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Liberalism & American Jews

Irving Kristol

AMERICAN Jews, in their overwhelming majority, are politically rooted in a liberal tradition. That is presumably why, as Milton Himmelfarb has noted, Jews in this country have the economic status of white Anglo-Saxon Episcopalians but vote more like low-income Hispanics. How to explain this anomaly, unique in the American experience? The Irish and the Italians, as they move up the economic ladder, are far more likely to shed the urban-immigrant liberalism of their parents and grandparents, shifting rather predictably to one version or another of suburban conservatism (of which interest-group liberalism is a subspecies). They perceive their interests in a new way, and vote these interests. Such a shift is what a student of sociology would expect. Why has it not happened among America's Jews? Why are they so different? Is there a single answer that can serve as an explanation?

I think there is—though it is a single answer, that is not a simple answer. It has to do with the meaning of that “liberalism” to which American Jews seem so stubbornly attached, a meaning that is itself a special compound of Jewish political history and Jewish religious history over the past two centuries. So powerful is this meaning that it has become, for many Jews, an integral aspect of their self-definition as Jews. There are now some signs that this self-definition is finally eroding in the face of a circumstantial reality that repels its solicitation. But it is interesting to note that Jews who move away from their familiar (and familial) liberalism still tend to describe themselves as “disillusioned,” whereas their Irish and Italian counterparts find such a movement to be natural, not at all traumatic, and not calling for any self-conscious reflection.

To be disillusioned one must have had illusions. The liberalism of the modern Jew is one that has been especially rich in illusions. Obviously, those illusions have been not merely illu-

sions—to retain the loyalty of Jews for so long a time, they had to be nourished by the real, outside world. “Jewish liberalism”—and the term is neither invidious nor inappropriate—is organically connected to a larger non-Jewish liberalism that has tended to dominate the intellectual (even spiritual) life of Western Europe ever since the French Revolution. It is the intensity and obstinacy of the Jewish commitment to this liberalism that is so special.

To this liberalism, and not to another. We are talking about Continental “radical” liberalism, the liberalism that gave rise to the French Revolution and which, stubbornly (if not altogether successfully) resisting opportunities for disillusionment, has remained loyal to the ideals of that revolution ever since. What was liberal about this liberalism was its opposition to monarchy and aristocracy, the *ancien régime* which was seen as oppressive, corrupt, and decadent. What was radical about this liberalism was the belief that a new order could be constructed, to be governed by a new, “enlightened” state which would be representative of man's finer instincts, his most elevated thoughts.

By the early decades of the 19th century, this belief began to incorporate a fundamental distrust and detestation of the market economy, which was perceived as incarnating self-interest as the guiding principle of the new social order. Such a focus on self-interest was thought to be inimical to “enlightened” government, which should be the master, not the servant, of social and economic realities. It is this polarity between “enlightened,” powerful, intrusive government and the principle of self-interest as the bedrock of our economic system which is the driving force behind all modern socialism, whether in its social-democratic or Leninist versions.

There is, of course, another liberal tradition with a quite different conception of “liberalism.” This is the Anglo-Scottish-American tradition, represented by such thinkers as John Locke, David Hume, Adam Smith, and the authors of *The Federalist Papers*. Though this tradition had a certain popularity in Continental Europe prior to the French Revolution, it has always been viewed by Continental liberalism as a mere prolegomenon to

IRVING KRISTOL is co-editor of the *Public Interest*, publisher of the *National Interest*, and author of, among other books, *Two Cheers for Capitalism* and *Reflections of a Neoconservative*. The present essay, in somewhat different form, will be included in a collection of essays in honor of Earl Raab, to be published in the spring of 1989 by Transaction Books, under the editorship of Seymour Martin Lipset.

the more "authentic" and more radical liberal ideals emerging from the French Revolution.

In Anglo-Scottish-American liberalism, it is an enlightened, civil society that is prized, while government is regarded as a continuing threat to individual liberty—including the liberty to pursue, within a large sphere of action, one's self-interest. Such individual liberty is the root principle of this new order. In the end, it is whether one regards a "bourgeois" civil society more favorably than an "enlightened" state, or vice versa, that determines whether one leans to Anglo-Scottish-American liberalism or to the radical liberalism of the Continental political tradition.

The difference between the two liberalisms can be fairly described, in quasi-Marxist terms, as the difference between a "bourgeois" and a "post-bourgeois" ideology, exemplified in the American and French Revolutions respectively. The ideals of the American Revolution were (and are) individual liberty, social and political equality, and representative government. The ideals of the French Revolution stressed economic equality, political community, and a government—freely elected or not—that claimed to represent a sovereign popular will. It is understandable, therefore, that socialist thinkers and socialist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries all looked back to the French Revolution as the appropriate paradigm of what a "real" revolution should look like, while the American Revolution was regarded, if at all, as a marginal event. Leon Trotsky's magisterial *History of the Russian Revolution*, for instance, takes the French precedent (or the Jacobin version thereof) as authoritative in explaining the "natural" history of revolutions in general, and specifically of the Russian Revolution in which he played so notable a part. This explains why the drama Trotsky reconstructs is so coherent, so plausible, though also more fictional than real.

THAT European Jews should have been legatees of the political ideology of the French Revolution was inevitable under the circumstances that prevailed. They had, properly speaking, no political philosophy or political traditions of their own, after all—even today, and even in the state of Israel, there is no identifiable "Jewish" political thought. They knew nothing of Anglo-American political theory and not much more about the far-off American Revolution. The individualism of Anglo-American political theory, in any case, evoked few echoes—still evokes few echoes—in a communally-oriented Judaism. In addition, and most important, the ideology of the French Revolution, throughout the 19th century, did offer European Jewry tangible benefits of the utmost significance, while the opponents of this ideology were likely to be adherents of an established Christian church and of an established social-political order which, at the very least, discriminated against Jews, or at most totally

excluded them from membership in the civil society.

It was the ideology of the French Revolution, incarnated in Napoleon, that liberated European Jewry from confinement in the ghetto. Just how much this may have meant at the time may be grasped from a reading of Martin Buber's fascinating imaginative reconstructions in his novel, *For the Sake of Heaven*, in which Orthodox Jews in a Central European ghetto conclude ecstatically that Napoleon is their long-awaited liberating messiah. This same ideology, expressed in the liberal, socialist, and social-democratic movements of the 19th century, succeeded in extending the suffrage to Jews, and in removing legal restrictions on their freedom of movement as well as their economic opportunities. In Eastern Europe, where liberalism of any kind made only a modest impression on anti-Semitic regimes, the commitment of many Jews to this ideology was correspondingly intense. While far from all European Jews situated themselves somewhere on the Left of the political spectrum, a disproportionate number did so. In France and Germany and Italy there was a stratum of conservative and centrist Jewry, assimilated into the national cultures, but many of these Jews eventually converted or simply cast off any religious or ethnic identity.

It was from Continental Europe, and mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, that Jews emigrated to the United States. They brought with them, naturally, their political beliefs. Those political beliefs still dominate the thinking of most American Jews. A recent Los Angeles *Times* poll reveals that when Jews are asked about the qualities most important to their Jewish identity—(a) a commitment to social equality, (b) religious observance, or (c) support for Israel—the first, a commitment to social equality, turns out to be the most important. This is an odd finding, since an objective observer would see in the American Jewish condition today little reason why social equality should evoke such a passionate commitment. One might think that intermarriage rather than discrimination or exclusion should be regarded as having a greater bearing on "Jewish survival." But ideas can have a life of their own, and Jewish political attitudes in the 1980's have a more direct connection with Jewish political thinking in the 1880's than with current social, economic, or even political realities in the United States.

It must also be pointed out that Jewish immigrants, congregating in the major urban centers, found there a Democratic party—usually dominated by the Irish, themselves earlier immigrants—that was hospitable to their aspirations, personal and ideological. Although the Democratic party was by no means a left-wing party, its liberalism on issues of social reform and its commitment to "balanced tickets" on which Jews were actually (if not all that frequently) elected to office were

sufficient to engender Jewish loyalties and establish a Jewish commitment. This was even the case for Orthodox Jews who were largely apolitical and indifferent to contemporary ideologies (including Zionism).

The Republican party in those urban milieus was perceived, correctly, as dominated by Wasps (as we now call them) who were either anti-Semitic or, at the very least, inclined to discriminate socially and economically against Jews. Up to World War II, major corporations hired few Jews and the more affluent suburbs were "restricted" to non-Jews (and, it goes without saying, to non-blacks). The struggle for equality of "civil rights," led by the liberal wing of the Democratic party, only reinforced the commitment of American Jews to an agenda of liberal reform.

What is puzzling, however, is the way in which the force of this commitment has survived the enactment of the liberal agenda in the postwar years. Even while social and economic discrimination against Jews has declined with a quite unforeseen rapidity, Jews are still haunted by the specter of anti-Semitism among traditional conservative sectors of the society. And even as Jews have become one of the most affluent and upwardly mobile of ethnic-religious groups, their political ideology has remained largely unaffected.

To some degree, this can be explained by the fact that American blacks have not experienced anything like the same success, leading Jews to wonder about the security of their own achievement. To some degree, too, it has resulted from a justifiable skepticism regarding the Republican party's willingness to accept as permanent the "civil-rights revolution"—a willingness diluted or subverted by the conservative dislike of governmental action in this field. But mainly the ideological loyalty of so many American Jews has been sustained and nourished by a historic change in their religious outlook—a change that reshaped the very conception of what it means to be a "good Jew."

This change goes back to the early decades of the 19th century and gathered momentum with time. To simplify considerably, it entailed a sharp shift in emphasis from the "rabbinic" elements in the Jewish tradition to the "prophetic" elements.

ONE should not exaggerate the tension that traditionally prevailed between these two currents of Jewish religiosity. What today is called "normative Judaism" managed to strike a cautious and generally acceptable balance between them. After all, the high moralism of the biblical Prophets—compassion for the poor and unfortunate, the emphasis on universal peace as a specifically Jewish aspiration—was incorporated into rabbinical teachings, while the Prophets themselves insisted on the importance of observing traditional Jewish law. Prophetic moralism always or almost always stopped well short of

antinomianism and messianic enthusiasm, while rabbinic legalism was always (or almost always) deferential to moral sensibilities. Jews prided themselves on being "more moral" than Christians, Muslims, or pagans, and—regardless of individual Jewish behavior—the Jewish religious tradition unquestionably put a greater stress on "good deeds" and "righteous living" than on faith or dogma.

Nevertheless, the tension was there and steps were taken to cope with it. There were undoubtedly incendiary possibilities in the declamations of the Prophets and prudence required that these be minimized. Even today, a student in the yeshiva in his early years never studies the Prophets in isolation from a study of the Pentateuch or the Talmud. And in the synagogue, the Prophets are read on the Sabbath only in the form of a commentary on the non-prophetic books of the Torah. Especially after the advent of Christianity, which can be seen as an antinomian and millenarian outburst within the Jewish prophetic tradition, it was a constant matter of concern to the rabbis that such "enthusiasm" be held in check by a more rigorous focus on lawful and orderly behavior.

After the French Revolution, however, what we today call "prophetic Judaism" acquired an ever-greater vitality and autonomy. This was part and parcel of the emerging messianic sensibility—in matters political, social, and economic—that the Revolution established throughout European society. An era of grand aspirations began. The Israeli historian, the late J.L. Talmon, opens his book, *Political Messianism: The Romantic Phase*, with the following sentences:

The present inquiry is concerned with the expectation of universal regeneration which animated men and movements in the first half of the 19th century.

No period before or after has experienced so luxurious a flowering of utopian schemes purporting to offer a coherent, complete, and final solution to the problem of social evil.

"Expectations of universal regeneration"—and in the foreseeable future, and to be achieved through political and social action! In this way, and in this period, did a secular version of Judeo-Christian messianism enter Western political thought and establish itself there as a rational option for reasonable persons. What made it seem both rational and reasonable was its apparent continuity with the theme of social, political, economic, and (perhaps above all) technological progress which had emerged so powerfully in the previous two centuries. Indeed, it seemed not only continuous with, but a plausible extension of, the idea of progress. Why should progress be so gradual, so intermittent even, so painfully slow? Why not, by deliberate action, hasten the progressive movement toward its predestined end—the universal regeneration of mankind?

Now, "hastening the end" had always been regarded by Jewish and Christian orthodoxy as a dangerous, heretical temptation, one that indigent messianism made a permanent temptation, and therefore to be guarded against all the more vigilantly. But in a secular version, rooted not in religion but in science and the newly-invented "social sciences," it escaped such vigilance. Traditional religious orthodoxy was neither confronted nor refuted by the new spirit of this new age, but was ignored and left to "wither away."

In such a heightened, "progressive" perspective, capitalism—i.e., a society centered around a market economy—posed a problem for Jews. On this matter, the relation between Jews and capitalism, there has been a vast amount of intellectual confusion.

Judaism, as is generally and correctly recognized, is much more a "this-worldly" religion than Christianity. As a result, Jews have never been opposed to or contemptuous of business (or, for that matter, of sex) as a human activity. "Making a living" was always regarded as central to Jewish family life, and while Jewish law imposed some relatively mild inhibitions and prohibitions on commercial activity, there was never any sense of a conflict between the two. Becoming wealthy was similarly regarded as a legitimate, even admirable goal—so long as this wealth was used for benign (usually communal) purposes.

But "business" in specific commercial markets is not "capitalism." Business is an activity; commerce is an activity; capitalism is an idea, an idea invented in the 18th century. Business proceeds, in one way or another, in all socioeconomic systems above the most primitive level. Capitalism is a prescription whereby business activity is incorporated into a market economy that is the major institution of civil society, an institution that is the source and guarantor of individual liberty.

It is the failure to distinguish between business activity by Jews and the capitalist idea that muddles the thinking and writing of Max Weber and Werner Sombart—and some of our own contemporaries, who are perplexed by the fact that Jews do so well under capitalism while showing so little gratitude to the system. The fact that Jews, for various historical reasons, are adept at business, and the further fact that Judaism does little to frustrate business incentives, means that Jews always manage to do very well in a capitalist society. But it does not follow that Jewish affluence or Jewish prosperity brings with it Jewish contentment—peace of mind, peace of soul. In all existing capitalist societies, Jews have done and do extremely well for themselves. And in all existing societies, Jews—especially younger Jews—are profoundly uneasy about the legitimacy of their own success. The anti-Semitic fantasy in which Jews manage to be simultaneously wealthy capitalists and subversive radicals is but a paranoid inflation of a reality.

THE only exceptions to this generalization are the strictly Orthodox Jews, who isolate themselves from modernity as a whole, and who continue to practice business in a capitalist society while being utterly indifferent to, even willfully ignorant of, the capitalist idea. For them, the religious community is the only authentic sociological reality. This makes them conservative by temperament and inclination, while remaining indifferent to modern conservative ideologies, modern liberal ideologies, or modern radical ideologies.

Jews who are not strictly Orthodox, however, are fully implicated in modernity and its ideologies. For reasons already given, they are most likely to be attracted to that version of liberal ideology spawned by Continental radical-liberalism. This is most obviously the case for secularized Jews, who have been "liberated" from any formal attachment to the Jewish community, and who feel that adherence to such an ideology is an appropriate Jewish response to modernity. They find in the "secular humanism" of this ideology an adequate approximation of the ideals of the "prophetic Judaism" which emerged in the 19th century and has infused itself into all non-Orthodox versions of contemporary Judaism.

There really is such a thing as "secular humanism," just as there really is such a thing as "prophetic Judaism," and the connection between the two is deep and strong. Secular humanism, born of the Renaissance, is a form of atheism—one less interested in denying the existence of a divinity, either apart from or immanent in the cosmos, than in affirming the possibility of humanity's realizing its "full human potential" through the energetic application of high-minded (i.e., moralistic) intelligence. Prophetic Judaism, for its part, is a form of Jewish religiosity, of course, but a distinctly modern form—one less interested in God's word or Jewish law than in realizing, here on earth, a universalist version of the preaching of the Prophets.

Social and social-democratic movements are all inspired, officially or unofficially, by one version or another of secular humanism. Similarly, non-Orthodox Judaism today is, in varying degrees, inspired by, or infused by, the teaching of the Prophets rather than of the rabbis. In the case of Reform Judaism, such an inspiration was and remains its original *raison d'être*. In the case of Conservative Judaism, the prophetic teachings are allowed to dominate its secular involvements, even where there is substantial attachment to the law. And in the case of secular Jews, prophetic Judaism merges into secular humanism to create what can fairly be described as a peculiarly intense, Jewish secular humanism.

It is this combination of secular historical experience and the religious mutation it provoked that accounts for the political predispositions of contemporary American Jews. And not only Ameri-

can Jews. Wherever European Jews (especially East European Jews) have settled—whether it be in Canada, Australia, South Africa, or Latin America—they have located themselves on the Left-of-Center of the political spectrum. This has most obviously and strikingly been the case in Israel, where shreds and tatters of the socialist tradition—and Israel, of course, was originally settled, for the most part, by socialist pioneers—still evoke a kind of pious loyalty, despite the obvious fact that the prevalence of socialist ideas is obstructing the growth of the Israeli economy and that such ideas have no relevance whatsoever to the realities that confront Israeli foreign policy.

Having said all this, however, one must add—perhaps, even, one must conclude—that this situation cannot endure for much longer. After two centuries, the socialist idea, in whatever version, is becoming more and more meaningless, more and more incomprehensible even to its advocates. In practically all countries with self-styled socialist regimes, the movement is away from socialism, in any traditional sense of the term. As concerns economics, the direction of this movement is toward a system in which self-interested economic activity in a freer market plays a greater role. As concerns politics, it is toward a system that is, ideologically, either left-wing authoritarian or right-wing authoritarian or some unstable combination of the two. The promise of a humanistic, democratic socialism, whether as an ideal to be

realized or as a goal to be approached, is dissolving into the mists.

This leaves American Jews in a condition of what social psychologists call "cognitive dissonance." Their political loyalties become more desperate in proclamation, more unbelievable in fact. This is especially the case as the so-called Third World, where socialism is still a much-respected and often official doctrine, evolves toward socioeconomic-political systems that fall outside of any Western category and have in common mainly a hostility to Western liberal civilization, Western religious humanism, and Western secular humanism. It is this hostility that shapes the attitude of those countries toward Israel, perceived (correctly) as an outpost of Western civilization. More and more, a socialist, quasi-socialist, or Left-liberal political outlook sympathetic to social democracy is becoming inconsistent with a concern, which American Jews overwhelmingly feel, for the survival of the state and nation of Israel.

How long this condition of "cognitive dissonance" will continue, and where it will end, is not now foreseeable. Everything will depend on how the Western democracies themselves adapt to this new situation. What is certain, however, is that American Jews, even as they feel more and more "at home" in America (as they do), are going to find themselves among a much larger population of liberal Americans: the ideologically uprooted and dispossessed.

The separation of political and security borders provides the only approach to a settlement

THE NUMBER ONE issue in the political discussions in Israel concerns the strategic importance of the West Bank to Israel's future. Many factors - historical, emotional, religious, ethical, demographic, etc. - have helped to influence the different positions over the years, but we shall limit our discussion in this short analysis to the military aspects alone.

Unfortunately, we have to be aware that for a very long time to come, there will be a possibility of an Arab attack from the outside. Even if a political settlement is reached, we must always face the fact that the Arab side has not given up its original "strategy of phases," and that it may initiate renewed political as well as military moves in order to achieve its goal - the destruction of Israel.

Furthermore, as long as the Arab Middle East suffers from instability, it would be extremely naive and irresponsible to base Israel's very existence on the goodwill and good intentions of an Arab leader or regime that may disappear from one day to another. The viability of any political agreement will depend on genuine Arab interests; on their very careful calculation and understanding that if they violate the agreement, it may have dangerous results for them. Those results may be far more painful than the meagre chance of destroying Israel by a surprise military attack.

ISRAEL'S PROBLEM is how not to forgo any possibility of a political settlement without incurring immense security risks.

From the political point of view, it would be totally wrong to adopt the pessimistic position that "Israel has no partner for a dialogue." Such an attitude was always wrong, and was never the adopted policy either of the Zionist movement or of Israel.

Our world is facing a permanent process of change. Nothing is static. Any argument that there is no chance of peace only because there was no genuine Arab desire for it yesterday, or even today, may prove to be completely wrong tomorrow.

On the contrary, our assumption should always be that, sooner or later, the necessary changes will take place, and that we should be extremely careful not to miss any opportunity. The dramatic visit of President Sadat to Israel in 1977, just four years after the Yom Kippur War, is the best justification for such an attitude.

WE HAVE to realize also that such

Strategic depth and peace

Shlomo Gazit

a change may never occur if the Arab side knows that, as far as Israel is concerned, there is nothing to discuss, and Israel is offering merely "peace for peace."

If Israel is planning to enter negotiations with such an approach, then there is no opening for any possible compromise in the future. What many Israelis do not understand is that for the Arabs, peace with Israel is not an asset, it is not what they yearn for (as we in Israel do).

On the contrary, peace with Israel is the very high price they will have to pay in order to obtain some very vital interests of their own, interests that only Israel can provide.

These are, of course, the return of territories which Israel has been occupying since 1967, and the granting of political self-determination to an Arab population at present under Israeli military rule. And there are interests that could be dealt with only after a revolutionary change in national priorities, moving from a policy of military action to an era of economic and social development.

Moreover, things are never static. If there is no dialogue, if there is no move towards a political settlement, there is only one possible outcome: escalation, leading to a most dangerous and very costly war, which Israel would be undertaking under most unfavourable political conditions.

And one last argument. There is no guarantee - even if Israel were to do its best to promote such an agreement - that there is any chance at present of reaching a political settlement and avoiding war. But if Israel has to face another major war with the Arabs, it is of the utmost importance for every one of us to know, for every soldier and family to be reassured, that we have done our best in our endeavours to reach an honourable settlement, and that we are not to be accused of not trying to advance peace.

HOW FLEXIBLE can Israel afford to be in any future political discussions?

Our strategic depth is based today



on just over 60 kilometres between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. If we compare this with the former 14 km. between the Green Line and the sea, this is an enormous improvement. We have multiplied our strategic depth by four, and we have also added a physical obstacle that did not exist in the past, i.e., the need to cross the river as well as the mountain ridge of the West Bank.

It would be absurd to claim, however, that the present strategic depth of 60 km. provides us with foolproof security. Such a claim would be as irresponsible as a policy advocating a fallback to the 1967 Green Line as our defence line while relying on the goodwill and genuine intentions of our Arab partner to the agreement.

Following the Six Day War in

1967, the Israeli cabinet introduced a very important definition, separating "political borders" from "security borders."

This separation is as valid today as it was 21 years ago, and provides the only possible approach for a future settlement in the Middle East. It offers maximum flexibility for a political compromise, while posing the minimum risk to Israel's security as long as the threat of war exists.

From the Israeli point of view, the future political borders should allow for most of the area densely populated by Palestinians to be handed over to Arab sovereignty. This is the only solution that might be acceptable to the other side. On the other hand, Israel's security border would have to be based on the Jordan River.

Such a security borders would deter the Arabs from attempting a surprise attack and would give Israel, if a war were nevertheless initiated, a reasonable chance of having the upper hand.

Two elements, vital to that security border, would have to be incorporated in the agreement.

The first is the complete demilitarization of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. No local Arab military forces would be allowed in those areas (except for a small gendarmerie responsible for internal security); and no outside Arab forces would be allowed to move in. One has to realize that an Arab offensive against Israel, initiated from the 1967 borders, might prove to be a military threat leading to catastrophe.

The other element is that Israeli forces would be responsible for guaranteeing the demilitarization, and would be allowed to use military force if there were an attempt to violate the agreement. No time-limit should be attached to this responsibility; it will have to continue as long as may be necessary.

WE IN Israel have prolonged experience of international observers and peace-keeping forces. Israel should never agree to base its very existence on the performance of such forces in case of a crisis. Their effectiveness only persists as long as both parties are prepared to fulfil an agreement.

An international force will always be guided by political considerations, not necessarily coinciding with the original spirit of the agreement - whether it be the secretary-general of the UN, a Security Council resolution, or a foreign government that is responsible for

its presence. There is no possible guarantee that in an emergency, political considerations will not override an agreement.

There is nothing wrong, however, in allowing an international force to be deployed in the area in addition to the IDF presence, to satisfy Arab fears of Israeli violations of the agreement. But this force should never come instead of an IDF presence.

The vast majority of Israeli military experts agree that the IDF's presence in the West Bank is a vital necessity, and this for a very long period after the signing of a political agreement and its implementation.

The vast majority of those experts will agree on the vital need for viable "security borders." Where they disagree is on the political issue. Should Israel insist that the security borders also be our final political borders?

WHOEVER ADOPTS a policy of *Af sha'al* (not one inch to be given back), of *Eretz Yisrael Hashlema* (the complete Land of Israel), adopts a position that no Arab party may ever accept. The consequences for Israel should be crystal clear.

It means a demographic problem which will become increasingly critical for Israel. Israel will be losing its Jewish majority in the not-too-distant future, and we would face a continued and unavoidable Palestinian uprising.

It means that the voices within Israel advocating the expulsion of the Palestinian Arabs in the territories, and making Eretz Yisrael "Araber rein," will become stronger and stronger, and the only dictators of policy in the future.

It means that the strong differences and disagreement within Israel will become increasingly critical, possibly even leading to a most painful civil war.

And it means that even if Israel succeeds in evacuating most Palestinians across the border, we shall not improve our condition or solve our problems in the long run. A new war, facing the broadest Arab military coalition under extremely difficult internal and external conditions, will be unavoidable.

In such circumstances, no attempt to make our security borders identical with our political borders will guarantee our future and our existence. This will be true in spite of the strategic depth we will enjoy along the Jordan River.

The writer is a former head of the IDF Intelligence Corps.

YASSER ARAFAT'S declaration and the American decision to open negotiations with the PLO are a result of dramatic changes in international affairs, above all, the radical change in Soviet foreign policy both general and vis-à-vis the Middle East. The Arab countries and the PLO have evidently come to the conclusion that the USSR will no longer be a global patron, encouraging them to a confrontation with Israel and the West.

The USSR has repeatedly and publicly told Syria and the PLO that it is interested in a speedy resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict, and in normalizing its relations with Israel as soon as conditions permit.

It quickly became clear that this is a strategy rather than a tactic of Soviet leadership, and that militant Arabs can no longer hope that the USSR will try to change the balance of forces in the Middle East in their favour. The only way out for the

A new gateway to Moscow

Mikhail Agursky

PLO is to reconcile themselves to reality, while trying to garner as much benefit as possible.

The U.S. has also come to the conclusion that the PLO is no longer a Trojan horse for Soviet entry into the Middle East. It is therefore ready to recognize the PLO as a partner for negotiations on certain conditions. (European countries, no longer intimidated by a threat of Soviet encirclement, reached the same conclusion earlier.)

BUT WHY is the USSR prepared to support the PLO now?

Firstly, Soviet Middle East experts have realized that there is no better Arab alternative to the PLO in the Arab-Israel conflict. Other options are Jibril, Abu-Nidal and -

much more dangerous - militant Islam.

The PLO, cultivating relations with the West and the Soviet bloc, is clearly the best choice.

Without the PLO, Islamic radicalization of the Arab-Israel conflict is to be expected, drastically changing the fragile domestic balance of moderate Arab countries such as Jordan and Egypt, and even militant Syria. This could serve as a catalyst for Moslem extremism throughout the Middle East, a direct threat to the USSR with its escalating Moslem cri-

sis which, lacking any basic solution, can only be temporarily averted.

But the USSR is even more interested in the stability of Israel, since we constitute a most important strategic counterbalance to the Islamic threat. The collapse of Israel would greatly endanger the USSR.

In principle, the USSR might accept any solution whereby Israel would remain a Middle East power to which the Arab world would be reconciled in one way or another.

LET US emphasize that while the PLO is no longer a Soviet client, it is still the best Soviet option in the policy of containment of militant Islam. An understanding of Soviet Middle East policy can be facilitated by a simple rule: "Cherchez l'Islam

fondamentaliste."

From this viewpoint, Israel is a natural geopolitical ally for the USSR. And this being so, the PLO threat to Israel should be reconsidered.

The USSR appears to be making a mistake in not entering into full diplomatic relations with Israel. This would have a positive influence on Israeli political life and help discount the theory that the whole world is hostile and any compromise is suicidal.

Israel would see that in existing conditions, when both superpowers are indeed interested in a lasting Middle East solution, it will not be difficult to find a political solution which will bring peace to our area.

We have only to understand that what happened in Geneva is not an Israeli defeat, but an Israeli victory.

The writer is a member of the Soviet-East European Research Centre of the Hebrew University.

ESSAY | William Safire

Baker's Trick

Why do you suppose Syria has finally told its ally Iran that now would be a good time to release the hostages held in Syrian-controlled Beirut?

Why has the demand for an "international conference" to arrange a "comprehensive settlement," so long a central Arab strategy, vanished from all P.L.O. pronouncements?

And why did Arabists get President Bush to confuse bedrock U.S. policy by raising the specter of a divided Jerusalem?

The answers interlock: the Soviet Union's abdication of empire has eroded the foundation of the 40-year war against Israel and caused a panic in the Arab world.

No longer is Moscow its reliable ally. Because the U.S. Congress restricts trade as long as the Soviets restrict emigration, Mr. Gorbachev has been forced to begin to let out Israel's most precious asset: persecuted Jewish families eager to make a new life for themselves.

The prospect of a haven in Israel for a million Soviet Jews in the coming decade ends vain fantasies of driving out the "Zionist entity." But that's not all: Arab leaders see diplomatic blocs crumbling.

If the freed Soviet satellites establish relations with Israel, as they are doing, and if African nations follow, what will happen to the automatic condemnations of Zionism in the U.N.?

If the Helsinki pact of 35 European and Atlantic nations becomes the central arena of international diplomacy, as Mr. Gorbachev apparently hopes, the U.N. General Assembly — long dominated by the Arab-African bloc backed by Soviet bloc votes — will become all the more peripheral.

On top of that is the loss of terrorist training camps and military supply; Syria and Libya can no longer depend on a flow of Soviet-made missiles, tanks and planes. That leads to a strategic stunner: No longer will a superpower be ready to guarantee that Arab aggressors cannot lose a war.

No wonder potentates are panicked; their world has changed, their boycott is undercut, and their monarchies and dictatorships could be engulfed by the world wave of freedom. No longer will they be able to deflect their peoples' anger at deprivation into a dead-end jihad; Arabs deserve liberation, too.

At this pregnant moment, which cries out for a campaign to spread democracy throughout the Middle East, George Bush and James Baker are frozen in the diplomatic Ice Age. They focus on Israel's West Bank; they exploit divisions within Israel's polity and refuse humanitarian aid to

refugees unless the Israeli Government accepts their view of what's best for our ally's security.

That's why we see Mr. Bush deliberately calling into question the integrity of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, ordering the Israelis not to let new refugees live there. That's why Mr. Baker — more underhanded than evenhanded — wants an Arab representative from Jerusalem, not from the West Bank, in the negotiations.

Some Israelis understand this trap. Far from nit-picking, the Jerusalem address is central: the Bush-Baker notion is to revisit the issue of an undivided Jerusalem, settled a generation ago, and put it on the negotiating table.

Then Secretary Baker, having created a new difference, will split that difference and grandly propose a

Slouching toward Jerusalem.

"compromise": Israelis keep Jerusalem so long as Arabs can live there, the P.L.O. gets the West Bank and the power to deny Jews the right to live there.

The State Department will not admit it; the Labor Party in Israel refuses to see it — but that's the deal in the cards.

The Baker trick deals dishonorably with an ally, involves the U.S. in a new generation of troubles, and puts manacles on Palestinians of the intifada — whose local leaders are being murdered for challenging the Tunisian terrorcrats' claim to be their "sole legitimate representative."

This weekend, the split Israeli Cabinet will decide whether to go down that road. A principled refusal will be roundly denounced by Israel-bashers and don't-make-waves Jews as anti-process; the Bush Administration would threaten to retaliate.

But who in Washington needs to provoke a crisis between democratic allies? Must we compensate for the real crisis among tyrannies? Why, when not even Communist parties lay claim to a monopoly of power, should the U.S. be on the side of unelected "sole representatives" of anybody?

Let Arab dictators panic; let Soviet Jews settle throughout Israel without dictation from Washington; let Israel's offer of free elections to West Bank Palestinians not be corrupted by Baker trickery to rig the outcome. □

ESSAY | William Safire

'You Tell Him This'

Israel's Prime Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, sent this invitation to Egypt's President, Hosni Mubarak: Stay an extra day in Washington and let us meet in President Bush's office. The Egyptian refused.

Mr. Bush, who had been asked by Israel to facilitate these talks, did nothing to bring the Israeli and Arab leaders together. Instead, he damaged his credibility as mediator by calling for "the end of the occupation" of territories Israel considers vital to its security.

Why did Mr. Bush gratuitously insult Israel's elected leader by announcing his conclusion before Mr. Shamir could even make his case?

At a reception for Mr. Mubarak in the home of the Vice President, I put that to Brent Scowcroft, our national security adviser. He would say only, "We did not intend to make news."

If that is true, then the State Department aide who drafted the statement, the N.S.C., which cleared it, and the President who spoke the blunt words did not consider as newsworthy a U.S. call for Israel to get out of the West Bank. Such ignorance of a change of position would reveal incredible ineptitude at all levels.

I think the statement was not a mistake, but was a Bush-Baker calculation, more heavy-handed than evenhanded, to pressure Israel and placate the P.L.O. Many in the diplomatic press corps swallowed State Department protestations that nothing was new, but Barry Schweid of the A.P. and Tom Friedman of The New York Times put that major change in their leads.

The Egyptian Ambassador, Raouf el-Reedy, spotted me at the fruit-kebab table and motioned me over to meet his boss. I cheerfully identified myself as a right-wing pro-Israeli hawk and asked Mr. Mubarak why he had refused to meet Mr. Shamir in the Oval Office.

"I once offered to go to Jerusalem," said President Mubarak animatedly, "and he issued the invitation, but then he started talking about his three 'no's,' so how could I go? What would be the public opinion?"

He left out the part about conditioning his visit on Israeli acceptance of an international conference, but my concern was this week's snub: What would have been the harm in meeting in Washington, since both were in town? "To talk about what?" he counter-queried.

Free elections on the West Bank and Gaza, for a starter.

"Free?" He made a skeptical face.

It's not for the press to negotiate for anybody, but since he was asking, I threw in the compromise being bruited

about: free elections under some sort of international supervision.

As if he had been waiting for that precise formulation, The President of Egypt leaned forward and put his finger on my chest. "You tell him this. You tell him if he is willing to have elections under international supervision, I'll help."

How much will he help?

"I'll help to the maximum." As God, and the V.P., our national security adviser, the Egyptian Ambassador and our nail-nibbling Chief of Protocol are my witnesses, that's what the man said. It's a good bet that's also what Mr. Mubarak said privately to Mr. Bush and Mr. Quayle.

Let us now review the state of play. Israel can be expected to hedge its free-elections proposal with restrictions, among them: not until the intifada violence stops; no P.L.O. candidates; the first stage only for municipal offices, and the polls supervised by

Mubarak leaves Shamir a message.

Israelis with invited observers.

This opening position will be frowned on by Egypt as "not enough," dismissed by ABC News as "warmed-over Camp David" and denounced by Yasir Arafat, who worries about losing his authority to freely elected local Palestinian leaders.

However, the Shamir offer provides running room for mediators — even those who impose settlement terms before negotiations begin.

The intifada could cool it without agreeing to ice it; non-P.L.O. candidates could proclaim their P.L.O. affection; the municipal officers could have a territories-wide function; and while the Zionism-is-racism U.N. would hardly be disinterested, supervision by a few countries with democratic experience would be acceptable.

Now watch how the bash-Israel crowd tries to turn "free elections" into dirty words. Not "new"? Nothing could be newer to most Arabs than a secret ballot. Arab regimes do not tolerate elections that offer genuine choices; they do not want West Bank and Gaza Palestinians to lead the way, because democracy is contagious.

But President Mubarak says to tell Mr. Shamir he is ready to "help to the maximum" to conduct such elections under international supervision. Message passed. Worth following up. □

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Henry Kissinger

Israel and the PLO—Wishes and Reality

With the visit to Washington of Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, Middle East diplomacy is once again moving toward center stage. This should put into perspective the oft-expressed fear that Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's journey to the Middle East stole a march on America. For in the end, it is not gestures but substance that matters. Shevardnadze's invocation of such shopworn nostrums as an international peace conference, return by Israel to 1967 boundaries, a Palestinian state, only define the stalemate; they do nothing to resolve it.

What is new is not Shevardnadze's trip

The passion and persistence of the advocates of this scheme are in inverse proportion to its attainability. At this stage, establishing Arafat as the interlocutor for Israel is incompatible with the concept of direct negotiation. And the substantive difficulties are massive. The distance from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean is 40 miles. To shoe-horn even two friendly states into that territory would be difficult; to do so with parties that have considered each other mortal enemies—and one of which still maintains the destruction of the other in its charter—is almost impossible to reconcile with the requirement of Security Council Resolution

451 by Israel? (2) Who shall govern there? (3) What security arrangements will prevail after Israeli withdrawal?

As for the first question, Israel is deluding itself if it believes that America will ever endorse, at a conference or in direct bilateral talks, permanent Israeli occupation of the entire West Bank and Gaza. For Israel to insist on the status quo guarantees increasing pressures by the international community and risks a fatal erosion of the support by American public opinion and Congress. Israel and America, therefore, must discuss in preliminary talks the extent as well as the limits of Israeli territorial concessions.

At the same time, I cannot forget the reply of a radical Arab leader when in the 1970s I told him that in the end he would have no choice but to follow the example of Sadat: "You Americans have betrayed Vietnam; you will surely abandon Taiwan; and we Arabs will be waiting when you grow tired of Israel." Such a perception is ultimately destructive of America's international role. The United States cannot permit a negotiating process designed to chivy Israel from one dilemma to another until its spirit is broken or, in despair, it erupts into war. It must look beyond the maddeningly legalistic manner in which Israel often presents its case to the reality of Israeli nightmares. It requires an excessive act of faith to stake the national survival of Israel on the proposition that Arafat and his colleagues, now major international figures received by kings, popes and presidents, would henceforth be satisfied with being the leaders of a demilitarized enclave 20 miles by 40 miles hedged between a hostile Israel and a suspicious Jordan.

And even should the most optimistic estimates about Arafat's newfound moderation

That was the Camp David formula, of course. But in application, Israel defined the autonomy for Palestinians envisioned in the Camp David formula, so restrictively as to turn it into a subterfuge for continued Israeli occupation. Nevertheless, Israel's best hope for coexistence is with Arab leaders living on the West Bank; paradoxically, with the very people conducting the uprising against Israeli rule. Israel's occupation practices have offended the dignity of the Arab population on the West Bank. But these are the Palestinians that chose not to flee their homeland and have been living in close proximity with Israelis and within the orbit of the Israeli economy. Of all the Palestinians they are in the best position to understand coexistence on the basis of self-rule.

Such an approach need not imply the permanent exclusion of the PLO. For one thing, those parts of the West Bank and Gaza subject to Arab self-rule should be free to elect leaders of their choice. In practice, the majority will be pro-PLO, though fundamentalist groups may make some inroads. A five-year transitional period will test whether coexistence between Israel and a Palestinian political unit is in fact possible before a final political settlement is negotiated. The dialogue between the United States and the PLO could help provide a framework for such a transition.

Next to Israel, Jordan has the greatest stake in any self-rule that produces genuine coexistence. Jordan's security will be almost as severely—and perhaps more immediately—threatened as Israel's by a revolutionary Palestinian state. Heretofore it has been unwilling to take the responsibility for a final peace settlement, lest the fury of the Arab radicals descend on it. But these inhibitions should not apply to transitional arrangements. Jordan's stability depends on security arrangements for the West Bank that prevent self-rule from turning into a hotbed for assaults on all neighbors. Egypt and Saudi Arabia could help in that task. If this much cannot be agreed on in exploratory conversations under American aegis, there is no point in a full-scale conference.

In that case, Israel should implement unilaterally those parts of self-rule not requiring international agreement, such as demilitarization.

The same principle applies to other countries. The Soviet Union, for example, dangles the possible recognition of Israel as its contribution to the peace process. But recognition is the beginning of diplomacy, not its purpose. The criterion for Soviet participation will be its willingness to help define conditions that will not only help produce a peace conference but also lead to a constructive outcome of it. That requires a Soviet willingness to ask its Arab friends for

"... conditions for a final settlement simply do not now exist ..."

but the decision of the last days of the Reagan administration that vague remarks at an Arafat press conference could all of a sudden satisfy America's conditions of 20 years' standing for entering into discussions with the Palestine Liberation Organization. In fact, the Reagan administration went further, justifying the move as a "step toward the beginning of direct negotiations between the parties." The Arab party was clearly the PLO, heretofore and still anathema to Israel. In the words of the State Department, "If you are going to get a peaceful settlement in the Middle East, you have to include Palestinians from the beginning and at the end."

This reversal of policy was all the more striking in the light of a judgment made two weeks earlier when Arafat was denied a U.S. visa on the ground that he had conspired in terrorism. After all, the PLO was founded in 1964, when Israel was within its 1967 borders and the Old City of Jerusalem was in Arab hands. Its stated purpose, which continues to be expressed in its charter, has been the destruction of the state of Israel. In 1973 the United States told the PLO through intelligence channels that diplomatic contact required a prior end to terrorism. In 1975 it reaffirmed the policy of three administrations in a memorandum to Israel which restated the "existing" policy until the PLO accepted the state of Israel and U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which, respectively, call for a return by Israel to secure borders and for direct negotiations between the parties.

What never occurred to some of us involved in drafting that document was that these conditions would one day be met by semantic formulas rather than by an insistence on concrete changes in attitude. Recognition is not so difficult a concept that the PLO might not have volunteered its own distinctive language with which to express it rather than negotiate it in advance, albeit indirectly, with the United States. Not surprisingly, no Arab state has seen the so-called recognition as real enough to follow suit.

One clear-cut result of the American move was to revive pressures for precisely the kind of negotiation that has proven stillborn for six years. The chanceries of the European Community, the Soviet Union and lately the PLO reverberate with advocacy of a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza based on the 1967 boundaries with "minor rectifications," to be achieved by direct negotiations between the parties, which have been declared by all potential participants in the conference explicitly—and the U.S. by implication—as the PLO and Israel.

242 for secure and recognized borders.

The deadlock is intractable. I know no Israeli leader willing to give up the old city of Jerusalem. I know of no Arab leader prepared to accept less. Israel rejects the 1967 borders because they would leave Israel with a corridor only eight miles wide between Tel Aviv and Haifa and some three miles wide between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. But neither does the PLO accept the 1967 frontiers. Arafat's press conference and other statements base the backhanded recognition of Israel on U.N. Security Council Resolution 181, which contains two features no foreseeable Israeli government can accept: it affirms the borders of 1947 (a territory one-third the size of present Israel and one-half of pre-1967 Israel); and it calls for the return of all Palestinian refugees

into that rump state, which would destroy its Jewish identity. In this context, Arafat's acceptance of Resolution 242 calling for the return of occupied territories cleverly transforms all land beyond the 1947 borders into occupied territory.

Neither Shevardnadze nor any other statesman can break that deadlock except by pressures on Israel that would be the precursor of the ultimate castration of the Jewish state. Of course, pressure is precisely what many advocates of the scheme really want—though they delude themselves into thinking that it will be easy and that its outcome will in the end prove consistent with Israel's survival.

As for the United States, it is not clear why it should maneuver itself into a position where it is obliged to either dissociate itself from an ally or become increasingly isolated, the target of Arab frustrations, Islamic fundamentalist wrath, European alienation and Soviet pressures. Thus the crucial decision for the United States is not whether Secretary of State James Baker III can retrace Shevardnadze's Middle East tracks, but to define the goals of a realistic diplomacy. This requires answers to three questions: (1) What territories, if any, will be given up

prove correct, would he survive the inevitable internecine struggles of a Palestinian state? What measures could keep the West Bank from turning into a Beirut? And what happens to the Arab populations that remain on the Israeli side of the frontier? Even within the 1967 borders, Israel would still harbor almost as many Arabs as now live on the West Bank. What would be the attitude of the PLO state or of the West if they were

"... Israel's best hope for coexistence is with Arab leaders living on the West Bank ..."

to start their own uprising?

Any serious diplomatic effort in the Middle East must therefore start from two propositions: conditions for a final settlement simply do not now exist; Israel cannot be asked simultaneously to give up territories and to establish a PLO state. A Palestinian state can emerge only after Israelis and Palestinians have learned to live side-by-side in dignity. Thus a period of self-rule must precede—say by five years—political negotiations for a final settlement.

the same sacrifices that America must ask of Israel in any peace process.

The Bush administration is correct to insist that a full-blown Middle East initiative must await preliminary explorations. The complexity of such a task makes it imperative that the president and the secretary of state keep control of it. Special emissaries cannot orchestrate so wide-ranging an agenda, involving as it does every aspect of American foreign relations.

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