious or ethnic or tribal pride engages in anti-Semitic activity."

But where is anti-Semitism in America coming from today, and how should it be fought? On this crucial question, no one agrees. To understand why, we have to review some familiar and not-so-familiar recent political developments. Just consider the following:

§ A little over a year ago, neo-Nazi ex-Klansman David Duke was defeated in his race for the Louisiana governorship. This past November, with far less fanfare, nineteen Duke supporters were elected to the Republican state central committee. Together with a bloc of fifty-one Duke-friendly fundamentalist Christians—led until recently by the Rev. Billy McCormack, who supported Duke during his gubernatorial campaign (something McCormack now denies)—they will make up close to a working majority of the party's main organ.

§ In December 1991, Patrick Buchanan was condemned by Buckley for a series of anti-Semitic statements. A few weeks later he was endorsed by Buckley and *National Review* in the New Hampshire primary. Without ever apologizing for what he said, Buchanan went on to give a keynote speech at the Republican convention in August. Over at CNN's *Crossfire*, they're keeping his chair warm for his return.

§ In this year's presidential campaign, President Bush hired as his campaign manager Fred Malek, the man who sup-

plied President Nixon with a list of Jews in the Labor Department; never once criticized Buchanan for his bigotry; and never repudiated the Louisiana Republican Party for its critical failure to censure Duke. This past September he addressed the annual convention of Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, where, speaking after the evening news hour to avoid TV coverage, he was seated next to the very same Rev. McCormack, who was the Bush campaign's Louisiana vice chairman.

All this has happened with hardly a word of public protest from the professional anti-anti-Semitic world and barely a blink on either the news or Op-Ed pages (except for a blast or two from *New York Times* columnist Abe Rosenthal on the subject of Buchanan's presidential campaign). Can anyone imagine such silence if supporters of Louis Farrakhan were elected to the Illinois Democratic state committee? Does anyone remember such silence when Jesse Jackson ran for President in 1988—after having made numerous apologies for his 1984 "Hymietown" remark? If, say, some Farrakhanite had been invited to a Rainbow Coalition convention and if Bill Clinton had been seated next to him, would the organized forces of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee have held their fire, explaining, as they did in the cases of Duke and Buchanan, that their tax-exempt status prevented them from intervening in a political campaign?

This is not to suggest that the anti-anti-Semites, led by the powerful A.D.L., have forgotten their mandate. This past November the A.D.L. released a new public opinion survey that found that support for anti-Semitic views, while down slightly in the past decade, remains strong among *one-fifth* of the adult population. While anti-Semitism on the social level, which takes the form of abhorring contact with Jews or believing stereotypes about Jews as greedy, dishonest, etc., is clearly on the decline, the notions that Jews have too much power and are more loyal to Israel than America have gained support. The survey confirms the worrisome facts, acknowledged and condemned by scholars like Henry Louis Gates Jr., Cornel West and others, about the prevalence of anti-Jewish prejudice among blacks. Blacks are twice as likely as whites to subscribe to anti-Semitic views, a disturbing finding even if this is partially a reflection of the resentment many may feel at the amount of attention

given by American institutions to Israel and the Holocaust as against Africa and slavery.* This comes on the heels of an equally troubling A.D.L. report on the anti-Semitism of black demagogues, from Farrakhan and former Representative Gus Savage to CUNY Professor Leonard Jeffries and rapper Professor Griff of Public Enemy. There is no question the A.D.L. takes minority anti-Semitism seriously, as well it should. But what about anti-Semitism elsewhere, among the white majority and by the powerful?

Here is what the A.D.L. says about its approach to fighting anti-Semitism, in its report on black demagogues: "The scapegoating statements and polarizing acts of anti-white, anti-Asian and anti-Semitic extremists are evidence of a troubling phenomenon which requires exposure and condemnation." The report's authors write:

No community is monolithic, and no community . . . should be judged by its extremists. But we believe it is reasonable to call upon the recognized and elected organizational representatives and public officials of any given community to isolate, condemn and repudiate its extremists. . .

Some mainstream Black leaders have forcefully denounced and repudiated anti-Semitism and Jew baiting. But others have lent respectability to bigots by sharing platforms and public forums with them, rationalizing their bigotry by stressing the "social benefits" of their programs, and even honoring them

But a bare two months after Buckley's much-ballyhooed essay parsing four recent cases of alleged anti-Semitism in public discourse (that of *National Review* writer Joseph Sobran, commentator and soon-to-be presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan, the right-wing *Dartmouth Review* and the author and *Nation* contributor Gore Vidal), *National Review* was making a case for the benefits of Buchanan's program: "Mr. Buchanan's principles . . . are soundly Reaganite on such matters as taxes, spending, welfare, quotas and crime. Because this list accounts for most great political issues, and because Mr. Bush is *unsound* on them, *National Review* urged a tactical vote for the challenger in New Hampshire." (A great many Louisianians—the majority

* One significant positive finding. Contrary to earlier polls and Gates's July 20, 1992, *New York Times* Op-Ed on "Black Demagogues and Pseudo-Scholars," higher levels of education lead to *lower* support for anti-Semitic beliefs among blacks, matching the overall tendency among whites



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of white voters—no doubt thought David Duke's positions were soundly Reaganite as well.*) Buckley insisted that a vote for Buchanan had nothing to do with countenancing anti-Semitism. "The people backing Buchanan are protesting George Bush's domestic policies," he told reporter Gabe Pressman at the time, "and the question of anti-Semitism simply isn't on the table." (Well, it wasn't as if Duke was openly and actively campaigning against the Jews either. Nor was Jesse Jackson, even though the issue was constantly raised against him.)

Buckley says Buchanan is not anti- Semitic, he just likes 'mischievous generalizations.'

It's not that no one objected to the endorsement—for about fifteen minutes, it was an issue. In fact, in *In Search of Anti-Semitism*, a book-length compilation of Buckley's original 40,000-word essay, the responses of a zoo of neocons, paleocons, plain-old-cons (and a smattering of liberals) and a chapter-length afterword from the old man, Buckley reveals that criticism of his Buchanan endorsement from prominent conservatives prompted a belated attempt to retrieve both men's reputations. Using a nephew who was a member of the Buchanan cadre as his conduit, Buckley drafted a statement for Pat to deliver. It read, in part:

I said in the fall of 1990 that the impulse to resist Saddam Hussein by force of arms was almost exclusively generated by the Israeli lobby. I was wrong: that sentiment was quite general, and it included respectable voices of American conservatism, which is not part of what I jocularly called the "amen corner" of the Israel lobby.

I am sorry about this misrepresentation, as I am sorry that in naming important geopolitical strategists who favored such action against Saddam Hussein, I listed four important voices all of whom are Jewish Americans. I am especially sorry that I made the mistake of

listing only non-Jewish names as probable military casualties of such action.

This text is a useful reminder of how sparse Buckley's original indictment of Buchanan was. (Buckley leaves out such outrages as Buchanan's claim that diesel engines, the exhaust from which was used in Treblinka's gas chambers, "do not emit enough carbon monoxide to kill anybody," and he dismisses those—Jack Newfield in particular—who insist that Buchanan is an across-the-board hate-monger.) Needless to say, Buchanan rejected Buckley's suggestion. And Buckley, who anyway says at numerous points in his essay that he does not believe Buchanan to be anti-Semitic, just "attracted to mischievous generalizations," let matters drop. The ugliness was conveniently forgotten by all, and during the Republican convention no one noticed when the Buchanans rented a campground owned by the Jewish Community Center of Houston for a big thank-you party for a thousand of Pat's partisans.

The Great Reversal

For all his essay's slipperiness (see "Buckley's Search," January 6/13, 1992), Buckley is at least trying to ask the right question: Why is anti-anti-Semitism so frail? But his explanations for what he calls "the great reversal" of the cause are trivial in the first case and overbroad in the second: First, he blames the publication of an infamous article by Gore Vidal in this magazine ("The Empire Lovers Strike Back," March 22, 1986), and second, he sees Auschwitz as a distant memory "fading away as the dynamic arbiter of the nation's moral reflexes." How one article in a progressive journal of opinion paved the way for, say, Patrick Buchanan's survival as a presidential contender and media conglomerate is beyond me. Let us stipulate that Vidal went over the usual line one draws around discussion of American Jews and Israel with his depiction of neocons Norman Podhoretz and Midge Decter as "the Lunts of the new right (Israeli Fifth Column Division)" and his description of the Israelis as a "predatory people." He now writes, in a letter to *The New Yorker* (!), that his "censure of a few dozen neocons" was unfairly turned "into an indictment of all American Jews" and implies that he is a supporter of Israel's Peace Now movement. Given Vidal's longstanding and mutually vitriolic fight with Podhoretz and Decter, I think people should grant that he did not intend all Jews as his target and accept his letter as an expression

of better faith on that count. I still wish the editors of this magazine (I was publicity director at the time, but include myself in this) had insisted on greater care from Vidal in his remarks; perhaps, as we have seen, irony and hyperbole are inappropriate modes of rhetoric in this super-sensitive arena, bound to be misunderstood and misused.

Hyperbole, after all, is the defense Buckley and other right-wingers have claimed for people like Pat Buchanan. "He expresses himself with excessive liberty from accepted conventions," said Buckley of Joseph Sobran after the columnist had written in praise of an obscure racist magazine called *Instauration*. (Sobran remained a senior editor of *National Review* for four years after that episode, and is still its critic-at-large.) Buchanan wrote with "characteristic hyperbole," said Robert Novak. Buckley concluded, "What [Buchanan] did and said during the period under examination amounted to anti-Semitism, what ever it was that drove him to say and do it: most probably, an iconoclastic temperament."

For Buckley, opposition to anti-Semitism requires a consistent pressure for sensitive behavior. But why? "Ethnic sensitivities vary," he writes "About the American Indians one can say most things with impunity; about gays, progressively less as, emerging from the closet, they consolidate and give strength to their retaliatory powers.* In respect of American Jews, the sensitivity is of an extremely high order, and for the best of reasons." Either Buckley thinks some groups, like American Indians and gays, deserve the suffering inflicted on them, as opposed to the Jews, who were unjustly persecuted, or he believes the expression or acceptance of prejudice should be inversely proportional to an ethnic group's power. Neither approach offers much hope of creating a society free of hatred.

The same can be said of the efforts of groups like the A.D.L. and its neoconservative allies. Their struggle against anti-Semitism has been marred by a tendency to inflate charges of prejudice on the left and to play them down on the right. Recall, if you will, the initial response of Abe Foxman, national director of the A.D.L., after *The Washington Post* revealed in 1988 that Fred Malek, a high-level adviser to then-Vice President Bush,

* In October 1991, during the gubernatorial campaign in Louisiana, Buchanan himself had this to say about Duke's coded racial attacks on welfare and affirmative action: "In the hard times in Louisiana, Duke's message comes across as middle class, meritocratic, populist and nationalist."

* This from a man who not so long ago called for the tattooing of the backsides of people infected with HIV. More recently, Buckley has begun to venture out of his homophobic cave, prompted by the coming out of Marvin Liebman, a longtime friend and prominent conservative.

had given President Nixon a list of Jews in the Labor Department, some of whom then lost their jobs. Foxman called it "ancient history," adding that Malek had merely been "carrying out the instructions of an individual who had [prejudiced] feelings." As liberal Representative Barney Frank said at the time, "The idea that he's not an anti-Semite himself but is only helping somebody else be an anti-Semite doesn't make me feel much better." With that somebody else in mind, I asked the A.D.L.'s research director, Alan Schwartz, for a copy of all statements the league had ever made regarding Nixon and anti-Semitism. The only one he could find was issued in response to the ex-President's assertion that lobbying by Israel and American Jews was responsible for Congressional opposition to the 1981 AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia. It read, in part:

Richard Nixon is indeed a friend of Israel and his views on foreign affairs merit regard. But singling American Jews out from the broad spectrum of opposition to the AWACS sale, is at best mischievous, at worst mean-spirited.

Ah, but wasn't a major reason Buckley censured Buchanan the same singling out of American Jews? Now study the transcripts of the Watergate tapes. On the mere 2 percent of the tapes that have been released we can hear Nixon referring to Jews as "kikes"; asking (incorrectly) "Aren't the Chicago Seven all Jews?"; and telling his aides, "The Arts you know—they're Jews, they're left wing—in other words, stay away." Isn't Richard Nixon an anti-Semite (as well as a racist and plenty of other things)? Why do others lend him respectability by offering him public forums?

Part of an answer can be found in the response to Representative Robert Dornan—now reviled for other, not dissimilar reasons—after his attack on Soviet TV commentator Vladimir Pozner back in 1986. On the floor of the House of Representatives, Dornan lashed out at Pozner for being a "disloyal, betraying little Jew" after Pozner had appeared on U.S. television criticizing a speech by President Reagan. Dornan at first said no apology was in order, but swiftly changed his mind after an outcry from Jewish leaders. Many, like Representative Stephen Solarz, were then quick to exonerate him, noting his "long history of support and involvement with Israel, Soviet Jewry and other Jewish causes." It was left to the *Los Angeles Times* to remind its readers that this was not the first time

Dornan had let loose with anti-Semitic slurs. One year earlier, he had been criticized by Barney Frank after he had called the Massachusetts Congressman one of the "New York liberal Democrats [who] only build F-15s for Israeli pilots, not for our pilots."

With Friends Like These

This pattern of deference to friends of Israel who harbor anti-Semitic impulses can be found even in the A.D.L.'s reports on Pat Buchanan. The November 1991 report "Anger on the Right: Pat Buchanan's Venomous Crusade" makes no mention of Ronald Reagan's 1985 trip to Bitburg, where he laid a wreath at the grave of German soldiers and members of the S.S. As Joshua Muravchik pointed out in his essay on Buchanan in *Commentary*, according to *U.S. News & World Report*, "Fellow White House aides blanched when Communications Director Patrick Buchanan bluntly urged Jewish leaders visiting the White House to 'be good Americans' and stop protesting Reagan's cemetery stop." And *The Washington Post* reported that Buchanan was "credited . . . with the President's characterization of World War II German soldiers and SS troops as 'victims' of the Nazis 'just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps.'" I asked A.D.L. research director Schwartz about this omission, and all he could say was "There was an allegation about an offensive note about Jews [by Buchanan] at the time that we couldn't confirm." But maybe the A.D.L. didn't want to remind readers of President Reagan's sordid trip to the German cemetery.*

Malek, Nixon, Dornan, Reagan. Perhaps such people are treated gently because they are powerful, or have powerful patrons, and groups like the A.D.L. don't want to pick fights they fear they can't win. And perhaps friendship to Israel exonerates. But, knowing the A.D.L.'s longstanding monitoring of the far right, how to explain the group's actions in the fight against David Duke? It is worth recalling that Duke continued to associate with neo-Nazis after his election to the Louisiana state legislature in 1989, and that he was still selling hate literature from his office. Yet a motion to censure Duke, proposed by Elizabeth Rickey, the member of the Republican state central committee who was pivotal in exposing

* The A.D.L.'s newly updated report on Buchanan corrects this omission with one sentence during a discussion of his work as a columnist, not as a Reagan aide. Reagan's hiring of a man with an "anti-Semitic slant," in the A.D.L.'s words, does not appear to affect its view of the President.

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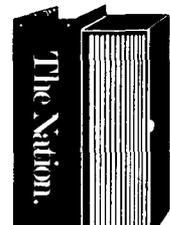
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these facts, was blocked by the chairman of the state party (with the important help of the Rev. Billy McCormack).^{*} Given the A.D.L.'s regular insistence on the repudiation of black anti-Semites by other black leaders, it is odd that the group never attacked the Republican National Committee for allowing the Louisiana party to continue to participate in the national party after it failed to repudiate Duke.

The A.D.L. admits it was sidelined during Duke's 1990 and 1991 races for senator and governor, but says it couldn't take a more vocal role in opposing him because of its tax-exempt status, which prevents such groups from taking sides in political campaigns. Indeed, the organization was tied up in the courts for years after 1984 presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche brought a complaint to the Federal Fair Election Practices Commission after the group denounced his "anti-Semitic bigotry." But, says Daniel Levitas, executive director of the Center for Democratic Renewal, an Atlanta-based group that focuses on anti-Semitism, racism and organized hate groups, "in 1984 and 1988, the A.D.L. cared not one whit for violations of its tax-exempt status in its denunciations of Jesse Jackson." (Before Jackson announced his candidacy in 1983, but aware of his impending run, the A.D.L. quietly circulated a nineteen-page memo to reporters detailing Jackson's past statements regarding Jews. When the "Hymietown" furor broke, A.D.L. officials leapt at the opportunity to nail him

^{*} Rickey was one of the founders of the Louisiana Coalition Against Racism and Nazism, which led the anti-Duke movement. See her excellent essay, "The Nazi and the Republicans: An Insider View of the Response of the Louisiana Republican Party to David Duke," in *The Emergence of David Duke and the Politics of Race*, Douglas Rose, ed. (University of North Carolina, 1992)

MY POEMS

My poems are prayers to a god
to come into being.

Some mornings I have seen his hair
flash on the horizon,

some nights I have seen his heel there
clear as the moon.

My poem pray to him to be
manifest like lightning—

in one pure instant abolish
and recreate the world.

May Swenson

as an anti-Semite. Apologies were of no use. "He could light candles every Friday night, and grow sidecurls, and it still wouldn't matter . . . he's a whore," Nathan Perlmutter, then the A.D.L.'s director, told CBS News reporter Bob Faw.)

In Levitas's view, the core of the problem is the rise of neoconservatives in the Jewish establishment. "That event determined how, why and when 'anti-Semitism' would be used politically," he says. He recalls meeting with Irwin Suall, the long-time fact-finding director of the A.D.L.'s New York office, back in 1986. According to Levitas, Suall told him, "The principal struggle in defense of Jewish security in the United States today does not concern the radical right. The greatest threat to the fabric of democracy comes from the left." And if confirmation of this shift in the A.D.L.'s priorities is needed, here is its sometime soulmate Buckley: "Back when the Anti-Defamation League was tempted to identify American conservatism with fascism and racism, we regularly gave the organization hell. (We welcomed its reformation at the hands of the late Nathan Perlmutter, who was a contributor to *National Review*.)" Readers who recall Perlmutter's advocacy of a Jewish alliance with the Christian Right as well as the A.D.L.'s work on behalf of Reagan's Central America policies might look up Frank Donner's seminal essay in these pages ("Courting Disaster," October 6, 1984) to refresh their memories.

The A.D.L.'s own recent survey on anti-Semitism suggests that this shift in emphasis is the wrong one. For one thing, somewhat fewer liberals than conservatives fall into the "most anti-Semitic" category. The study also found a strong connection between anti-Semitic and xenophobic, racist and intolerant attitudes. People who agreed with such statements as "It bothers me to see immigrants succeeding more than Americans who were born here"; "I do not think it is all right for whites and blacks to date each other"; "Women should return to their traditional role in society"; and "AIDS might be God's punishment for immoral sexual behavior" were significantly more likely to be anti-Semitic. If so, it seems the best strategy for Jews would be one that confronts legitimization of any of these views and seeks alliances with people in the women's, gay, black and immigrant communities who see things the same way.

What About the Left?

Much more could be said about the ramifications of the neocons' politicized approach to the problem of anti-

Semitism in America. For example, there is the danger that emphasizing its existence among blacks while playing down its prevalence among whites, particularly powerful whites, will cause the cries of concern to fall on deafened ears. Law professor Patricia Williams calls this "the Willie Hortonization of anti-Semitism." In this context, the courageous statements by people like Jesse Jackson, Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, Randall Kennedy, bell hooks and others condemning black anti-Semitism are all the more significant. The clucking that came from commentators like Abe Foxman, Ed Koch and *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen after Jackson's powerful call for a new, positive relationship between blacks and Jews last July before the World Jewish Congress in Brussels was pathetic. To insist, as each of them did, that Jackson's condemnation of anti-Semitism was essentially meaningless until it was "delivered in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn and at black student meetings at Berkeley" was to move the goalposts yet again.

And one could write whole essays on the sometimes wacky controversies about anti-Semitism in the culture (remember the row over Michael Thomas's novel *Hanover Place*?) and on how the neocons have sought to brand most critics of Israel as anti-Semites, a subject of endless debate.^{*} But put aside the politics of anti-anti-Semitism. If, as the surveys suggest and the survival of the Buchanans and Farrakhans attests, anti-Semitism remains just below the surface of American life, what is to be done? Our professional anti-anti-Semites call for more vigilance, more educational work in the schools, more denunciations by leading public figures. It takes a progressive Jewish dissident like *Tikkun* magazine's Michael Lerner to remind us that anti-Semitism is not merely the product of a bad education.

In *The Socialism of Fools: Anti-Semitism on the Left*, Lerner points out that anti-Semitism exists, above all, because it is useful to the rulers of exploitative and unequal societies. And the opportunities that Jews have been historically allowed in the class system have

^{*} In that respect, one of the more interesting findings not highlighted in the coverage of the A.D.L.'s new survey on anti-Semitism, taken during the last months of the Shamir government, is worth noting. Criticism of Israel, it turns out, is no predictor for anti-Semitic attitudes. In fact, many critics of Israeli policy are well-educated, follow foreign affairs closely and embrace tolerant, pluralistic attitudes at home.

made them vulnerable in a specific way. "Whether as . . . shopkeepers, business leaders, foremen, tax collectors, pawnbrokers, moneylenders, lawyers, doctors, teachers, psychologists, social workers or government bureaucrats, Jews were (and are) often in the position of appearing to have power over others," Lerner explains. "Anti-Semitism in the contemporary period has as one important root people's resentment of their oppression in daily life," he writes. "This resentment is then directed toward one of the recognizable agents of the oppressors rather than at the oppressors themselves." Given the neoconservative dominance of the discussion, he is to be thanked for reminding us of this trenchant analysis. With it, Lerner offers vital insights into the failure of American Jews to take their condition seriously.

Lerner's view, which convinces me, is that a struggle against anti-Semitism—the kind of confrontation in personal and institutional relationships that has taken place and continues against sexism, racism and homophobia—has never really happened in this country. Instead, World War II made it unpatriotic to be anti-Semitic, and the Holocaust shamed everyone into silence thereafter. Then, the leadership of the American Jewish community shied away from any public demand that Jewish oppression as such be dealt with in the public arena. "Their

deep pessimism about non-Jews, expressed inside the Jewish world in a pervasive 'goyim-bashing,' discouraged them from even beginning a full-scale assault on anti-Semitism," Lerner writes. "Instead, all they ask is that non-Jews give Israel enough support so that there will be a place to escape to when these non-Jews turn on them." The more difficult but necessary task of confronting the injuries of class and creating a more humane and equitable society was ignored as many Jews began "making it," in the immortal words of neocon Norman Podhoretz.

Building moral authority is a reciprocal project.

Lerner also argues that anti-Semitism has never been a vital concern of the left, and "without that legitimation, Jews who *have* raised this issue have been portrayed as being narrowly sectarian and self-interested, rather than as crusaders for a cause that the society has unfairly neglected." Though Lerner is at pains to insist that the real threat of anti-Semitism comes from the right, the central concern that runs through his book is this: The left is insensitive to anti-Semitism. I wish he had been more specific, especially as this charge pertains to today's movements for change, as opposed to the older, more ideological lefts of Europe and the United States. Most of the current examples he offers either occurred during the Gulf War crisis or are acts of omission (Jewish issues are ignored by progressive organizations, Jews aren't represented as Jews within left organizations, Jewish sources are ignored by multiculturalists, leftists fail to subscribe to *Tikkun* because it is seen as a Jewish magazine). Many of the latter cases are arguable, and it's hard to say to what extent the former incidents reflected the confusion and hysteria of the time, the ideological animus of some far-left groups or the surfacing of repressed feelings among typical progressives. Personally, I have never felt a conflict between my Jewish and progressive identities, a choice Lerner says is often forced on Jews on the left. Nor do I think the left forces Jews to "abandon their own unique history and ethnic identity and instead identify as 'whites' in America." Perhaps this comes from liv-

ing in New York City instead of the San Francisco Bay area.

But I do think Lerner is right to insist that the left remain vigilant about anti-Semitism within its ranks, be it openly expressed or unconscious, and that Jews on the left be more determined to speak out as Jews on their concerns the same way gays, women and blacks have organized among themselves and within the broader left to insure that their issues are heard. I think, however, that care must be taken all around not to separate and isolate these causes from one another, and that new and creative ways must be found to forge a common front against prejudice and discrimination. Building moral authority is a reciprocal project, as those blacks who have condemned anti-Semitism among their fellows have pointed out. An injury to one is an injury to all.

What Is a Jew?

The American Jewish community is relatively secure, compared with most. Jews, unlike blacks, aren't routinely pulled over by police if they drive through WASP neighborhoods, and unlike gays they are not regularly beaten and killed simply for who they are (Yankel Rosenbaum and Alan Berg, the Denver talk-radio host murdered by white supremacists, are recent exceptions). It's not that Jews should stop worrying about outbreaks of prejudice here, as recent events in Germany remind us. But the very security Jews have achieved is subtly undermining the community's solidity, while intermarriage rates rise. And that sense of slippage affects how American Jews see anti-Semitism in America today.

In that context, it seems to me that the heated and unsettled question, "Who is an anti-Semite?" is intimately related to the less openly discussed confusion within Judaism about "Who is a Jew?" It wasn't that long ago that American Jewry rose up, united across political differences, to oppose the promise, made by Yitzhak Shamir to religious parties in his government coalition, to tighten the presently expansive definition of "Who is a Jew" to exclude anyone converted by a rabbi in the Reform or Conservative branches of Judaism. Some Hasidim see themselves as superior to non-Orthodox Jews (and conversely, many Jews say they would be more upset about their child marrying a Hasid than a conservative WASP). And I am willing to bet that most Jews, whatever their degree of observance, would be hard pressed to say what being Jewish means to them, be-

GUILTY

I hadn't finished being young,
hadn't learned how to be,
when I noticed I'd been semi-old
for some time.
And now that, beyond that,
I've arrived—or, *gone*
is the right word—far
beyond "beyond the shadow
of a doubt" to that low state
labeled "old," I'm incredulous
at the extent of my self-blindness
since the beginning.

Guilty, I declare myself.
And, too late at this final state
to begin to learn how
to begin to be.
Self-condemned, confined
to the cell of old age, I'm
sentenced to . . . life!
A term pityfully short.
Time of execution, any early
morning. It's a secret.
It'll be a surprise.

May Swenson

yond a commitment to Jewish survival and Israel's safety. On this, I am indebted to Leonard Fein, the former editor of *Moment* magazine, who has written sensitively on the paradox of American Jewish identity:

At the end of the day, "never again!" tells us only what to avoid, not what to embrace. It raises the fact of Jewishness to something more than a mere name tag, but it falls far short of offering a way of life, a source of identity; it suggests an agenda, not a culture; it points to a politics, not to a value system. It is a way of saying where we are not and will not let ourselves be, but it does not tell us where we are and want to go.

It reduces a religious civilization to a political action committee.

And any direct-mail expert can tell you the best way to drum up support for a political action committee—with scare tactics. As Fein warns:

A community that holds survival as its purpose . . . must necessarily constantly remind its members how precarious that survival is. Such a community depends, finally, on its enemies, real or imagined, to mobilize its lethargic troops

Fortunately, the Jewish community is not a neoconservative monolith, despite the prominence of some particular individuals and groups. Many still identify with the liberation story at the core of the Jewish heritage—on which Lerner is most eloquent—and try to act accordingly. It was in that spirit that I was pleased to discover that the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the Reform movement, invited Jesse Jackson to speak at its annual convention this past December. Some Jews—many Jews—know that sustaining the meaning and moral authority of the struggle against anti-Semitism and for Jewish survival involves more than denouncing Jew-haters and lining up support for Israel. As Albert Vorspan and David Saperstein, two leaders of the Reform movement, write in their new book *Tough Choices: Jewish Perspectives on Social Justice*:

We can find no safety in turning inward upon ourselves, severing our links with the general community. We can find safety only if we help America deal not only with the symptoms—hatred, rage, bigotry—but with the root problems of our society—slums, powerlessness, decay of our cities, and unemployment, which spawn the evils of bigotry and conflict. Our task as Jews must go beyond the defensive job of countering the attacks of anti-Semitism to helping bring about a just and peaceful society

MUSIC.

EDWARD W. SAID

Most summer music festivals originate in celebration and commemoration that later harden into routine and become unashamed touristic promotion. This has certainly been true of Salzburg, which began (as Michael Steinberg's book on its origins amply shows) as a Mozart festival whose aim in the post-World War I period was to revitalize the idea of Austria as the home of a Catholic Baroque world view and to give Austria a new sense of international mission. The works of Mozart, von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauss were the core of its repertory and, until World War II, it succeeded quite brilliantly albeit not on the grandiose scale imagined by its founder. After the war it was hijacked by Herbert von Karajan for his self-glorification. As a student I attended the Salzburg Festival once (in 1958), and although impressed with the remarkable level of performances—in the course of a week I heard Karajan do *Fidelio* and the Verdi *Requiem*, Karl Bohm do *Così fan tutte* with Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Christa Ludwig, Dimitri Mitropoulos conduct Barber's *Vanessa* and a superb Brahms concert with the Vienna Philharmonic and Zino Francescatti, plus recitals by Glenn Gould and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau—I could already sense the degree of alienating opulence and reactionary as well as pointless display toward which it was tending. Thereafter, unless you were a corporate C.E.O. or a German banker, Salzburg was simply out of reach, dominated entirely by Karajan's imperiousness and cold arrogance. Reports about the new regime started this year by Gérard Mortier suggest a different although unclear tack, with a healthy dose of avant-garde works (e.g., Peter Sellars's 1992 production of Messiaen's opera *St. Francis*) played there for the first time.

Six years ago I reported here about the Santa Fe Opera, where I heard an interesting performance of Strauss's basically unperformed opera *Die ägyptische Helena* and (for me at least) the altogether less interesting Monteverdi *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*. I returned in 1992 for Gay and Pepusch's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) and Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, both of which received competent if uninspiring realizations. *The Beggar's Opera*

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