

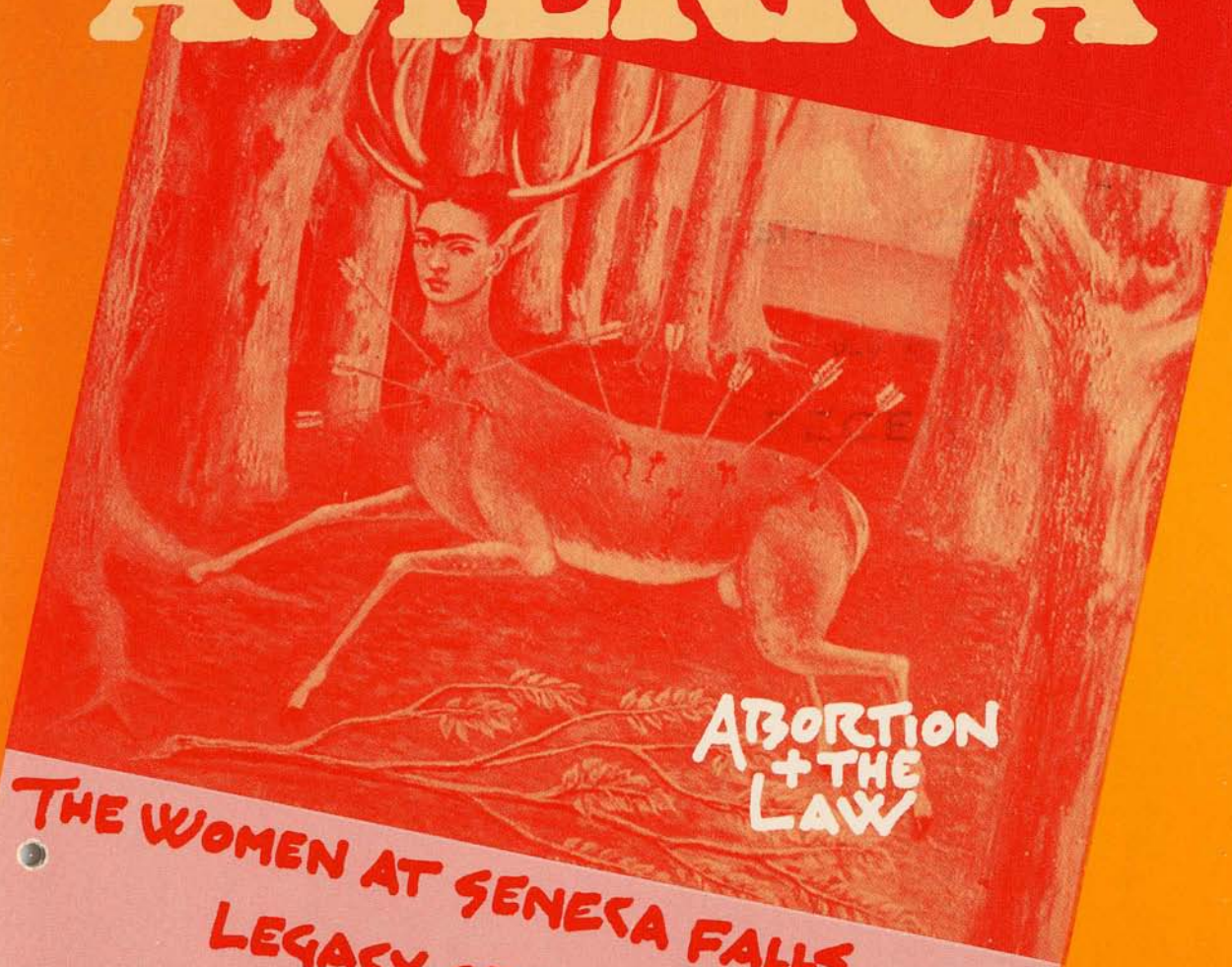
POLITICAL USES OF THE HOLOCAUST

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Vol. 17
No. 4

RADICAL AMERICA

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ABORTION
+ THE
LAW

THE WOMEN AT SENECA FALLS
LEGACY OF MIKE GOLD

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RADICAL AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

The two lead articles in this issue come from far apart in the globe as well as in their political concerns. Boaz Evron, an Israeli journalist, criticizes the Israeli government for its reactionary use of the memory of the Holocaust; Catharine MacKinnon, an American feminist lawyer, criticizes the “pro-choice” movement for the way it has campaigned for abortion rights. Yet the articles seem to us to share a similar political concern, calling our attention to the manipulation of ideology regarding two difficult and divisive political struggles, reminding us perhaps of the need to criticize and re-examine even those arguments which may at first appear to be benefitting our side of an issue.

Boaz Evron wrote his article for an Israeli audience, examining how Israeli governments have defined and manipulated a particular version of the Holocaust story to justify its imperialist policies and to control and suppress criticism of these policies, within Israel and among Israeli supporters abroad. By dwelling on a false understanding of the Jews as sole and unique victims of the Nazi extermination policies, Israeli leaders tried to place their country “above” the normal constraints of national and international politics. Criticism of state policy, not to mention of Israeli borders as currently defined, could be labelled anti-Semitic; worse, opponents, including Palestinians who had lost their homeland to the

Zionist cause, were identified with Nazis. The Israeli version of the Holocaust ideology worked to suppress critical debate about Israeli economic and social power in the Middle East and to mask the function of Israel in US foreign policy. It helped make possible Israeli alliances with South Africa and the Israelis' own genocidal policies toward Palestinians.

Focussed as it is on Israeli political struggles, Evron's article made us yearn for a US-centered discussion of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, and Zionism. In the US, thinking of the Jews as unique and somehow arbitrary victims weakens understanding of racism and of how inequality and prejudice grow. At the same time, in the US Zionist politics has served as a screen, hiding the existence of anti-Semitism, just as, vice versa, the failure to confront anti-Semitism in western countries promotes a channelling of all Jewish consciousness and emotion into Zionism. We would welcome readers' responses to this issue.

While abortion has been an equally divisive issue in American politics generally, radicals of our (that is, Radical America's) stripe have not usually admitted or discussed its troubling aspects, so concerned have we been to permit no sliding away from commitment to abortion as one of women's fundamental rights. MacKinnon's critique of the major legal and political defenses of abortion rights surprised and stimulated us, and seemed important for reproductive-rights supporters to consider. We hope that our readers will make an effort to tackle the unfamiliar legal language to confront her arguments.

Within the abortion struggle, MacKinnon shows, concern to hang onto our tenuous victories has led feminists to define the issue in liberal terms to win the broadest possible support. This strategy of argumentation has involved three tactics: emphasizing abortion rights as a

question of privacy; arguing for abortion in terms of "choice," that individual freedom; and de-emphasizing questions of sexuality, sexual oppression of women, and male dominance in general. All three tactics, MacKinnon shows, represent a significant retreat from important feminist social criticisms. First, the notion of privacy is a class- and sex-biased one, benefiting those with power: for example, the privacy rights have been used to prevent legal intervention against wife beaters. Second, the argument from individual freedom retreats from the understanding that there can be no freedom without power; hence in the liberal understanding of freedom there is no contradiction between making abortion legal but preventing state monies from helping poor women get abortions. Third, withdrawing from discussions of sex and what sexual freedom means specifically for women creates the kind of contradictions that we see in the fact that Playboy has consistently supported pro-abortion legislation. This image of sexual "revolution," as it is commercially called, of sexually "liberated" women, does not guarantee any greater sexual power for women and may only remodel women's sexual subordination to men.

MacKinnon's article naturally leaves many things unsaid, some of which would modify her arguments, we think. For example, the "sexuality" in her article is exclusively heterosexual. The greater visibility of lesbianism as a sexual and social option for women today greatly affects even the way women conduct heterosexual lives. Furthermore, we wonder if political and social gains women have made in the past decades have not also altered heterosexual relations. The personal is political, MacKinnon reminds us, even when it is as "personal" as sex. What women should want, she implies, is not privacy but more social controls against men who would sexually dominate, and more

state intervention to help women protect themselves sexually. Yet there are questions to be asked about how far we can trust the "political" state to meet women's "personal" concerns, and we have to be concerned with abandoning the protections that come even to women from privacy rights.

Still, Catharine MacKinnon has re-invigorated a debate about the connection between abortion rights and the overall issues of women's oppression. We would like to continue this debate, and we will hope that others involved in reproductive rights will respond to MacKinnon's article.

We are also publishing here an article on the "proletarian" Jewish writer Michael Gold. It might be considered part of our biography series, which we are continuing (in an upcoming issue we will publish a biography of Marie Equi, a classic example of a "lost" radical—activist in the IWW, the World War I peace movement, the birth control movement, lesbian, feminist, physician from Portland, Oregon). But the Gold article also comes from our interest in radical culture and writing. We hope readers working on other figures and topics in this tradition of uniting art and politics will send us their manuscripts.

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In Solidarity with the continuing
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Teach me to fight
for what is ours,
teach me not to
resign myself,
teach me to love,
to live. . .

The day will come
when we will find each other
in the streets
of the people,
but we will not call it a street then,
it will be the garden
of men
and women.

Ximena

Translated from Spanish by Felipe Lizana and Michael Taylor



Anonymous, 1932. *The Third Reich? No!*

HOLOCAUST:

The Uses of Disaster

Boaz Evron

Two awful things happened to the Jewish people in the present century: the Holocaust—and the lessons drawn from it. The unhistorical, often patently false interpretations given to the event have in themselves become a menace to the Jewish people and to the State of Israel.

The very term “Holocaust” is objectionable. It has an undertone of oratorical glibness, it seems to cover up and hide the terrible reality behind. “Holocaust” is a nonspecific word; it could as well be an earthquake or an epidemic. It is something that hits you all of a sudden, out of a clear sky, outside the historical context. You are under no obligation to understand it and analyze its causes. As a matter of fact, you may even conveniently evade and forget it, thanks to this very non-specificity. In this sense, there is not such a great difference between the evasive Nazi term “Final Solution” and the evasive Jewish term “Holocaust.” Both terms serve to avoid calling things by their proper names. The first was meant to hide from the murderers, and from public opinion, the meaning of the deed. The second blunts and neutralizes the memory of the murder in the minds of the survivors. “The massacre of the Jews of Europe” is, linguistically speaking, a much clumsier expression, but it denotes exactly what happened, states that there have been murderers and victims, specifies the location

where the crime took place, and describes a *historical event*, which must be conceived and understood in *historical*, not mystical or pseudo-religious terms, which amount to avoidance of the issue.

The first false premise is that the Nazi policy of genocide was directed almost exclusively at Jews. Indeed, the Jews *were* its main and foremost victims, as well as the only group painted in diabolical colors, and as such not merely sub-human but antihuman. As such, too, they were the only group on which total annihilation was practiced. But one should view the Nazi policy in this matter as a process. The Jews, to begin with, were “merely” deprived of their civil rights; later, they were deported. Only in the final stage were they exterminated. Six years passed from the promulgation of the Nuremberg laws to the implementation of the “Final Solution.” Then other groups began to follow the Jews. The Gypsies were also butchered, and not only they. The Poles began to be massacred en masse too—altogether three million non-Jewish Poles were murdered. Hannah Arendt, in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, notes that the procedures previously applied to the Jews began to be applied also to the Poles. Mass murder was practiced against the Russian people, too: millions of Russian war prisoners and slave laborers were murdered, and entire communities were annihilated inside Russia itself. Nazi policy toward “inferior races,” first and foremost the Slavs, is a complex issue. Apparently no specific directive was ever issued to exterminate them, of the sort that inspired the Wannsee Conference with regard to the annihilation of the Jews. From this and other considerations, Prof. Saul Friedlander draws the conclusion (in “The Historical Significance of the Holocaust,” *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 1, Autumn 1976) that there was a difference in kind between the Nazi attitudes and projected

policies toward the Jews and the Slavs. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the eventual extermination of the Slavs was only a question of time, that all signs pointed to that eventuality, and that it was thwarted only by the Allied victory. At any rate, there are good grounds to suppose that the Slavs were slated for enslavement and extermination by stages. Furthermore, the inner logic of the Nazi dynamic, toward the end of the war, culminated in the application of extensive murder and terror to the German population itself in order “to curb defeatist tendencies.”*

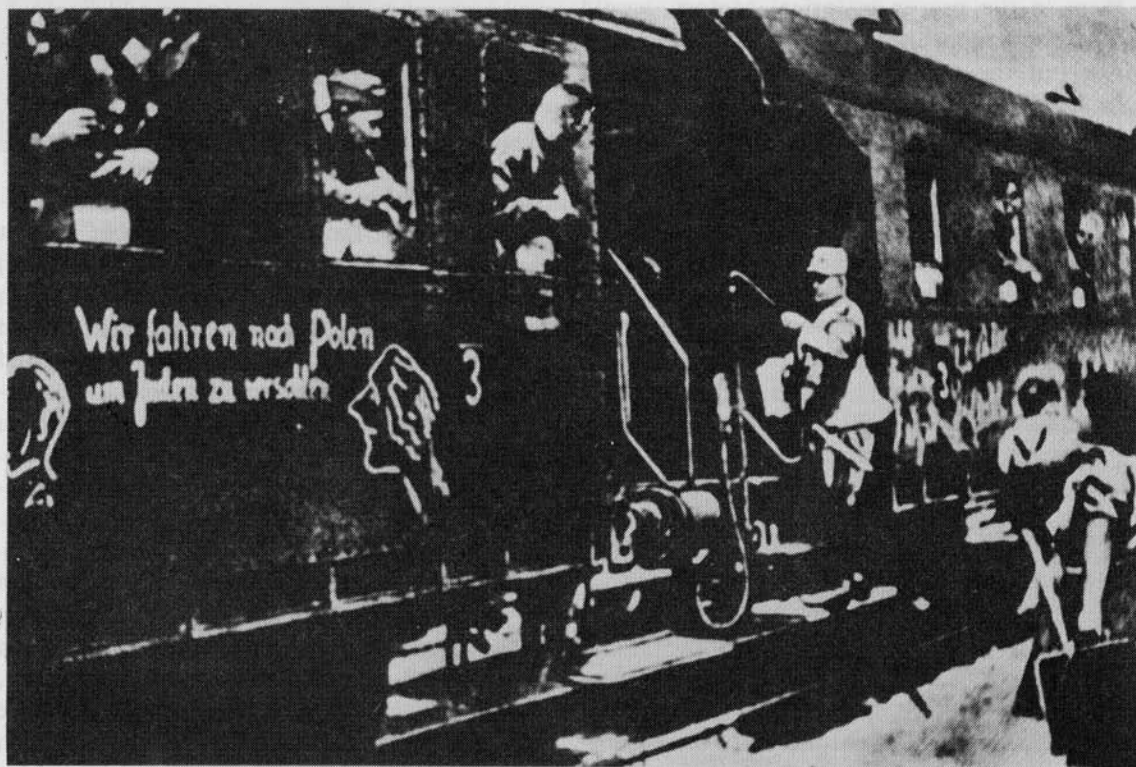
Anti-Semitism served as a catalyst, as a focal point for the extermination machinery—but this machinery was an essential part of the endless “selection” process, which was meant to be

*As regards the preparations for the eventual turning of the extermination machinery on segments of the German nation itself, it is a well-known fact that gassing began in sanatoria for *German* mental patients, and was copied in the extermination camps. Hannah Arendt, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, quotes additional examples: one is from Leon Poliakov's *Breviaire De La Haique*, wherein he relates that a Reich health bill, drafted by Hitler himself for implementation after the war, states that all families with cases of heart and lung ailments should be “isolated” from the German population, their physical liquidation being of course the next step in this program. Himmler stated that “in this process of selection there can never be a standstill” (N. 16, p. 310). Goebbels declared in 1934, “Who are the people to criticize? Party members? No. The rest of the German people? They should consider themselves lucky to be alive still. It would be too much of a good thing altogether, if those who live at our mercy should be allowed to criticize.” Hitler declared during the war, “I have often stated that the time will come when all worthwhile men in Germany are going to be in my camp. And those who will not be in my camp are worthless anyway.” Arendt comments: “Even then it was clear to Hitler's immediate environment what would happen to those who are ‘worthless anyway’ . . . Himmler meant the same when he said: ‘The Fuhrer does not think in German, but in Germanic terms, except that we know from *Hitlers Tischengesprache* . . . that in those days he was already making fun even of the Germanic ‘clamor’ and thought in ‘Aryan terms’ ” (N. 32, p. 360).

a permanent central feature of the peacetime Nazi empire. Hatred and dislike of the Jews had been prevalent in Europe for many centuries, without leading to quite such gruesome results. The Zionist contention that the catastrophe was a result of the peculiar position of the Jews within European society also is unsatisfactory, for it fails to explain the fact that other groups began to follow the Jews to the gas chambers. The events can be understood only in the context of German and European history and ideology. We may find food for thought in the fact that genocide had been practiced by Europeans in the non-European world for centuries (in the Americas, the Congo, etc.). The Nazi innovation was the introduction of these practices into the family of European nations.

The murder of European Jewry was not a characteristic and exclusive phenomenon of Jewish history, but rather one symptom of the collapse of the European system. The result was the dissociation of the Jewish people from the human race, aimed for by the Nazis, on the one hand, and by extreme Jewish nationalists on the other. This broader view leads to the conclusion that any attempt to exclude one human group from the definition of humanity may result in an attack on the human race as a whole.

Many Jewish interpretations, mainly the Zionist leadership, wanted this insight suppressed in order to present the Jewish people as the sole victim, as a memento of the world's guilt. It was, of course, the natural reaction of a victim, and in this case it also coincided with deeper psychological and ideological interests;



"We're Going to Poland to Beat Up the Jews," 1939.

it was, in a way, a satisfaction of the traditional Jewish notion of being "chosen," which parallels, in its modern ultra-nationalist form, the Nazi view, by dissociating the Jewish people from the rest of humanity, though "for the better." (Many have already commented on the similarity of the Zionist and the anti-Semitic descriptions of the "Diaspora Jew.") Thus the well-known Hebrew poet Uri Zvi Greenberg divides humanity into "Circumcized" and "Uncircumcized." But the extermination also served ostensibly as a decisive proof of the Zionist thesis, namely that the Jewish people cannot survive in a state of dispersion, without a territory of its own, and that its continued existence is possible only in its own sovereign homeland, with its own army. A nonmythical examination of the events, however, setting them in the proper historical context, would have shown that the extermination of the Jews was but the opening stage of a program of genocide as a permanent institution. It would have shown that the unique Jewish fate, which the Zionists spoke of, was unique in this case in the sense that it habituated the world to the institution of genocide, by applying it first to alien and unliked (or actively disliked) groups such as the Jews and the Gypsies. Objective analysis and description would have demonstrated that if even the Poles and the Russians, well-rooted territorial nations both (the latter actually one of the world's mightiest military powers), are liable to extermination, then sovereignty and military prowess are no security against it. Objective reflection would have brought us to the further fact that the Israeli Jews were not saved by Zionism but by the unrelated fact that the Nazis failed to conquer Palestine. We would, moreover, have recognized that most territorial peoples in history have vanished, through assimilation, conquest, or annihilation. It would therefore have trans-



Labor Zionists in May Day Parade, Chelm, 1932.

pired that this central Zionist tenet is meaningless, and that the ultimate guarantee against extermination (if such a guarantee is possible) lies in the eradication of ideologies which exclude any human group from the definition of humanity. This implies joint struggle and international cooperation that seek to overcome differences and barriers, not to heighten and strengthen them, as urged by powerful elements within Israel and in the Zionist movement.

But others have been party to the Zionist policy of promoting a nonhistorical presentation of the facts. First of all, the Germans themselves. They were interested in this presentation so as to dispel the feelings of hatred, vengeance, fear, and suspicion with which the outside world, mainly the Slav peoples, who had been

slated for enslavement and annihilation, regarded them after the war. By suppressing the facts and by limiting the memory of genocide to the Jewish people, it could be represented as a singular insane seizure, not necessarily of the German people, but of the Austrian dictator who ruled it, and who had acquired his anti-Semitic notions in the gutters of Vienna. Indeed, the extermination policy did contain an individual Hitlerian ingredient, but the extermination of the Jews could hardly have taken place except in the context of an overall ideology advocating the subjugation and even annihilation of "inferior races," as the Slavs were held to be by "pan-German" ideologists long before Hitler. This ideology was itself a typical byproduct of the "Drang nach Osten," the drive eastward, which reappears periodically in German history.

The Western powers, too, were anxious to confine the memory of the Nazi extermination policy to the "Final Solution." They were eager to restore West Germany as soon as possible to the "family of nations," in order to establish with its help the present West European-Atlantic military-political system as a counterweight to Soviet might, a system within which Germany was assigned a central role from the very beginning. The Jews being largely "outsiders" in the European-Christian cultural consciousness (even when not actively hated), their destruction and that of other "outsiders," such as Gypsies, did not carry the same onus as the annihilation of "legitimate" members of the European family of nations, for example the Dutch or the English. After all, even the Slavs are not considered in Western Europe (or in the United States) to be full-fledged members of the civilized community of nations. Thus the idea that the extermination was limited to Jews, and the advocacy of restitution to the surviving Jews, more or less prepared the ground for the

readmission of Germany as a member in good standing of the European community.

With regard to the Slav peoples, presumably next in line for the Nazi treatment, the situation is more complex. In the East European countries, notably in the Soviet Union, the central role of the Jews as victims of Nazi genocide has been played down, and their ethnic identity often hidden among the Soviet or Polish citizens murdered by the Germans. Some claim that this fact, anti-Semitic on the face of it, admits of a further interpretation: anti-Semitism being still endemic in parts of the USSR (mainly in the Ukraine), an emphasis on Jews as the prime victims may not arouse much of a reaction among non-Jews, so that the exposure of the generally murderous nature of the Nazi regime is a more effective educational measure against fascism. At any rate, the emphasis in these countries is on the guilt of German fascism, care being taken to distinguish it from the German people. There are, of course, ideological principles involved, but another factor is the need to accept East Germany, the GDR, into the system of Eastern European nations, and to blunt the feelings of fear, hatred, and vengeance toward it. Lately, not only toward the GDR—the Eastern bloc is



Jewish refugees from Germany at Polish border, 1930s.

also anxious to maintain good relations with the Federal Republic, which has reappeared on the world scene as a political-industrial giant, and the mention of the past and the raising of ghosts from their graves cannot be helpful to this end.

The "Jewish monopolization," if one may so term it, of the Nazi phenomenon, by presenting the Jewish people as it almost exclusive victim, is reprehensible from several points of view. Firstly, as noted, it excludes the Jews from the human race, as if they were inherently different from it, producing a paranoid reaction among a section of the Jewish community which feels divorced from humanity and its rules. Other Jews are driven to utterly irrational reactions toward the surrounding world, as I shall show presently. On the other hand the exclusive identification of Naziism with anti-Semitism inclines many people who are not particularly sympathetic toward the Jews to regard Nazi-like manifestations lightly, without considering them a danger to themselves—as being, after all, only a "Jewish affair." This identification can therefore *encourage* Naziism, should this dormant malignancy ever revive.

Let us now see how the Israeli political leadership, in collusion with the Jewish and Zionist leadership in the Diaspora, used the Holocaust in its relations with the non-Jewish world, the Jewish Diaspora, and the Israeli public.

During the 1950s the "Holocaust awareness" in Israel, as well as in the world outside, was somewhat on the wane. Immigration from Islamic countries brought to Israel Jewish communities which had been hardly aware of the catastrophe and tended to view it as "an Ashkenazi affair." The Israeli native felt that Israel was essentially different from the Jewish Diaspora—that genocide had to do with the European Jews, not the Israelis. The survivors who landed in Israel had not yet struck deep

roots in the country, and their terrible memories were not yet a living part of the public awareness. Nor had the ritualistic system of commemoration been fully developed as yet. Though the "Holocaust and Heroism Day" was established from the very beginning of statehood, "Yad Vashem"* and all that it involves were founded only toward the end of the '50s. Much of the Holocaust literature had not yet been written or published. No doubt it was only a temporary oblivion, like the momentary paralysis following a severe injury, before the nervous system reacts and the pain is felt.

The decisive turning-point in Israel and in the world came with the Eichmann trial. To the best of my knowledge, no study has yet been published of the political background of the trial, but I think that it would not be far wrong to assume that, in addition to the desire and the need to punish the chief executive of "the Final Solution," thereby announcing to the world that such crimes will not go unpunished, and making Israel instrumental in the application of the highest principles of human justice and international law (despite the legalistic quibbling concerning the kidnapping in the Argentine), the trial also had complex political aims and extremely important political consequences.

It may be conjectured that one aim was to renew and reinforce the German sense of guilt, at a time when the feeling was gaining strength in Germany that by the payment of the reparations Germany had discharged its debt to the Jewish people and to the world at large.

The most important result of the trial, politically speaking, was West Germany's agree-

*"Yad Vashem," which may be loosely translated as "monument and memento," is a shrine in Jerusalem dedicated to the memory of the Jews murdered by the Nazis, and to the relevant research.



Jews leaving for Palestine (New Year's greeting card).

ment to establish open diplomatic relations with Israel, to add a substantial increase to the reparations, and to put an end to all talk about "paying off the debt."

And this is the point which is so objectionable about it. The trial served not only for the symbolic punishment of Nazi crimes (after all, the hanging of one Eichmann cannot be considered as a more than symbolic retribution for the murder of millions), not only for the commemoration of these crimes and the inculcation of moral horror of them and their like into the mind of the world—but also for the purpose of making immediate political capital. It became a tactic of worldly politics, aiming at worldly ends. This mundane intent could not but vitiate the higher moral purposes of the trial.

To elaborate: the Adenauer Government had avoided the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with Israel for pragmatic reasons: it did not wish to jeopardize its relations with the Arab world. It viewed the reparations and the restitutions in a legalistic light—they have nothing to do with present-day political problems, but are compensation for injuries inflicted in the past, a compensation which must by no means tie West Germany's hands in its present relations with the world.

The Eichmann trial forced Germany to abandon this principle, to act against its natural interests and to accord Israel a special preference, without Israel feeling obliged to pay Germany back with the hard currency of reciprocal interests, as customary in relations between

states. There is no need to be particularly solicitous about German interests, for a country like Germany could hardly draw a line under the past and behave henceforth like a normal state. But these facts had extremely grave and corrupting consequences for *Israel*, and the interests that were really hurt were not Germany's, but Israel's.

The constant harping on the Holocaust, on anti-Semitism and Jew-hatred throughout history, created in the Israeli public and its leadership a strange moral blindness. As "the world" is always conceived as a hater and persecutor, Israelis tend to consider themselves free of all moral obligation in their relations with it, while expecting to be treated in return on the basis of moral guilt. While their main arguments rest on an appeal to justice and the world's obligation to "the remnants of the Holocaust," they feel free to contract agreements with the world's darkest, most repressive regimes, to negotiate arms deals with the worst governments, and to oppress non-Jews subject to their rule.

The exploitation of the memory of the Holocaust for these purposes has been developed into a fine art. Almost any Israeli official appearance abroad involves an invocation of the Holocaust, in order to inculcate in the listeners the proper feelings of guilt. Similarly, all important non-Jewish visitors to Israel are taken as a matter of course to "Yad Vashem," as part of their initiation, sometimes with the addition of Kibbutz Lohamei Hagetaot* for good measure, in order to inject them with the proper mood and the ritual guilt expected of them.

The Christian world does have a very bad conscience about the Jews, both because of past

*A Kibbutz inhabited mostly by former ghetto fighters against the Nazis.

centuries, and because the charges that it remained indifferent during the Nazi extermination are true (though it should be remembered that the Allies did not bomb the extermination camps while hundreds of thousands of *non-Jews* were also being murdered there, and it seems that the Soviet leadership was completely indifferent to the plight of Soviet war prisoners).

Thus a situation has been created in which the foremost basis of Israel's policy toward the rest of the world is the invocation of guilt and moral pressure. From this viewpoint, Mr. Begin's Holocaust rhetoric is a faithful continuation of a tradition initiated by Labor governments. Incidentally, it is amusing to observe the difficulties our policymakers have in finding a common language with countries where there are no guilt feelings regarding the Jews, like most Third World states. These nations experienced no pangs of conscience when they suspended diplomatic relations with us, and one can hardly accuse the Chinese of anti-Semitism when they have but the vaguest notion who the Jews are!

The net result is that the State of Israel, established ostensibly to enable the Jews to lead a "normal existence as a nation-state among other nation-states," deliberately adopts a policy which puts it outside the system of power relationships normal among nations. It insists on being treated as an abnormal nation, it avoids direct economic and political involvement in a world of power and interests, in the *historical* world, and tries to maintain a *non-historical* existence as a sect divorced from the historical process.

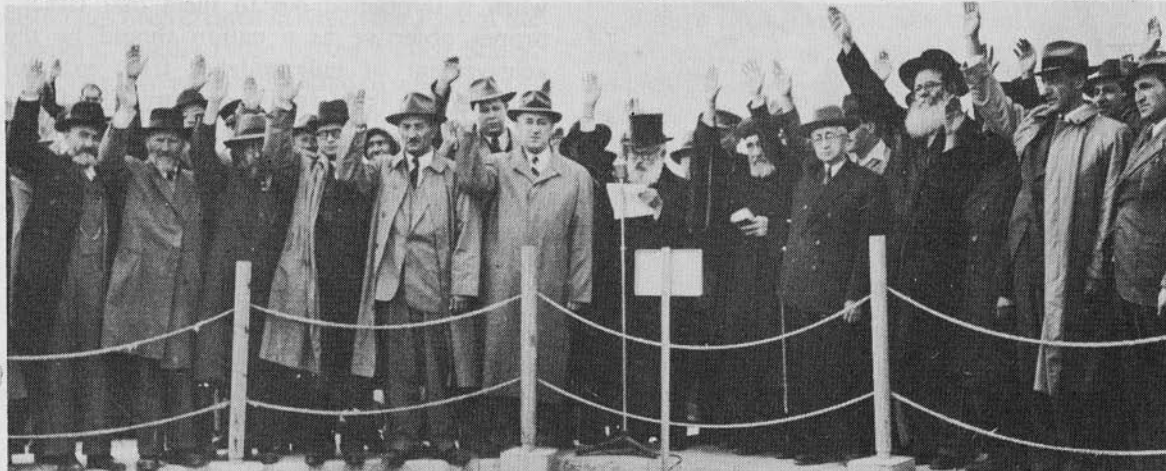
Needless to say, such a policy, successful as it has been in the short run, is doomed to fail in the long, having been initially based on a sense of past guilt. This consciousness has its limits, and it may be compared to a bank account

which is not replenished but steadily exhausted by heavy withdrawals. The reserves of guilt feelings are being steadily depleted: fewer and fewer people remember the Holocaust, in spite of the reiterated harping on it. For those who do not remember it, its monotonous invocation becomes a nuisance. It would be a hard day for Israel when it is called upon to perform in the real world, after the final exhaustion of its "moral credit," and when all of its structure and outlook have been formed under hothouse conditions.

I stated that the "Holocaust awareness" in Israel had been on the wane during the '50s and was reignited by the Eichmann trial, though doubtless it would have reawakened in one way or another. But there is a great difference between a spontaneous reawakening, deriving from the need to understand the past as a key to the present, and an official, propagandistic indoctrination, churning out slogans and a false view of the world, the real aim of which is not at all an understanding of the past, but a manipulation of the present. This attitude has gained control of both Israel and the Jewish people abroad.

The memory of the Nazi extermination served as a powerful tool in the hands of the Israeli leadership and that of the Jews abroad, the latter being largely subservient to the Israeli, to rally and regiment the Jewish Diaspora, above all in the United States. This has been achieved by the exploitation and cultivation of two main factors: (a) The American Jews' feelings of guilt about not having done more to prevent the disaster; (b) The insecurity of some Jews about their position in American society.

The guilt feeling is utilized in the following manner: Israel is presented to US Jews as being under a constant threat of annihilation by the surrounding Arab countries, in spite of the fact, which is not publicized, that it is several times stronger, and that in the foreseeable future it is in no military danger. This provides an opportunity for the Jews to assuage their guilt feelings by their economic and political mobilization "for the prevention of a second Holocaust." Any war is therefore represented as a menace to the State's very existence, and the ensuing victory is then represented as a miracle, due, among other things, to Jewish support,



After UN declares Jerusalem an International City, 1949, Jewish leaders vow the city will be forever Jewish.

thus providing the Jews with a sense of achievement and participation in the heroic events. Israel is also presented in this light to the non-Jewish world, in an attempt to silence criticism of its policies with the unanswerable argument: "You, who stood idly on the sidelines during the Holocaust, may not tell us what we should do to prevent another Holocaust."

For this purpose the Jews of Israel are represented as the "surviving remnant," although in reality most of them either immigrated to Palestine before World War II (or are their descendants), or came from Islamic countries. The illusion has been ably served in the past by the



From Exhibition on "Degenerate Music" in Dusseldorf, 1938.

Arab statesmen and their talk of "eliminating the Zionist entity," talk which only died down after the Six Day War. From this point of view, the PLO refusal to recognize Israel and to amend the "Palestinian Covenant" are the last straws clutched at by Israeli policy.

Here another significant factor enters the picture: the image of an Israel under a threat of destruction is *necessary and precious* to American Jewry. One tries to explain to American Jews that, as a matter of fact, Israel is *not* in danger of annihilation, that for many years yet it will be stronger than any combination of Arab states, that in point of fact Israel has been in no danger of physical destruction since the first truce in the 1948 War of Independence, that Israel's cultural and organizational level, even in its currently demoralized state, is still far higher than those of the surrounding Arab nations, and that this qualitative advantage, when all is said and done, is its true military superiority—and the response is resistance and anger. Then one realizes that this image of Israel is a necessity to American Jews, as it enables them to overcome their "Holocaust guilt." Many of them therefore react with displeasure when it is pointed out to them that Israel's proper objective as a nation should be the achievement of independence from external factors, even from Jewish support. They want this dependence to continue, so as to feel that they are needed. In addition, support for Israel is necessary to them because they have no other focus for their identity as Jews. The Israeli soldier, the "Israeli Hero," is also needed by them as a focus of emotional compensation in an environment where the Jew is not generally depicted as the tough virile warrior extolled by the society. Thus the Israeli supplies the American Jew with a dual, self-contradictory image: on the one hand, the virile superhuman; on the other, a hapless potential Holocaust victim.

Both images have, of course, little relation to reality. Furthermore, the fact that Diaspora Jews, mainly those in America, use Israel to view themselves as “vicarious heroes,” while they would not even dream of immigrating to participate in the “heroic battles,” intensifies their sense of guilt and enhances the moral control of the Israeli establishment. I would even hazard a guess that this establishment is not really interested in their immigration to Israel, but prefers their guilty unstinting support from afar.

It should be noted further that this massive transfer of Jewish (and non-Jewish) American funds into the hands of the Israeli power elite takes place without the donors having any say or right to criticize the ways that the money is spent in Israel itself. Only the Israelis, who, it is said, are on the spot and are more familiar with the situation than foreign Jews—being after all on the very firing line, facing the threat of the new Holocaust—are entitled to express any opinion on the subject. Were not the danger of a new Holocaust invoked again and again, Diaspora Jews might have demanded more say and participation in these decisions. Thus a situation has been created in which the Jews of the Diaspora, mainly those of the United States, have been converted into a kind of colonial possession of the Israeli power establishment, serving as an inexhaustible source of revenue, without the right to exercise any control over its expenditure, the sort of situation which caused the British colonies in North America to revolt against the British crown under the slogan “No taxation without representation!”

This pattern is further reinforced by harping on the feelings of insecurity of some American Jews, mainly of the first and second generations of immigrants, concerning their position in American society. Again, Israel is presented as a refuge in a storm, as insurance against the

future—the same Israel which at the same time is pictured to them as a candidate for annihilation. It would be useless to argue that this is a contradiction in terms, for we deal here with utterly irrational attitudes. These Jews also tend as a rule to place a blind trust in Israel, and unlike the average American Jew, with whom the subject is more or less open to discussion, one can hardly argue with them. Any Israeli action, however stupid or aggressive, wins instinctive agreement and identification on their part. Thus, whereas many American Jews experience an acute sense of discomfort, embarrassment and even shame at Mr. Begin’s behavior and rhetoric (not unlike the feelings many Israelis have about him), the latter identify with him completely, much more than they did with Mr. Rabin before him. For Begin is so thoroughly a Diaspora Jew, one of their own, a Holocaust survivor like them, that they say: “To hell with what the *Goyim* think about his style and personality. Anyway, who are those *Goyim*, if not actual or potential murderers? Didn’t they rejoice in their hearts while we were being gassed and burned? So why should we care what they think?”

I have tried to show how the invocation of the Holocaust is one of the main instruments by which the Israeli power establishment controls Diaspora Jewry and converts it into a tool of its economic policy, in addition to its use as a means of pressuring the non-Jewish world. The funds collected in this manner, without being controlled by their donors, are distributed among the various institutions of the Israeli power elite according to an agreed ratio, and in their turn serve as a means of manipulating the Israeli public, which has no say about their distribution, either, since it has not contributed them. This process actually began in the ’20s, when the Labor Movement denied the Zionist organization any say about the allocation of the

funds entrusted to its care (cf. J. Shapiro's book *The History of Ahdut Ha'avoda*). But only after the war and the founding of the State of Israel did the process reach its highest refinement. In reality this means that *it is a structural interest of this system to perpetuate Israel's dependence on outside help, since it enables the Israeli power elite to exploit Diaspora Jews, on the one hand, and maintain its control over the Israeli public, on the other, by means of the incoming contributions, without being obliged to render an account of these resources to anybody*. This may lead us to view with a certain skepticism the talk about "economic independence," which has indeed almost disappeared since the Six Day War. The country's economic dependence benefits the power elite and helps to perpetuate it in power. This is irrespective of whether the government is that of the Alignment, Mapam, Likud, the NRP, etc.—they all are members of the system. Though the foregoing is a side issue of our theme, it deserves fuller elaboration and treatment.

I have stated before that the goal of Zionism was to put an end to Jewish dispersal and to turn the Jews into a sovereign territorial nation. And, indeed, in conformity with classical Zionist predictions, according to which establishing the Jew on his own land would create a new type of Jew and a new Jewish mentality, an independent national consciousness, distinct from the Jewish one though having an affinity with it, began to develop in Eretz Israel.

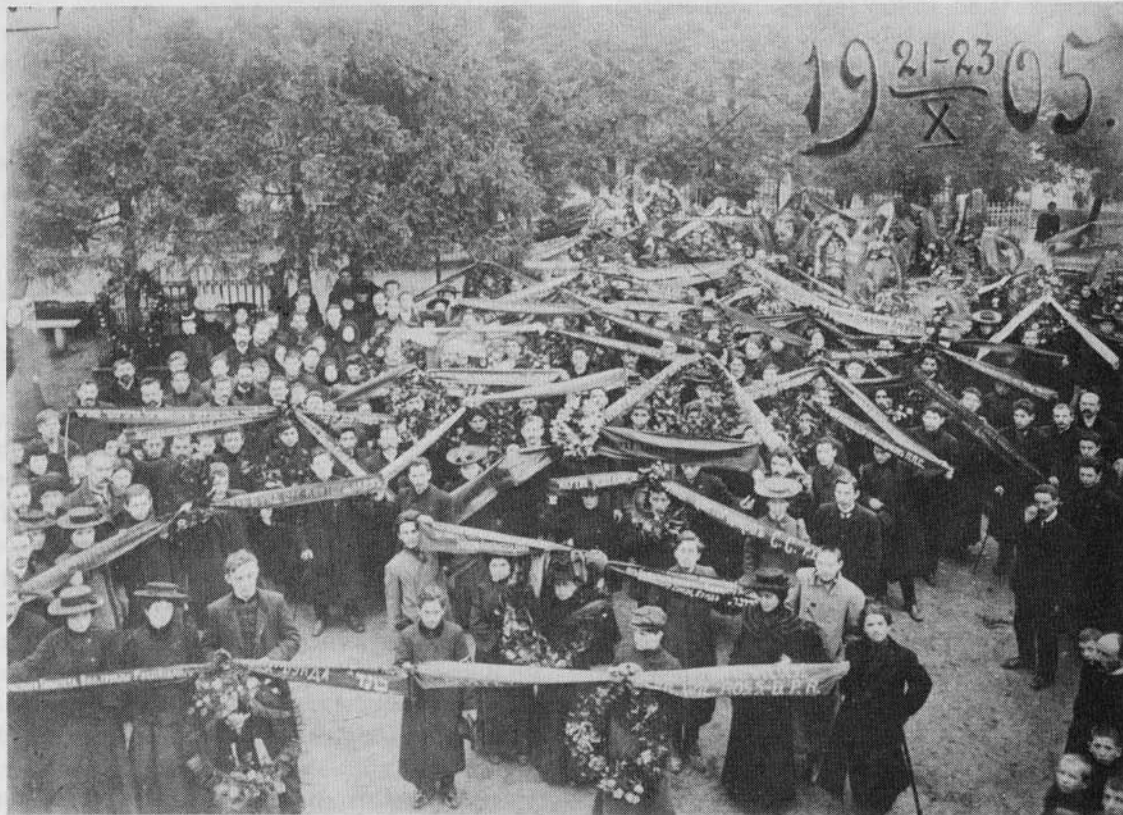
Already in the '40s and the '50s the leadership became aware of this process, which as a matter of fact began in its own ranks, as for example in Ben Gurion's transfer of emphasis to Eretz Israel, and his reversal of priorities—instead of the Hebrew *Yishuv* in Palestine serving the needs of the Jewish people, the Jewish people were to become an instrument in the hands of the *Yishuv*. If matters had been per-

mitted to follow their natural course, the new Israeli nation would have developed independently of the Jewish Diaspora, and would eventually have formed a distinct and separate entity. The ties between this nation and the Diaspora would gradually have become feebler and vaguer, thus attenuating the ideological and the power basis of the ruling establishment. The leadership therefore set out to block and reverse the process.

The most effective ideological tool for the achievement of this objective was the exploitation of Arab hatred, the drawing of an analogy between the Nazis and the Arabs, with the corollary that Jewish destiny is the same everywhere, in Israel or in the Diaspora, like a mark of Cain branded on Jewish brows from the beginning of time by mysterious, supernatural forces: We are always an object of hatred and the urge to annihilate, here and everywhere, now and always. The only difference between Israel and the Diaspora is that in Israel we can fight back, whereas in the Diaspora we have no alternative but "to be led to slaughter like sheep." Inevitably this led to various historical theories and conclusions about the unique, mystical course and meaning of Jewish history, to Messianic illuminations and so on, conclusions which the nationalistic right wing was quick to embrace, though in the Labor movement, where some vestiges of its rationalistic origins still persisted, there was a reluctance to follow the inner logic of this argument. It need hardly be said that in the writings of the founders of Zionism there is virtually no trace of such an interpretation, as initially Zionism was an attempt to provide a rational solution to the frightful problems facing the Jewish people of Eastern and Central Europe during the crisis of the dynastic European systems. Had the founders of Zionism conceived the Jewish problem in this light, they would hardly have arrived at the

Zionist solution. Their main aim was *to put an end* to “Jewish destiny,” to the Jewish “uniqueness as victims,” and to create a more just society. If the purpose of Zionism had been merely the establishment of a more effective self-defense organization, they would not have considered the effort worthwhile. Thus the murder of Europe’s Jews, which, as I have argued earlier, *should be understood mainly in the context of German and European history*, and of the special position occupied by the Jews in the European socio-economic structure, is conceived as a disembodied, meta-historical, eschatological phenomenon. There is a continuing effort to blur the decisive differences between Arab hatred and Naziism, such as the

fact that the Nazis invented the myth of the “Jewish Conspiracy” for the purpose of inflaming an irrational, psychotic hatred of the Jews in the German people, whereas the Arabs are engaged in a struggle against a real enemy whose might really threatens them, who has already caused the flight of more than a million of their brethren from their homes, and who is now subjugating another two million. Moreover, Arab hostility is directed, rationally enough, against *the Israelis*, and not against all Jews wherever they are (although the support most Jews extend to Israel does tend to spread the hostility to all Jews). We need not dwell on the vast differences between the Arabs and the Germans in social conditions, cultural and reli-



Polish & Russian Social Democrats and Bund members honoring victims of the October 1905 pogrom in Vilna.

gious backgrounds, their economic, political, and national stages of development, differences which make it impossible to discuss the two phenomena in the same breath. But as most Israelis know little of the Arab world, and for so many of them "all *Goyim* are alike," in their eyes there is no difference between a Palestinian peasant refugee and a member of the SS, heir to a high technology and a perverted ideology, trained in the massacre of populations and nations. And as so many Israelis still bear the psychological scars of persecution and discrimination in their countries of origin, this shallow propagandistic analogy falls on fertile ground. This is true not only of the masses, not only of the immigrants, but also of many Israelis with pretensions to education and historical discrimination.

Thus, both on the eve of the Six Day War and after the Yom Kippur War, serious people talked about these events as "an expression of the Jewish fate which unites us all," as if other nations had never fought, were never suddenly attacked, as if the danger of war is not an inseparable part of sovereign political existence, rather than "a Jewish tragedy."

Simultaneously with the doctrine about "the common fate," it is repeatedly asserted that "the Jewish people are Israel's only loyal ally." Since the Jewish people are *not* a political power, nor are they a clearly defined and organized entity, no "alliance" is possible between them and a sovereign state. A state can contract alliances only with states. This assertion, then, can mean only one of two things: either Israel is not a real state, or the Jews *can move states* (notably the United States) to contract alliances with Israel. In reality, when you try to examine the real content of the slogan "an orientation on the Jewish people," you realize that it is pure phrase-mongering. Its real meaning is the wish and the hope that the Jews

will always succeed in forcing the US Government to support Israel, i.e., it is an orientation on the USA. But the slogan has another meaning: the evasion of realistic policies in the real world—where there are no "loyal allies" but only shifting communities of interest—and a retreat to a status of nonhistorical dependence.

The identification of the Arabs in general, and the Palestinians in particular, with the Nazis, together with the constant reiteration of the danger of a Holocaust, which arouses panic in the average Israeli, as well as the doctrine of "the Jewish people as Israel's only ally," lead to the following consequences: First, they freeze Israeli political consciousness in a pre-state stage, to the point that it is incapable of relating to, or understanding, the real forces operating in the political arena. The public level of consciousness remains one of a sect, rather than of a sovereign political community, and is therefore incapable of judging the political leadership by realistic standards. Second, these analogies have produced grave moral consequences. As the choices the Israelis believe they confront are not realistic, but either "Holocaust" or "victory" (or at least "holding fast"), it relieves them of moral compunctions. People who believe themselves to be in danger of annihilation consider themselves free of any moral qualm which might tie their hands in their efforts to save themselves. The only thing that stops them is the utilitarian consideration that certain acts could hurt their image abroad. This is the logic guiding people like Moshe Shamir or Geulah Cohen and other founders of the Tehiyah ("Revival") Party, who argue that we may do anything, because the world wants to destroy us. They are, therefore, uninhibited in advocating the most drastic steps against the non-Jewish population of the country. Such arguments remind us of the excuses made by the Soviets when they displaced populations on



Israeli soldiers.

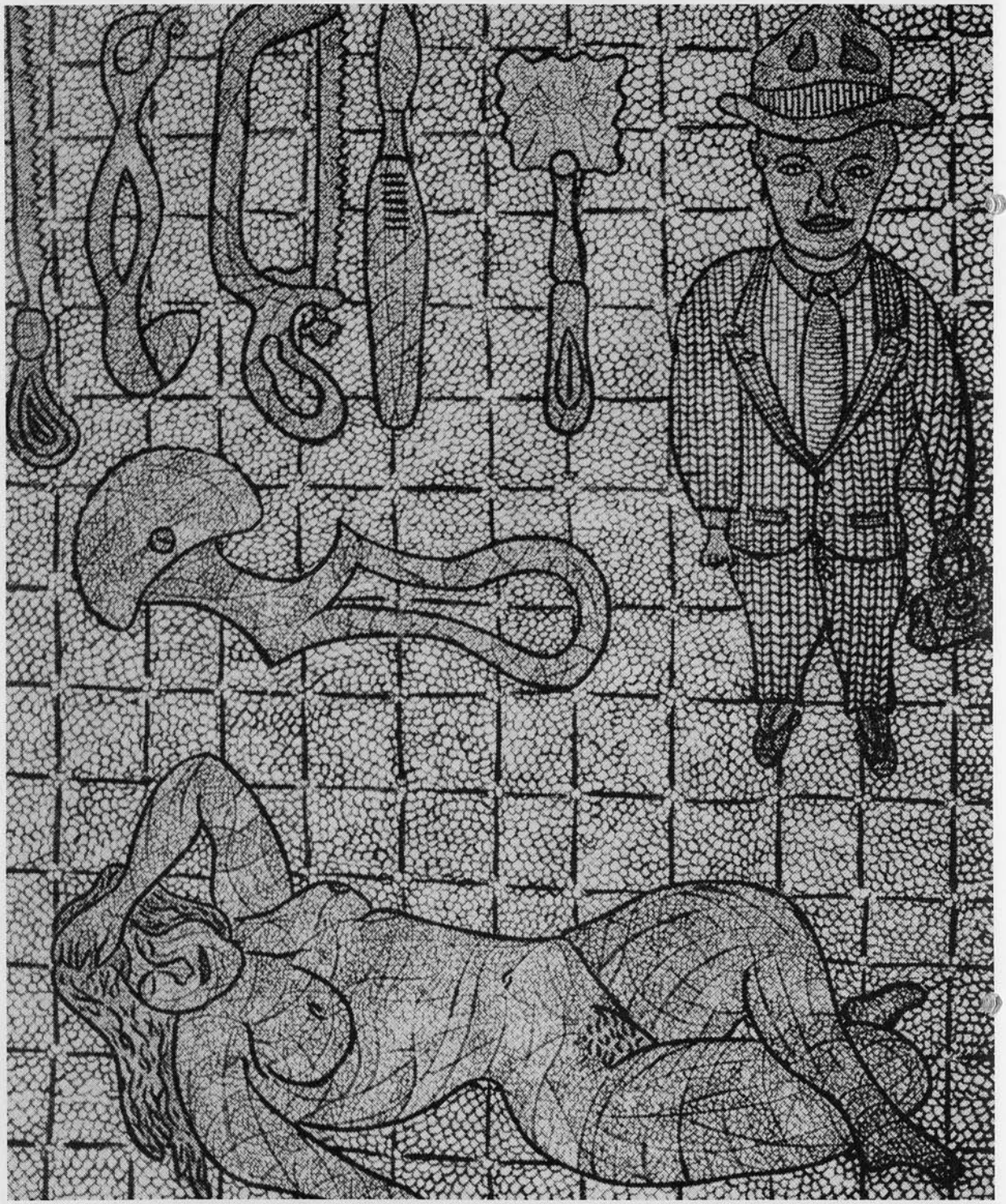
the grounds that they displayed “chauvinist, counter-revolutionary tendencies.” Also, although such comparisons may be shocking, it should be remembered that the basic argument which the Nazis used to justify the murder of the Jews was that the Jews were planning the ruin and destruction of the German people, so that the choice was between the destruction of the Jews or the destruction of the Germans. Any argumentation based on claiming that the

other side harbors intentions of annihilation implies, in most cases, the presence of such intentions toward the other side. An honest person should be extremely cautious before endorsing such a thesis, as it may in reality mean endorsing the massacre of innocents. (It goes without saying that there are cases in which exterminatory intentions do exist, so that a thorough examination of the facts is always in order.)

The third result may be the gravest: A leadership cannot be divorced from its propaganda. Sooner or later it too begins to believe in the reality of the propaganda image. This is particularly true in the case of the present Israeli leadership, which is immeasurably more naive than its predecessor, and also more a captive of ideology and hallucination. Thus the leadership, too, operates in the world of myths and monsters which it has created in order to maintain and perpetuate its power. It is no longer capable of understanding what is happening in the world, and the nature of the historical processes in which its country is involved. Such a leadership, in the deteriorating political and economic situation of Israel today, constitutes a grave danger to the very existence of the State.

Thus, paradoxically, the “Holocaust consciousness” inculcated by propagandistic means has produced a real danger of destruction. A precondition to the healing and revival of Israeli society is a realization of the country’s true historical and political status. As in psychoanalytical therapy, a recognition of your real condition is the beginning of the cure.

Boaz Evron is an Israeli philosopher and journalist; this article will be part of a forthcoming book critiquing Zionism.



THE MALE IDEOLOGY OF PRIVACY:

A Feminist Perspective on the Right to Abortion

Catharine MacKinnon

In a society where women entered sexual intercourse willingly, where adequate contraception was a genuine social priority, there would be no "abortion issue" Abortion is violence. . . . It is the offspring, and will continue to be the accuser of a more pervasive and prevalent violence, the violence of rapism. —Adrienne Rich

Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution
(Norton, 1976), pp. 267, 269

In 1973, *Roe against Wade* held that a statute that made criminal all abortions except to save the mother's life violated the constitutional right to privacy.¹ In 1980, *Harris against McRae* decided that this privacy right did not require public funding of medically necessary abortions for women who could not afford them.² Here I argue that the public/private line drawn in *McRae* sustains and reveals the meaning of privacy recognized in *Roe*.

First, the experience of abortion, and the terms of the struggle for the abortion right, is situated in a context of a feminist comprehension of gender inequality, to which a critique of sexuality is central.³ Next, the legal concept of privacy is examined in the abortion context. I argue that privacy doctrine affirms what feminism rejects: the public/private split. Once the ideological meaning of the law of privacy is connected with a feminist critique of the public/

This paper was originally given as a speech on a panel entitled, "*Roe v. Wade: A Retrospective*" at a Conference on Persons, Morality and Abortion at Hampshire College, January 21, 1983.

private division, the *Roe* approach looks consistent with *McRae's* confinement of its reach. To guarantee abortions as an aspect of the private, rather than of the public, sector is to guarantee women a right to abortion subject to women's ability to provide it for ourselves. This is to guarantee access to abortion only to some women on the basis of class, not to women *as women*, and therefore, under conditions of sex inequality, to guarantee it to *all* women only on male terms. The rest of this is an attempt to unpack what I mean by that.

I will neglect two important explorations, which I bracket now. The first is: what are babies to men? Sometimes men respond to women's right to abort as if confronting the possibility of their own potential nonexistence—at *women's* hands, no less. Men's issues of potency, of continuity as a compensation for mortality, of the thrust to embody themselves or the image of themselves in the world, seem to underlie their relation to babies, as well as to most everything else. The idea that women can undo what men have done to them on this level seems to provoke insecurity sometimes bordering on hysteria. To overlook these meanings of abortion to men as men is to overlook political

and strategic as well as deep theoretical issues, is to misassess where much of the opposition to abortion is coming from, and to make a lot of mistakes. The second question I bracket is one that, unlike the first, has been discussed extensively in the abortion debate: the moral rightness of abortion itself. My view, which the rest of what I say on abortion reflects, is that the abortion choice should be available and must be *women's*, but not because the fetus is not a form of life. The more usual approach tends to make whether women should make the abortion decision somehow contingent on whether the fetus is a form of life. Why shouldn't women make life or death decisions? Which returns us to the first bracketed issue.

The issues I will discuss have largely not been discussed in the terms I will use. What has happened instead, I think, is that women's embattled need to survive in a system that is hostile to our survival, the desperation of our need to negotiate with whatever means that same system will respond to, has precluded our exploration of these issues in the way that I am about to explore them. That is, the terms on which we have addressed the issue of abortion have been shaped and constrained by the very situation that the abortion issue has put us in a position to need to address. We have not been able to risk thinking about these issues on our own terms because the terms have not been ours—either in sex, in social life in general, or in court. The attempt to grasp women's situation on our own terms, from our own point of view, defines the feminist impulse. If doing that is risky, our situation as women also makes it risky not to.

So, first feminism, then law.

Most women who seek abortions became pregnant while having sexual intercourse with men. Most did not mean or wish to conceive. In contrast to this fact of women's experience, the



repeat offenders, high on the list of the Right's villains, their best case for opposing abortion as female sexual irresponsibility. Ask such women why they are repeatedly pregnant, they say something like, the sex just happened. Like every night for over a year.⁶ I wonder if a woman can be presumed to control access to her sexuality who feels unable to interrupt intercourse to insert a diaphragm; or worse, *cannot even want to*, aware that she risks a pregnancy she knows she doesn't want. Do you think she would stop the man for any other reason, such as, for instance—the real taboo—lack of desire? If not, how is sex, hence its consequences, meaningfully voluntary for women? Norms of sexual rhythm and romance that are felt interrupted by women's needs are constructed against women's interests. When it appears normatively less costly for women to risk an undesired, often painful, traumatic, dangerous, sometimes illegal, and potentially

life-threatening procedure, than it is to protect oneself in advance, sex doesn't look a whole lot like freedom. Yet the policy debate in the last twenty years has not explicitly approached abortion in the context of how women get pregnant, that is, as a consequence of sexual intercourse under conditions of gender inequality, that is, as an issue of forced sex.

Now, law. In 1973, Roe against Wade found the right to privacy "broad enough to encompass a woman's decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy." Privacy had previously been recognized as a constitutional principle in a case that decriminalized the prescription and use of contraceptives.⁸ Note that courts implicitly connect contraception with abortion under the privacy rubric in a way that parallels the way I just did explicitly under the feminist rubric. In 1977, three justices observed, "In the abortion context, we have held that the right to privacy shields the woman from undue state



intrusion in and external scrutiny of her very personal choice.”⁹ In 1980, the Supreme Court in *Harris* against *McRae* decided that this did not mean that federal Medicaid programs had to cover medically necessary abortions for poor women.¹⁰ According to the court, the privacy of the woman’s choice was not unconstitutionally burdened by the government financing her decision to continue, but not her decision to end, a conception. The Supreme Court reasoned that “although the government may not place obstacles in the path of a woman’s exercise of her freedom of choice, it may not remove those not of its own creation.”¹¹

Aside from holding the state exempt in any issue of the distribution of wealth, which is dubious, it was apparently a very short step from that which the government had a duty *not* to intervene in, as in *Roe*, and that which it has *no* duty to intervene in, as in *McRae*. That this distinction has consistent parallels in other areas of jurisprudence and social policy—such as in the distinction between negative and positive freedom¹² and in the state action requirement¹³—does not mean that the public/private line that forms their common dimension is not, there as well as here, the gender line. The result of government’s stance is also the same throughout: an area of social life is cordoned off from the reach of explicitly recognized public authority. This does not mean, as they think, that government stays out really. Rather, this leaves the balance of forces where they are socially, so that government’s patterns of intervention mirror and magnify, thus authorize, the existing social divisions of power.

The law of privacy, explicitly a public law *against* public intervention, is one such doctrine. Conceived as the outer edge of limited government, it embodies a tension between precluding public exposure or governmental intrusion on the one hand, and autonomy in the

sense of protecting personal self-action on the other. This is a tension, not just two facets of one whole right. This tension is resolved from the liberal state’s point of view—I am now moving into a critique of liberalism—by delineating the threshold of the state as its permissible extent of penetration (a term I use advisedly) into a domain that is considered free by definition: the private sphere. By this move the state secures what has been termed “an inviolable personality” by insuring what is called “autonomy or control over the intimacies of personal identity.”¹⁴ The state does this by centering its self-restraint on body and home, especially bedroom. By staying out of marriage and the family, prominently meaning sexuality, that is to say, heterosexuality, from contraception through pornography to the abortion decision, the law of privacy proposes to guarantee individual bodily integrity, personal exercise of moral intelligence, and freedom of intimacy.¹⁵ What it actually does is translate traditional social values into the rhetoric of individual rights as a means of subordinating those rights to social imperatives.¹⁶ In feminist terms, applied to abortion law, the logic of *Roe* consummated in *Harris* translates the ideology of the private sphere into individual women’s collective needs to the imperatives of male supremacy.

This is my ten-year retrospective on *Roe* against *Wade*. Reproduction is sexual, men control sexuality, and the state supports the interest of men as a group. If *Roe* is part of this, why was abortion legalized? Why were women even imagined to have such a right as privacy? It is not an accusation of bad faith to answer that the interests of men as a social group converge here with the definition of justice embodied in law. The male point of view unites them. Taking this approach, one sees that the way the male point of view constructs a social event or

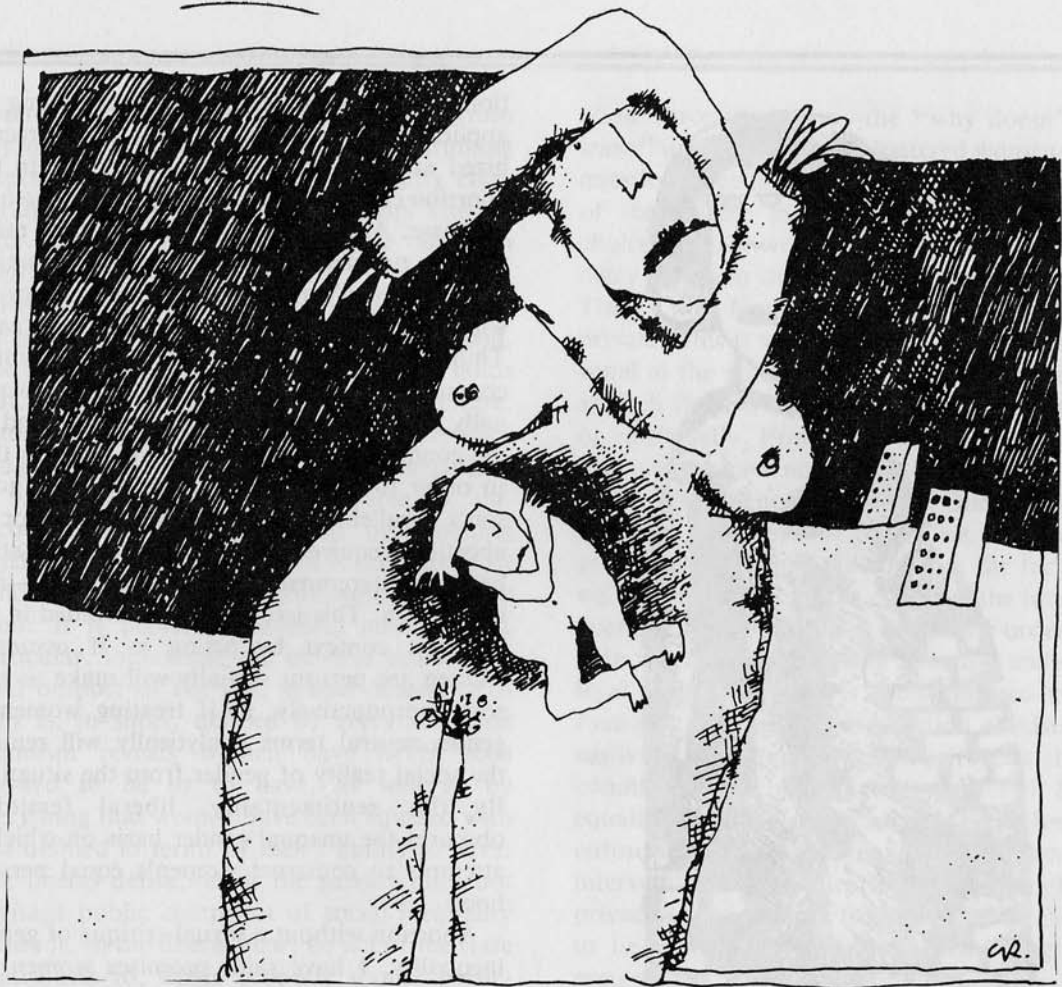
legal notion is the way that event or notion is framed by state policy. For example, to the extent possession is the point of sex, illegal rape will be sex with a woman who is not yours unless the act makes her yours. If part of the kick of pornography involves eroticizing the putatively prohibited, illegal pornography—obscenity—will be prohibited enough to keep pornography desirable without ever making it truly illegitimate or unavailable. If, from the male standpoint, male is the implicit definition of human, maleness will be the implicit standard by which sex equality is measured in discrimination law. In parallel terms, the availability of abortion frames, and is framed by, the extent to which men, worked out among themselves, find it convenient to allow abortion—a reproductive consequence of intercourse—to occur. Abortion will then, to that extent, be available.

The abortion policy debate has construed the issues rather differently. The social problem posed by sexuality since Freud¹⁷ has been seen as the problem of the repression of innate desire for sexual pleasure by the constraints of civilization. Gender inequality arises as an issue in the Freudian context in women's repressive socialization to passivity and coolness (so-called frigidity), in women's so-called desexualization, and in the disparate consequences of biology, that is, pregnancy. Who defines what is seen as sexual, what sexuality therefore is, to whom what stimuli are erotic and why, and who defines the conditions under which sexuality is expressed—these issues are not available to be considered. "Civilization's" answer to these questions, in the Freudian context, instead fuses women's reproductivity with our attributed sexuality in its definition of what a woman is. We are, from a feminist standpoint, thus defined as women, as feminine, by the uses to which men want to put us. Seen this way, it

becomes clear why the struggle for reproductive freedom, since Freud, has not included a woman's right to refuse sex. In the post-Freudian era, the notion of sexual liberation frames the sexual equality issue as a struggle for women to have sex with men on the same terms as men: "without consequences."

The abortion right, to the extent it has been admitted to have anything to do with sex, has been sought as freedom from the unequal reproductive consequences of sexual expression, with sexuality defined as centered on heterosexual genital intercourse. It has been as if it is biological organisms, rather than social relations, that have sex and reproduce the species, and sex itself is "really" a gender-neutral, hence sex-equal, activity. But if you see both sexuality and reproduction, hence gender, as socially situated, and your issue is less how more people can get more sex as it is than who, socially, defines what sexuality—hence pleasure and violation—is, the abortion right becomes situated within a very different problematic: the social and political problematic of the inequality of the sexes. As Susan Sontag said, "Sex itself is not liberating for women. Neither is more sex. . . . The question is, what sexuality shall women be liberated to enjoy?"¹⁸ To address this for purposes of abortion policy, from a feminist perspective, requires reconceiving the problem of sexuality from the repression of drives by civilization to the oppression of women by men.

Most arguments for abortion under the rubric of feminism have rested upon the right to control one's own body, gender-neutral. I think that argument has been appealing for the same reasons it is inadequate. Women's bodies have not socially been ours; we have not controlled their meanings and destinies. So feminists have needed to assert that control while feeling unable to risk pursuing the sense that something



more than our bodies singular, something closer to a net of relations, relations in which we are (so far unescapedly) gendered, might be at stake.¹⁹ Some feminists have noticed that our “right to decide” has become merged with an overwhelmingly male professional’s right not to have his professional judgment second-guessed by the government.²⁰ But most abortion advocates have argued in rigidly and rigorously gender-neutral terms.

Consider, for instance, Judith Jarvis Thomson’s celebrated hypothetical case justifying abortion, in which a gender-neutral abducted

“you” has no obligation to be a life support system for the famous violinist (“he”) one is forcibly connected to. On this basis, “one” is argued to have no obligation to support a fetus.²¹ Never mind that no *woman* who needs an abortion, no woman period, is valued, no potential an actual woman’s life might hold would be cherished, comparable to a male famous violinist’s unencumbered possibilities. In the crunch, few women look like unborn Beethovens, even to sex-blind liberals. Not to mention that the underlying parallel to rape in the hypothetical—the origin in force, in abduc-

tion, that gives it weight while confining its application to instances in which force is recognized as force—is seldom interrogated in the abortion context for its applicability to the normal case. And abortion policy has to be made for the normal case. While the hypothetical makes women's rights depend by analogy on what is not considered the normal case, Thomson finds distinguishing rape from intercourse has “a rather unpleasant sound” principally because *fetal* rights should not depend on the conditions of conception. My point is that in order to apply even something like Thomson's parallel to the usual case of need for an abortion requires establishing some relation between intercourse and rape—sexuality—and conception. This issue has been avoided in the abortion context by acting as if *assuming* women are persons sexually will make us persons reproductively, as if treating women in gender-neutral terms analytically will remove the social reality of gender from the situation. By this sentimentality, liberal feminism obscures the unequal gender basis on which it attempts to construct women's equal personhood.

Abortion without a sexual critique of gender inequality, I have said, promises women sex with men on the same terms as men. Under conditions under which women do not control access to our sexuality, this facilitates women's heterosexual availability. It promises *men* women on male terms. I mean, under conditions of gender inequality, sexual liberation in this sense does not free women, it frees male sexual aggression. Available abortion on this basis removes one substantial legitimized reason that women have had, since Freud, for refusing sex besides the headache. Analyzing the perceptions upon which initial male support for abortion was based, Andrea Dworkin says: “Getting laid was at stake.”²² The Playboy



Foundation has supported abortion rights from day one; it continues to, even with shrinking disposable funds, on a level of priority comparable to its opposition to censorship. There is also evidence that men eroticize abortion itself.²³

Privacy doctrine is an ideal legal vehicle for the process of sexual politics I have described. The democratic liberal ideal of the private holds that, so long as the public does not interfere, autonomous individuals interact freely and equally. Conceptually, this private is hermetic. It *means* that which is inaccessible to, unaccountable to, unconstructed by anything beyond itself. By definition, it is not part of or conditioned by anything systematic or outside itself. It is personal, intimate, autonomous, particular, individual, the original source and final outpost of the self, gender-neutral. Privacy is, in short, defined by everything that feminism reveals women have never been allowed to be or to have, as well as by everything that women have been equated with and defined in terms of *men's* ability to have. The liberal definition of the private does not envisage public complaint of social inequality within it. In the liberal view, no act of the state contributes to, hence properly should participate in, shaping its internal alignments or distributing its internal forces, including inequalities among parties in private. Its inviolability by the state, framed as an individual right, presupposes that it is not already an arm of the state. It is not even a social sphere, exactly. Intimacy is implicitly thought to guarantee symmetry of power. Injuries arise in violating the private sphere, not within and by and because of it.

In private, consent tends to be presumed. It is true that a showing of coercion voids this presumption. But the problem is getting anything private perceived as coercive. Why one would

allow force in private—the “why doesn’t she leave” question raised to battered women—is a question given its urgency by the social meaning of the private as a sphere of equality and choice. But for women the measure of the intimacy has been the measure of the oppression. This is why feminism has had to explode the private. This is why feminism has seen the personal as the political. In this sense, for women as such there is no private, either normatively or empirically. Feminism confronts the reality that women have no privacy to lose or to guarantee. We have no inviolability. Our sexuality is not only violable, it is, hence we are, seen in and as our violation. To confront the fact that we have no privacy is to confront the intimate degradation of women *as* the public order.

In this light, recognizing abortion under the legal right to privacy is a complicated move. Freedom *from* public intervention coexists uneasily with any right which requires social preconditions to be meaningfully delivered. If inequality, for example, is socially pervasive and enforced, meaningful equality will require intervention, not abdication. But the right to privacy is not thought to require social change to be meaningful. It is not even thought to require any social preconditions, other than nonintervention by the public. The point for the abortion cases is not only that indigency, which was the specific barrier to effective choice in *McRae*, is well within public power to remedy, nor that the state, as I said, is hardly exempt in issues of the distribution of wealth. It is rather that *Roe* against *Wade* presumes that governmental nonintervention into the private sphere in itself amounts to, or at the least promotes, woman’s freedom of choice. When the alternative is jail, there is much to be said for this argument. But the *McRae* result sustains the meaning of the privacy recognized in *Roe*: women are guaranteed by the public no more

than what we can secure for ourselves in private. That is, what we can extract through our intimate associations with men. Women with privileges get rights.

Women got abortion as a private privilege, not as a public right. We got control over reproduction that is controlled by "a man or The Man,"²⁴ an individual man or (mostly male) doctors or the government. In this sense, abortion was not simply decriminalized, it was legalized; *Roe* set the stage for state regulation of the conditions under which women can have access to this right. Much of the control that women got out of legalization of abortion went directly into the hands of men socially—husbands, doctors, fathers. Much of the rest of it women have had to fight to keep from state attempts, both legislative and administrative, to regulate it out of existence.²⁵

It is not inconsistent, in this light, that a woman's decision to abort, framed as a privacy right, would have no claim on public funding and might genuinely not be seen as burdened by that deprivation. Privacy conceived as a right from public intervention and disclosure is the conceptual *opposite* of the relief *McRae* sought for welfare women. State intervention would

have provided a choice these women did *not* have in private. The women in *McRae*, poor women and women of color whose sexual refusal has counted for especially little,²⁶ needed something to make their privacy real. The logic of the court's response to them resembles that by which women are supposed to consent to sex. Preclude the alternatives, then call the sole option remaining "her choice." The point is that the woman's alternatives are precluded *prior* to the reach of the chosen remedy, the legal doctrine. They are precluded by conditions of sex, race, and class—the conditions the privacy frame not only assumes, but *works to guarantee*. These women were seen, essentially, as not having lost any privacy by having public funding for abortions withheld, as having no privacy to lose. In the bourgeois sense, in which you can have all the rights you can buy, converging with that dimension of male supremacy that makes the self-disposition money can buy a prerogative of masculinity, this was true. The *McRae* result certainly *made* it true.

The way the law of privacy restricts intrusions into intimacy also bars change in control over that intimacy. The existing distribution of power and resources within the private sphere will be precisely what the law of privacy exists to protect. Just as pornography is legally protected as individual freedom of expression without questioning whose freedom and whose expression and at whose expense, abstract privacy protects abstract autonomy without inquiring into whose freedom of action is being sanctioned, at whose expense. I think it is not coincidence that the very place (the body), the very relations (heterosexual), the very activities (intercourse and reproduction), and the very feelings (intimate) that feminism has found central to the subjection of women, form the core of privacy law's coverage. In this perspective, the legal concept of privacy can and has shield-



ed the place of battery, marital rape, and women's exploited labor, preserved the central institutions whereby women are *deprived* of identity, autonomy, control, and self-definition, and protected the primary activities through which male supremacy is expressed and enforced.

To fail to recognize the meaning of the private in the ideology and reality of women's subordination by seeking protection behind a right *to* that privacy is to cut women off from collective verification and state support in the same act. When women are segregated in private, separated from each other, one at a time, a right *to* that privacy isolates us at once from each other and from public recourse, even as it provides the only form of that recourse made available to us. So defined, the right to privacy has included a right of men "to be let alone"²⁷ to oppress women one at a time. It embodies and reflects the private sphere's existing definition of womanhood. As an instance of liberalism—applied to women as if we *are* persons, gender-neutral—Roe against Wade reinforces the division between public and private, a division that is not gender-neutral. It is at once an ideological division that lies about women's shared experience and mystifies the unity among the spheres of women's violation, and a very material division that *keeps* the private beyond public redress and depoliticizes women's subjection within it. It keeps some men out of the bedrooms of other men.

There seems to be a social perception that the Right has the high moral ground on abortion and the liberals have the high legal ground.²⁸ I have tried to sketch a feminist ground, a political ground critical of the common ground under the Right's morals and liberals' laws.

NOTES

1. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).
2. *Harris v. McRae*, 448 U.S. 297 (1980).
3. I talk about this in "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1982): 515-44.
4. See D.H. Regan, "Rewriting *Roe v. Wade*," *Michigan Law Review* 77 (August 1979): 1569-1646, in which the Good Samaritan, by analogy, happens upon the fetus.
5. As of 1973, ten states that made abortion a crime had exceptions for rape and incest; at least three had exceptions for rape only. Many of these exceptions were based on Model Penal Code Section 230.3 (Proposed Official Draft 1962), quoted in *Doe v. Bolton*, 410 U.S. 179, 205-7, app. B (1973), permitting abortion, *inter alia* in cases of "rape, incest, or other felonious intercourse." References to states with incest and rape exceptions can be found in *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, n. 37 (1973). Some versions of the Hyde Amendment, which prohibits use of public money to fund abortions, have contained exceptions for cases of rape or incest. Pub. L. No. 95-205, § 101, 91 Stat. 1960 (1972); Pub. L. No. 95-480, § 210, 92 Stat. 1567, 1586 (1978); Pub. L. No. 96-123, 109, 93 Stat. 923, 926 (1979); Pub. L. No. 96-536, § 109, 94 Stat. 3166, 3170 (1980). All require immediate reporting of the incident.
6. Kristin Luker, *Taking Chances: Abortion and the Decision Not to Contracept* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), p. 47.
7. *Roe*, 410 U.S. at 153.
8. *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965).
9. *H.L. v. Matheson*, 450 U.S. 398, 435 (dissent) (1981); See also *Whalen v. Roe*, 429 U.S. 589, 599-600 (1977).
10. *Harris v. McRae*, 448 U.S. 297 (1980).
11. *Harris*, 448 U.S. at 316.
12. Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, 1969).
13. See Paul Brest, "State Action and Liberal Theory: A Casenote on *Flagg Brothers v. Brooks*," 130 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1296 (1982).
14. Tom Gerety, "Redefining Privacy," *Harvard Civil Rights—Civil Liberties Law Review* 12, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 236.
15. Thus the law of privacy wavers between protecting the institution of heterosexuality as such and protecting that which heterosexuality is at least theoretically only one instance of, that is, free choice in intimate behavior. For the first proposition, see, e.g., *Griswold v. Connecticut* 381 U.S. 479 (1965) (distribution of contraceptives), *Loving v.*

Virginia, 388 U.S. 1 (1967) (marriage partners), *Skinner v. Oklahoma*, 316 U.S. 535 (1942) (male fertility), as well as *Roe v. Wade. Doe v. Commonwealth's Attorney*, 403 F. Supp. 1199 (D. Va. 1975) (homosexual conduct not protected, since "no part of marriage, home or family life.") For the second, *New York v. Onofre*, 424 N.Y.S. 2d 566 (1980) (invalidating criminal sodomy statute). It is consistent with this analysis that homosexuality, when protected or found officially acceptable, would primarily be in private (i.e. in the closet) and primarily parodying rather than challenging the heterosexual model. Kenneth Karst attempts to include both approaches to privacy in his formation of "intimate association," yet implicitly retains the heterosexual model as central to his definition of the meaning of intimacy. "By 'intimate association' I mean a close and familiar personal relationship with another that is in some significant way comparable to a marriage or family relationships... but in principle the idea of intimate association also includes close friendship, with or without any such links." K.L. Karst, "The Freedom of Intimate Association," *Yale Law Journal* 89, no. 4 (March 1980), p. 629. On pornography, see *Stanley v. Georgia*, 394 U.S. 557 (1969) and *Lovisi v. Slayton*, 539 F. 2d 349 (5th Cir. 1976). Taken together, these cases suggest that Mr. Stanley's privacy rights encompass looking at pornography regardless of the intrusiveness of its production, while the women depicted in the pornography Mr. Stanley looks at have no privacy rights, if they could not have "reasonably expect[ed]" privacy to attach when they permitted "onlookers" to take sexual pictures. For a discussion of privacy law in the pornography context see Ruth Colker, "Pornography and Privacy: Towards the Development of a Group Based Theory for Sex Based Intrusions of Privacy," 1, 2 *Law and Equality: A Journal of Theory and Practice* (forthcoming, 1983).

16. This formulation learned a lot from Tom Grey, "Eros, Civilization and the Burger Court," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 43, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 83-99.

17. Nineteenth-century feminists connected the abortion right with control over access to their sexuality. See Linda Gordon, *Woman's Body, Woman's Right: A Social History of Birth Control in America* [New York: Grossman (Viking), 1976]: esp. 100-15.

18. S. Sontag, "The Third World of Women," *Partisan Review* 40, no. 2 (1973), p. 188.

19. Such a relation has at least two aspects: the women/men relation; and woman/fetus relation. To the latter, see Adrienne Rich on the fetus as "neither as me nor as not-me." *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1976), p. 64.

20. K. Glen, "Abortion in the Courts: A Lay Woman's Historical Guide to the New Disaster Area," *Feminist Studies* 4 (1978): 1.

21. Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 1 (1971): 47-66.

22. A. Dworkin, *Right-Wing Women* (New York: Perigee, 1983). *You must read this book*. The support of men for abortion largely evaporated or became very equivocal when the women's movement produced, instead, women who refused sex with men and left men in droves. The fact that Jane Roe was pregnant from a gang rape, a fact which was not part of the litigation (" 'Jane Roe' Says She'd Fight Abortion Battle Again," *Minneapolis Star & Tribune*, Jan. 22, 1983), is emblematic of the sexual dimension of the issue. As further evidence, see Friedrich Engels arguing that removing private housekeeping into social industry would "remove all the anxiety about 'consequences,' which today is the most essential social—moral as well as economic—factor that prevents a girl from giving herself completely to the man she loves." *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1973), p. 139.

23. Andrea Dworkin's analysis of the Marquis de Sade's statements on abortion reveal that "Sade extolled the sexual value of murder and he saw abortion as a form of murder... abortion was a sexual act, an act of lust." *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (New York: Perigee, 1981), p. 96. One woman complaining of sexual harassment said the codirector of the abortion clinic she worked at had asked to be present during her abortion: "He said he had a fantasy about having sexual intercourse with a woman on an examining table during an abortion," she reported. "Woman accuses clinic chief of sexual harassment," *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, May 28, 1982. Ponder *Hustler's* cartoon depicting a naked man masturbating enthusiastically reading a book labeled *Fetal Positions* in the corner of an operating room where a woman lies on the operating table, knees agape in stirrups. A male doctor is holding up what he has just delivered with tongs, saying, "Want a piece of ass, Earl? This one's stillborn." WAVPM Slide Show. This slide show is described in Teresa Hommel, "Images of Women in Pornography and Medicine," VIII, 2 *NYU Review of Law and Social Change* (1978-79): 207-14.

24. Johnnie Tillmon, "Welfare is a Women's Issue," *Liberation News Service* (February 26, 1972), in *America's Working Women: A Documentary History, 1600 to the Present*, ed. Baxandall, Gordon, and Reverby (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), pp. 357-58.

25. *H.L. v. Matheson*, 450 U.S. 398 (1981) (upholding stat-

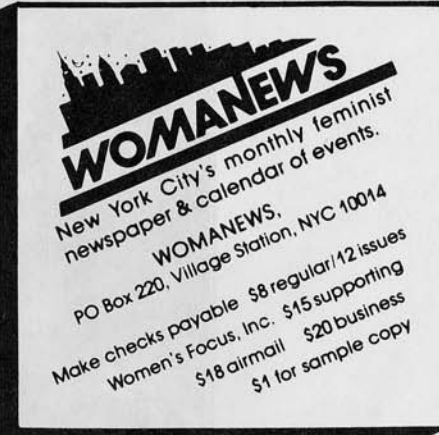
ute requiring physicians to notify parents of "dependent, unmarried minor girl" prior to performing an abortion), *Bellotti v. Baird*, 443 U.S. 672 (1977) (Bellotti II) (holding that parents may not have absolute veto power over their minor daughter's decision), *Doe v. Gerstein*, 517 F. 2d 787 (5th Cir. 1975), *aff'd* 417 U.S. 281 (1974) (mandatory written consent requirements of husbands' parents unconstitutional). In *Planned Parenthood of Mo. v. Danforth*, 428 U.S. 52 (1976) the Supreme Court held that a state cannot by statute allow a man to veto a wife's abortion choice in part because the state cannot give a husband rights over the woman's reproductive choice that the state itself does not have. This leads one to wonder where the states got their power to regulate (under some circumstances preclude) abortions in the second and third trimesters, where apparently "public" considerations can weigh against the woman's "private" choice. Could states, by statutes, allow husbands to veto abortions then? Whether courts can do by injunction what states cannot do by statute is discussed if not resolved in *Hagerstown Reproductive Health Services and Bonny Ann Fritz v. Chris Allen Fritz*, 295 Md. 268, 454 A. 2d 846 (1983). See also, *City of Akron v. Akron Center for Reproductive Health*, 103 S. Ct. 2481 (1983) (invalidating five city ordinances regulating where abortions may be performed (hospitals), who needs written consent by a parent (girls younger than 15), what doctors have to tell women prior to the procedure (e.g., tactile sensitivities of a fetus), when a abortion can be performed (24 hours after consent), and how the "fetal remains" must be disposed of.

26. The following statistics were reported in 1970: 79 percent of New York City's abortion deaths occurred among black and Puerto Rican woman; the abortion death rate was 4.7 times as high for Puerto Rican women, and 8 times as high for black women as for white women. Lucinda Cisler, "Unfinished Business: Birth Control and Women's Liberation," in *Sisterhood is Powerful: An Anthology of Writings from the Women's Liberation Movement*, ed. Robin Morgan (New York: Vintage 1970), p. 291.

27. The classic article formulating privacy as "the right to be let alone" is S.D. Warren and L.D. Brandeis, "The Right to Privacy," *Harvard Law Review* 4 (1890), p. 205. But note that state constitutional privacy provisions are sometimes interpreted to require funding for abortions. *Committee to Defend Reproductive Rights v. Meyers*, 29 C. 3d 252, 172 Cal. Rptr. 866, 625 P. 2d 779 (1981), *Moe v. Society of Administration and Finance*, 417 N.E. 2d 387 (Mass. 1981).

28. I owe this conception of public debate to Jay Garfield, Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts.

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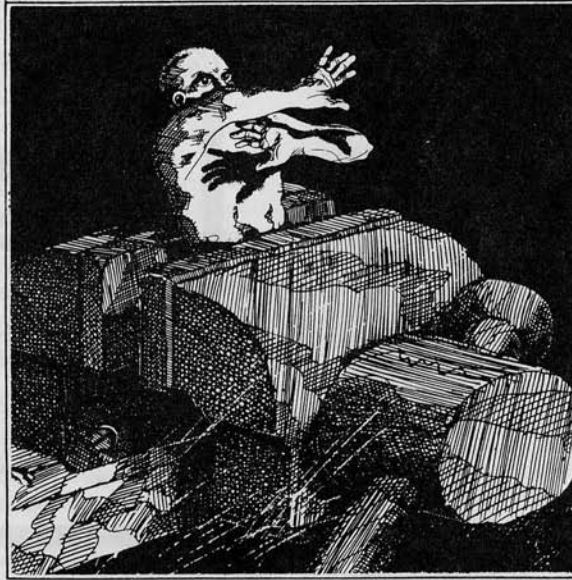
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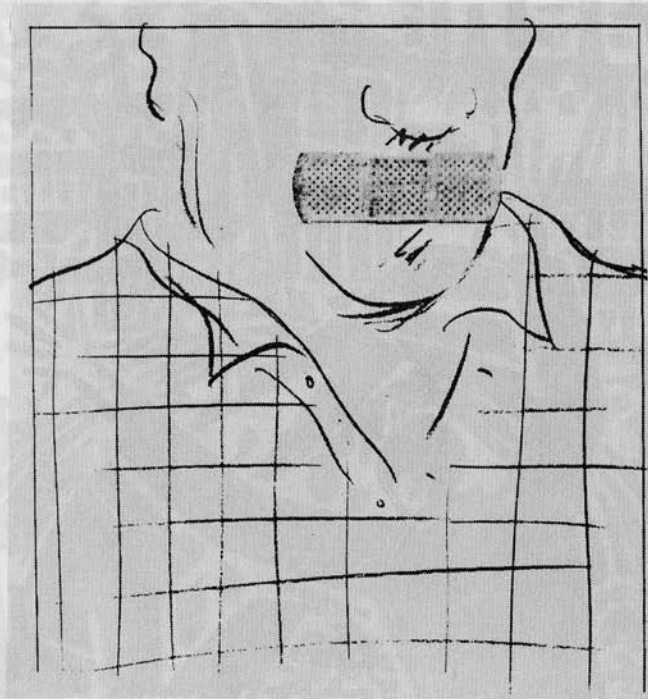
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Write Legibly

Born? (yes, no, choose one), why "yes"? (explain), where, when, why, for whom do you live? with whom are you in touch with the surface of your brain, whom do you meet with the frequency of your pulse? relatives outside the frontiers of your skin? (yes, no) why "no"? (explain), do you have contacts with the bloodstream of your time? (yes, no), do you write letters to yourself? (yes, no) do you call the confidential hotline? (yes, no), do you feed and with what do you feed your distrust? From where do you obtain the means of supporting your disobedience? Do you own private resources of permanent fear? Do you have knowledge of foreign bodies and languages? Orders, Honors, stigmas? Status of Civil Courage? do you intend to have children? (yes, no) why "no"?

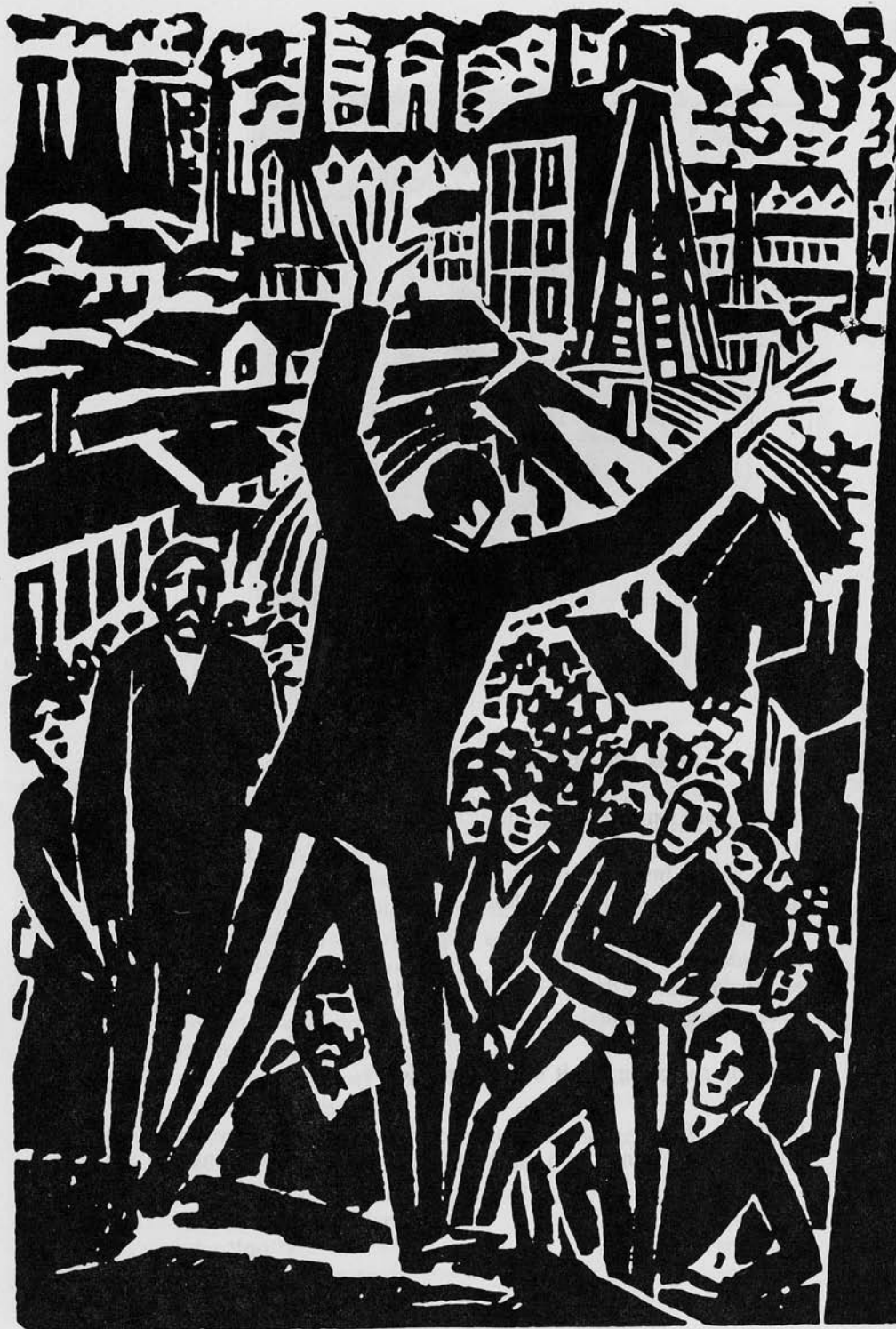
Stanislaw Baranczak



If You Insist on Screaming Do It Quietly

If you insist on screaming, do it quietly (the walls
have
ears), if you insist on loving,
turn out the lights (the neighbors
have
binoculars), if you insist
on staying home, don't close the door (they
have search warrants),
if you
insist on suffering, do it in private (life
has
its rules), if
you insist on being, limit yourself in everything (everything
has
its limits)

Stanislaw Baranczak



C.M.

EAST SIDE STORY:

Mike Gold, the Communists and the Jews

Paul Berman

Look for insights into the question of radicalism and the Jews, and even today, half a century after his moment, you must turn back to Michael Gold. He was no genius. His columns for *The Daily Worker* were thoroughly lamentable; year after year he vilified his literary betters on behalf of the Communist Party. Often his stuff was sentimental—his single classic, *Jews Without Money*, reads as if meant to be played by Rumanian violins. But what other writer has put his finger on the exact spot where Jewishness and socialism converge? What writer has better evoked the emotions of the old Jewish working class of 60 or 70 years ago, the weepy bitter emotions which led to dreams of revolution and utopia and which left a residue that still survives? Even Gold's dreadful qualities conjure the atmosphere of the historic Jewish left, for he was a representative figure, and if he strikes us today as mawkish, awful, a disgrace and a fool, you can be sure he was, at least, the real thing.

Gold certainly played a role in the development of American literature, which makes it hard to understand why there's so little you can read about him. During the 1920s he teamed up with John Dos Passos and John Howard Lawson (who remained his disciple for many years) in a radical theater venture. He was the man who pushed Edmund Wilson and all sorts of other liberals into Marxism at the beginning of the 30s; his literary criticism counted for a

good deal during the brief period in the Depression when the middle class was thought to have died. *Jews Without Money* is itself a landmark: the first Jewish novel to make a dent on American culture. After Gold, the deluge, so to speak.

Nevertheless, the best writings on him remain a couple of essays by Michael Folsom, the son of an old associate of Gold's, which came out more than a decade ago. John Pyros has done a brave thing in publishing his own critical study, *Mike Gold*, after several publishers turned it down; but Pyros's scholarship is shaky and his book makes only a tiny contribution. No one at all has produced a full-scale biography. No one has even looked at certain of the major research sources, for instance a long manuscript by Gold's brother, Manny Granich, describing Manny's career as Communist agitator, anti-Japanese publisher in China, Earl Browder's chauffeur, etc.

But we do know enough about Gold to see how he got his insights into Jewish radicalism. His home and turn-of-the-century childhood were the standard fare of the old left. Poppa was evidently not quite so poor as Gold made out. Instead of an unemployed wage-slave, he was a storefront manufacturer of suspender-fixtures, until the business folded and he became an unemployed ex-manufacturer—which was poor enough. The family lived in a tenement on Chrystie Street in what was then the Rumanian-Jewish district on the Lower East Side. Gold went to P.S. 20, but his teachers there were from a world too remote for him to appreciate. He received some religious education, but his instructors and rabbis were from the middle ages; Judaism as an intellectual system seemed dead as a doornail.

Not until he was 21 did he stumble, almost literally (if we are to believe his account), onto

the left-wing movement. He wandered up to Union Square and found Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and other anarchists haranguing a crowd of anti-unemployment demonstrators; or maybe it was Elizabeth Gurley Flynn doing the haranguing—the story varied. Either way, the cops charged, Gold was clubbed, and his literary-revolutionary career began at once.

Here, however, his experience started on an idiosyncratic course. Historians have often remarked that for a good many immigrants in this period, radicalism held the promise of assimilation. If you became a leftist, you could stop being a Jew. The old socialist ideals—atheism, plus the universal brotherhood of the international working class, regardless of race—relieved the pressure of Jewish tradition and meant you could throw yourself into life as an international proletarian without fear of becoming a Christian-type apostate. Accordingly a good many radical Jews abandoned the ghetto, abandoned their Yiddish, abandoned their names, and assimilated. Today, in our age of exaggerated ethnic sensibility, we can see the holes in this notion of left-wing universalism. For what did these assimilated radicals assimilate into? They swarmed into environments that were barely less Jewish than what they had left behind: the old Marxist parties, the Jewish labor movement, the cafeteria at City College, environments where they could fool themselves into thinking that Jewishness lay in the past and that the plight of the Jews was easily solved. Yes, they would say to one another—in their Yiddish-tinged accents, while looking up from their deep Talmudic study of the ancient Marxist texts—now that we are free of Jewishness, how do we solve the problem of Negroes in the South? This was not an atmosphere conducive to insights into Jewish experience.

Gold was also an assimilationist. "I am one of those who see only good in assimilation," he liked to say, and declared himself "willing to surrender all that I know is good in the Jewish tradition in return for a greater good." But the course he followed made self-deception in these matters a little more difficult. On one hand he kept coming back to stay with his mother (his father had died) on Chrystie Street, and instead of feeling ashamed of his old home, enjoyed showing it off; his friend Hugo Gellert, the artist recently told me about visiting Gold and eating one of his mother's dinners. On the other hand he assimilated into an environment that was genuinely non-Jewish: the Greenwich Village literary radicalism of *The Masses* magazine, whose leading lights were old-line WASPs like Max Eastman and John Reed. Greenwich Village put him in touch with the larger world. One of his literary contacts got him admitted to Harvard for a semester as a special student, which was not like going to CUNY. He took to wandering around Massachusetts as a labor agitator; he met Vanzetti; he called himself a Wobbly.

These circumstances seem to have encouraged in Gold an awareness of Jewish identity unusual among left-wing assimilators. Perhaps he also noticed an advantage in coming from a background that struck his unprejudiced gentile comrades as colorful. In any case, he started strumming the Jewish string. He sang Yiddish songs to Dorothy Day, in the period when they were hanging out together and working on the Socialist Party newspaper. His by-lines in themselves hit a Jewish note. Originally his name was Itzok Isaac Granich, which he Americanized to "Irwin Granich." His first work in *The Masses*—a poem commemorating the three anarchists who blew up themselves, instead of Rockefeller, on Lexington Avenue in 1914—was signed "Irwin Granich." When the Palmer

Raids and a period of police-state repression arrived, he decided to Americanize still further; but the name he chose—"Michael Gold"—was remarkable because while definitely more American-sounding, it was not less Jewish.

He kept up this theme of Jewish affirmation even after he became a big-time literary critic. He was a conspicuous opponent of literary anti-Semitism. He attacked Archibald MacLeish for a mildly anti-Semitic poem (which MacLeish afterward changed), he attacked Theodore Dreiser, and he made these attacks with a lot of force, not to say venom. He was really a first-rate street fighter; if he decided to compare you and your reactionary ideas to Adolf Hitler, you stayed compared. Looking through Gold's writings today, these anti-anti-Semitic bashings loom as some of the best things he did. The rest of his criticism had little to do with Jews and the Jewish question. He tried to pioneer a serious Marxist approach; he emphasized issues of social class; he attempted to project a working person's resentments into his literary analysis. But even here his fizz and crackle may have come from a Jewish sense of indignation. In his recent book, *Foreigners*, Marcus Klein makes a pretty good case for this. Klein points to Gold's single most influential Marxist essay, a blanket-bombing mission across the complete works of Thornton Wilder, in which Wilder was ridiculed for writing prissy Christian escape fantasies. The ridiculing sparked an uproar which took up a good part of 1930; it was the occasion which prompted Edmund Wilson to announce that class war was breaking out in the field of literature; it marked the beginning of Marxism as a force in American criticism. But Klein has gone back and looked into this uproar, and has noticed that many of the people who objected to Gold opposed him not as a Marxist, but as an ill-mannered Jew harassing the Christians. (And no question about his manners.) Is it pos-

sible that Gold didn't realize what meaning his Marxism would acquire in a Christian culture?

Not to push too hard on his Jewish side. He was, in his essays, a straight-out Marxist first, and most of his writings on Jewish issues simply plugged in the right Marxist doctrine concerning anti-Semitism (down with racism, the Jews aren't all moneylenders, indeed most of them are working people). He made sure not to look like a Jewish nationalist. The lines embracing assimilation that are quoted a few paragraphs back appeared in one of his attacks on anti-Semitism; he didn't want to compromise his Marxist orthodoxy.

Only in *Jews Without Money* did he let himself go, let himself depart from the conventional or mechanical Marxist line. He began by putting Jewishness in a sympathetic light. Though not *too* sympathetic: he sends little "Mikey Gold," his fictionalized autobiographical hero, on jaunts through the streets, and one of the main things Mikey encounters is the ignorant primitivism that constitutes Jewishness for the East Side masses. A mob of Jews in front of a Second Avenue church laughs hilariously at a church sexton scrubbing down a statue of Jesus. "Jesus is taking a bath!" they jeer. That's pretty primitive. But at the same time Gold was careful to show that even the crudest national pride among these lowly immigrants has an element of justified protest, contains a seed of admirable self-esteem and dignity; and that Jewishness cannot be slotted into easy political categories. His achievement was to work this view into the city landscape. One of his best scenes shows little Mikey riding across the Brooklyn Bridge on a funeral horse-coach with Nathan, the driver, who is delivering a corpse to the cemetery; and while this is happening the vagaries of Jewish identity practically fall into the East River.

"Look Mikey, down there. That's the Navy

Yard. That's where they keep the American warships. Sailors are a lot of Irish bums. Once I had a fight with a sailor and knocked his tooth out. He called me a Jew.'

"'Ain't you a Jew?' I asked timidly, as my greedy eyes drank in the panorama.

"'Of course I'm a Jew,' said Nathan, in his rough iron voice. 'I'm proud I'm a Jew, but no Irish bum can call me names, or call me a Jew.'

"'Why?' I asked.

"I was very logical when I was seven years old.

"'Why?' Nathan mimicked me with a sneer. 'Why? You tell a kid something, and he asks why? Kids give me a headache.' Nathan spat his disgust into the river. The blob of spit fell a third of a mile."

That blob—representing the hopelessness of explaining anything so ambiguous as Jewishness, but also the sense of dignity a working man might derive from it—was Gold's most vivid image.

He didn't write about the class struggle, except indirectly. The Communist critics weren't thrilled about this. They wanted to see strikes and barricades in Communist novels, and pointed out that the real-life East Side during Mikey's years was full of real-life picket lines. Instead Gold paid closer attention to the struggle between generations. But this struggle too had historical reality and yielded a very good theme, which in general terms can be described this way. Immigration doomed the greenhorn generation to a lifetime of unhappiness. Their poverty was too great, their opportunities were too small, and their lives were defined by the kind of neighborhood Gold so redolently described—a neighborhood where dead horses in the street gathered flies and children, where prostitutes crowded the sidewalk and thugs hung out on rooftops and where, in another of his brilliant images, even the tene-

ment buildings groan with pain. The one hope for these people was to abandon hope, give up even the tiniest ambitions for themselves, deny themselves even the smallest comforts—and stake everything on the children. For if they gave the children everything, maybe this next generation would have a better chance. And thus the whole emotional tragedy of the immigration passed from beaten-down Old World greenhorns to the almost equally beaten-down little graduates of P.S. 20, who were obliged

not only to make their own way through the ghetto but to justify their unhappy parents as well.

This was a fine theme, and no one who reads *Jews Without Money* is likely to forget how Gold deals with it in the central episode of the book. He describes peddling papers as a kid on the Bowery during a big snow storm. Quitting at dusk, he sets off for home and runs into his father, who is tending a banana cart in the snow near Cooper Union. The East Side masses are



Jacob Riis, "In a Sweat Shop"

streaming past on their way home from work—“a defeated army wrapped in dreams of home”—but no one stops to buy bananas. His father is too proud and depressed to holler out his goods like other peddlers, and little Mikey feels with a surge of guilt how badly his father’s life has gone, how miserably he has failed in his ambitions. So he offers to do the hollering for him and, overwhelmed with feelings, screams his lungs out. Still no one buys, and his father starts to speak. He confesses he is a failure: “a poor little Jew without money.” “Poppa, lots of Jews have no money,” Mikey says, desperate to comfort him. “I know it, my son, but don’t be one of them . . . Promise me you’ll be rich when you grow up, Mikey!” “Yes, Poppa.” “Ach,” Poppa says, “this is my one hope now! This is all that makes me happy!”

I don’t think it too much to say that in scenes like this Gold stumbled on one of the bigger themes in Jewish literature. It is the idea that suffering has meaning, that the Jews must suffer, but not forever; for suffering has a purpose. This idea is liable to three interpretations. Poppa offers the bourgeois interpretation: riches in the next generation will redeem misery in the present. There is also of course the religious interpretation, which Mikey entertains for awhile: the Messiah (looking like Buffalo Bill, in Mikey’s American imagination) will come and redeem everything. The book’s narrator, Michael Gold the grown-up author, rejects both of these interpretations. He has no use for religion. He thinks riches in the next generation are a pipe dream; he doesn’t believe in the myth of American opportunity. Yet he does agree that the suffering of the East Side has a meaning, and proposes a third, or socialist, interpretation. For a socialist interpretation exists and is as legitimate an expression of Jewishness as either of the others. The poverty, the broken-downness of the old generation, the guilt and

sorrow of the children, the ruined lives, the deformed misfits, the squalor, the vast sea of groans encompassing the entire neighborhood—all this will lead to social change. The Messiah is the revolution.

Gold’s little stroke of genius in *Jews Without Money* was to evoke this Jewish socialist emotion, yet not seem to; to make socialism central to the novel, yet never bring it on stage. He supplies all kinds of political references—to Zionism, to Teddy Roosevelt, to William Jennings Bryan—but almost never mentions the left-wing movement. The left comes up only in an odd 12-line postscript, in a sort of curtain call. Yet though socialism keeps away from the action, it exerts a pressure. You get the impression that everything Gold has depicted is merely a prelude to a revolution, and the revolution is so inevitable it doesn’t need to be described.

Socialism does figure in one place, however; it is part of the narrator’s personality, part of the image Gold drew of “Michael Gold,” that literary creation. He never lets you forget that the little ragamuffin Yid whose adventures he describes has grown up to be a big radical and undertaken to redeem the misery of the East Side. If the bug-infested tenement produced nothing else, it produced the narrator’s left-wing vocation. Here then is where Jewishness and socialism finally converge: they converge in the character “Michael Gold.” This is moving. It is also, Gold being Gold, sentimental. For who is the human inspiration behind the narrator’s adult career? Who is the ultimate source of socialist aspiration, the Jewish heart that beats for justice and beauty?

“Mother! Momma! I am still bound to you by the cords of birth. I cannot forget you. I must remain faithful to the poor because I cannot be faithless to you! I believe in the poor because I have known you. The world must be made gracious for the poor! Momma, you

taught me that!”

And the vat of schmaltz tips over.

* * *

The mystery of Michael Gold is why, having accomplished this much, he never accomplished more. He was 37 in 1930, when *Jews Without Money* came out, and he had a great deal going for him. The book sold well and for the first time in his life there was money in the bank; he bought a farm in Pennsylvania. He was established as the leading Marxist literary critic in America. Sinclair Lewis talked him up in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech. Edmund Wilson wrote sympathetic articles about his opinions in the *New Republic*. He seemed to represent the coming wave in American writing—indeed more than a coming wave, a golden age of literature that many writers earnestly expected.

His reputation and influence continued to grow. But he wasn't able to write much else that was good, either in fiction or in criticism. His difficulties with fiction are easiest to understand. He never had great powers of invention. *Jews Without Money* was a fictionalized memoir and successful for that reason. Perhaps if he had been willing to go on in this one vein he could have done more; but no doubt he hated the idea of writing the same sort of thing over and over. His nonmemoir fiction always seemed geared to Marxist formulas. Possibly the criticism he received from fellow Communists about *Jews Without Money*—not enough class struggle—inhibited him. Wilson thought this was the case.

The decline in Gold's criticism is another matter. The stuff he wrote in the '20s, his Marxist sniper attacks on middle-class literature, was sometimes effective. He was never a learned Marxist, he didn't have sophisticated theories. He knew his Whitman better than his Marx; *Democratic Vistas* was his major source

of literary theory. But he early on adopted a spirited style from the old *Masses*, a bad-boy romantic-rebel posture, which didn't require a big repertoire of profound ideas. You could count on him to stand up and say the opposite of what everyone else was saying. He asked obnoxious Marxist questions: that was his method, and in his younger days, that was almost good enough. In 1928 everyone else was saying Hemingway was wonderful and terrific, but Gold asked how Hemingway's characters made their livings. How were they able to ramble around Europe the way they did? Did they have a mysterious income, or what? He called Hemingway a "White Collar Poet"—a spinner of daydreams for the white-collar class. That was obnoxious, but it made good Marxist sense, and was original, besides.

The literary enthusiasms he cultivated in the early period had some of the same virtues. His manifestos for a "proletarian" literature were splendidly imaginative, if you didn't take them too literally. The image he proposed for his literary proletarians was marvelous. "A new writer has been appearing," he wrote, "a wild youth of about 22, the son of working-class parents, who himself works in the lumber camps, coal mines, and steel mills, harvest fields and mountain camps of America. He is sensitive and impatient. He writes in jets of exasperated feeling. . . . He is violent and sentimental by turns. . . . He is a Red but has few theories. It is all instinct with him. . . ." Gold wanted to attach these wild youths to the labor movement; they were going to be industrial correspondents and write strike propaganda.

But the trouble with boyish high-spirited obnoxious utopian-minded writers like Gold is that they don't always age very well. The boyishness is everything, and when the writer creeps into middle age and his spirit and wit sag, you want some substance. Sending wild

youths into the labor movement was fine as a utopian enthusiasm and fine as a program for the labor movement: but after a while Gold's insistence that these youths would replenish civilization got hard to take. His potshots at first-rate middle-class writers were sometimes on the mark; but after a while they began to look thuggish. His literary theory—no new ideas came his way, no inspirations from whatever was alive in the literature of the time—flat-

tened eventually into a dull formula, a formula in which bourgeois writers are always prissy, tea-drinking, dithering, and homosexual; in which proletarians are always manly, virile, clear, and from Missouri; in which capitalism is always a rotting, stinking, maggoty corpse. And alas for Gold—alas for intellectual Marxism—it was just at this point, in the early 1930s, that he ascended into a position of influence.

How to interpret Gold and the American



Jacob Riis, "Talmud School in Hester Street"

Communist literary movement in the years which followed is a matter for debate. Gold and his comrade critics did of course substitute political for aesthetic judgment, which is the charge usually thrown at them. The praise Gold heaped on his wild proletarians was so shameless and partisan it managed to taint the proletarian movement as a whole. He revised upward his opinion of Hemingway when Hemingway came into the Communist Party's good graces, and when Hemingway quarreled with the Party, revised him back down again. He expressed admiration for his old theater comrade Dos Passos in the '20s and early '30s; but when Dos Passos began saying the Party had turned sour, Gold declared he had "merde" in his soul. All this represented a peculiar kind of literary corruption—corruption not for money, but for political advantage (of course, corruption like this is not exactly unheard of among non-Communist cliques and factions). Rather more sinister was the obligation of writers like Gold to lie about certain events—about the Moscow Trials and conditions in Russia generally, about the Communist role in the Spanish Civil War. Though here too something can be said to diminish the scale of his sins: Gold may not have known he was lying. He may have believed his own propaganda, may even have believed it wholeheartedly. He was not too shrewd about the Soviet Union.

In any case, the thing that strikes a modern reader is how shrill Goldian Marxism got, how hysterical, perhaps even a little insane. The social crisis in the United States grew ever less severe as the New Deal wore on, and by all logic the tone of Marxist criticism should have grown less severe, too. The actual policies of the American Communist Party in these years, its moment in the big time, did in fact become more moderate. But the tone of sectarian invective and the policy of smearing political critics,

especially critics who had formerly been Communists or Communist-sympathizers and who now worried about Stalin, got shriller and wilder. In this the Communists were mirroring Russian developments: for as Stalin consolidated his power, he became ever more terrorized by the thought of plots against him and started murdering his opponents, and everywhere Stalin had influence the tenor of discussion slid into hysteria.

Gold began to echo the Stalinist accusations. Just as former leaders of the Russian Revolution were plotting with Hitler to destroy Stalin and seize power for themselves as lackeys of fascism (this was the Stalin theory), so the liberal and radical critics of Communism in the United States were in their own fashion agents of the Nazis or, at any rate, just as bad. On one hand, the "Zinoviev-Bukharin-Trotskyite gang of wreckers, assassins, saboteurs and Fifth Columnists." On the other, American writers who had lost their sympathy for the Communist Party. The Zinoviev-Bukharin-Trotskyite gang of wreckers "despise the people and bowed before the masters," Gold wrote. "This is the central core of all their vile and enormous treason; and it is also the heart of all petty-bourgeois renegadism, from the Granville Hickses and Edmund Wilsons down to the mangiest yellow dog who ever peddled his honor and his 'Confessions of an Ex-Communist' to Hearst and the Dies Committee for thirty silver dollars. Ernest Hemingway is another example of this same historic process..."

The low point came in 1946, during the last months of Communism's popularity among American liberals and radicals. The Communist writer Albert Maltz—best known as the screenwriter of *Pride of the Marines* and other cinema triumphs, and shortly to go to jail as one of the Hollywood 10—wrote an article in *New Masses* proposing a liberalized view of art.

He thought Communist writers should worry less about the Party line and more about art; they should be able to acknowledge things that were patently true, for instance, that James T. Farrell, the author of *Studs Lonigan* and some excellent Marxist criticism, was still talented even though he had come out against Stalin.

Gold, in his *Daily Worker* reply, hit the roof. Farrell? That “vicious, voluble Trotskyite” who “was in on the movement to vindicate the traitors who sold out to Hitler and were tried at Moscow,” i.e. the gang of wreckers—Farrell, who was practically an agent of Franco during the Spanish Civil War and was comparable to a “Nazi rat” like Ezra Pound? (In fact, he had been an independent Marxist opposed to the Communist Party.) Farrell, whose writings were part of “the reign of terror against Marxist ideas that prevails in the American publishing field?” (He had advocated a purer Marxism against Gold’s “revolutionary sentimentalism.”) Did Albert Maltz favor “esthetic immunity” for a man like that? Never. “Anyone who would grant esthetic immunity to this obvious enemy has lost sight of the Communist polar star.”

What has made this attack famous is that, by 1946, Goldism had become more or less institutionalized in one sector of the left and enjoyed a definite moral authority—not among the top writers, to be sure, and not among the shrewder left-wing political analysts, but among secondary groups like the left-wing Hollywood writers. And in these circles Gold’s views counted for something. Maltz felt the pressure keenly. He was a sincere but perhaps not very bright man and hadn’t realized that his call for intellectual honesty ran against Party policy (you can see his explanation in *Creative Differences*, a book about the Hollywood left, by David Talbot and Barbara Zheutlin). But as soon as it all clicked in his mind, he recanted and bowed

down before Gold, just as John Howard Lawson and so many others had done over the years. Gold was right, he declared. James T. Farrell had indeed lost his talent by criticizing Stalin. “I know of the manner in which a poisoned ideology and an increasingly sick soul can sap the talent and wreck the living fiber of a man’s work,” Albert Maltz wrote, referring to Farrell—and was thereupon symbolically welcomed back into the Communist Party’s good graces at a mass meeting chaired by Lawson and named, after a dear old Party slogan, “Art—Weapon for the People.”

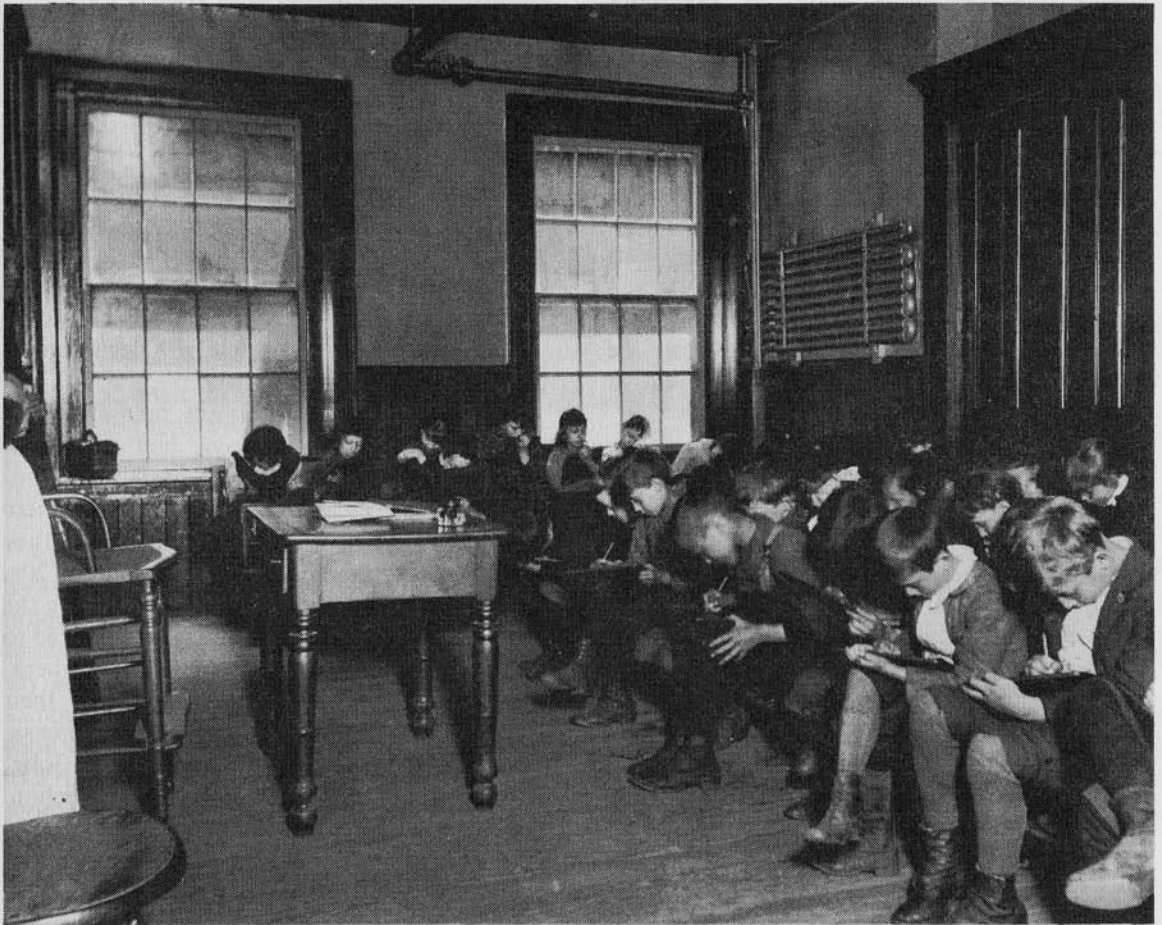
Gold’s clobbering of Maltz marked the end of Communist influence in American literary life, and also of his personal influence. The Party itself crumbled over the next few years and the remaining intellectuals departed, one by one, or in small herds. By the middle ’50s, every distinguished literary intellectual connected to the Party had departed. Even Albert Maltz departed. There was only one exception, one writer of talent and literary note who stayed in the Party come hell or high water. This was Michael Gold.

* * *

Why? Why didn’t he wake up and save his talent from “poisoned ideology”? Why was he the only literary notable in America to keep his Red card? You might point to the weakness of his health (he suffered from nervous breakdowns in his youth, diabetes when older), the limitations of his intelligence (so much more constricted than his talent), the narrowness of his education. His failure to surpass his early achievements may have frozen him into immobility. But I think the most fruitful way of understanding him is to go back to *Jews Without Money* and remember what happened to some of the real-life people who grew up in the same time and place and under the same conditions as little Mikey.

For Gold was part of an extraordinary and ill-fated Jewish generation, the generation of working-class idealists born at the turn of the century or a few years on either side. These were the last people who saw Jewish radicalism at its height. The Socialist Party of America was a powerful organization when they were young; it was the heart and soul of the poorer Jewish neighborhoods, almost an alternative society with a huge range of social-democratic cultural and welfare institutions. It was popular

enough to get its candidates and leaders sent to Congress and the State Assembly. And when this Party, along with its spin-offs and competitors, went into decisive decline after World War I, the generation of younger radicals couldn't accept it. They were filled with the utopian and bitter emotions Gold evoked in his book. They themselves were hardly in decline—they were bursting with energy. Above all they were electrified by the Russian Revolution. Far from recognizing that the Jewish left in the United



Jacob Riis, "East Side Public School"

States was tapering off, they convinced themselves that America was on the verge of a Russian revolution. Their own emotions told them this, and so did their brand new organization, the Communist Party.

All over the United States, the 1920s was a reactionary decade: radical organizations fell apart, unions declined. In a general way this was happening in the Jewish community in New York City as well. But within this decline, a generation of young radicals from the poorer Jewish neighborhoods took to marching around the garment district with red flags and hammers and sickles, getting their skulls cracked by goons and cops and screaming slogans about a Soviet America. They were fierce, even violent; they fought it out with gangsters. They were intensely idealistic. And while they were not as numerous as the old Jewish Socialists had once been, they could fill Yankee Stadium when they held a rally. They had newspapers and theaters; the Yiddish intellectuals supported them. They captured some of the Jewish unions; they *were* some of the Jewish unions.

The sad thing is, this movement of theirs was a calamity from the start. I know the radical historians will dispute this. They will remind me that these 1920s American Communists, in spite of their many faults and errors, accomplished wonders in the trade union field, fought labor racketeers, helped pioneer civil rights, paved the way for the New Deal, and did many other commendable and heroic things. All of which is true. But when you look back across the arc of this generation's career, when you consider them from (for the moment) a narrow Jewish perspective and regard them as representatives of the tradition of Jewish radicalism, it's hard to miss the aura of disaster. The very first action of these Communists was to precipitate a civil war in the Jewish working class that lasted

decades and destroyed whole chunks of the old social-democratic community. At one point in the '20s they pretty much captured the biggest Jewish union of all, the ILGWU, and followed a cockamamie strategy that left it in tatters. They adopted foreign affairs positions, on account of the Soviet Union, which compromised their ability to speak for the Jewish masses abroad, or even to hold up their heads among the Jewish masses at home. In 1929 the Jewish Communists were obliged by the Soviet Union to endorse an Arab massacre of Jews in Palestine. Ten years later they endorsed Stalin's pact with Hitler. They had to defend Stalin's social policies in the Soviet Union (for details on these policies, see an important new Russian-dissident book, *The Time of Stalin*, by Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko, Harper & Row, \$19.95). Nor did their burden ease with the years. In 1952 the stalwart Jewish Communists had to endure in silence the fact that the entire Yiddish literary elite in the Soviet Union was murdered—a moment which is still felt with deep humiliation by the old Communists.

Which is to say, Communism, no matter how popular it had briefly been, had no future among the Jews. And yet the Jewish Communists themselves never disappeared. There would always be Jewish Communists, and they would always be this generation of the '20s. Other generations turned to the left; during the '30s and '40s, all sorts of young Jews flocked to the Communist Party; but these later generations somehow lacked the passion of their elders. Their commitment wasn't as intense. They didn't stay Communists for very long, and when they took their leave, they left behind the aging warriors of the 1920s, still ensconced in their strange slogans and their identities as international proletarians. Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union? This '20s generation never heard of it. Soviet disasters under Stalin and his heirs?

An invention of the capitalist press. These people had made a commitment, back in their youth, of a sort that allows no second thoughts.

Here is the explanation for Michael Gold's career. You cannot understand him if you think of him only as an intellectual: intellectuals behave differently. You must think of him instead as Mikey of Chrystie Street, a member of this earliest of Communist generations, caught in the degeneration of the Jewish left, incapable of thinking through to a different path, whose solidarity with the other comrades seems to have mattered more to him than anything else. If they stuck by the hammer and sickle, he would stick, too. He had a perfectly reasonable explanation for this, based of course on class lines. From his vantage point, the people who abandoned the Communist Party had always been somewhat middle class. Maybe they came from the middle class originally and had never cleansed it from their souls, or in any case they had middle-class instincts which ultimately drew them away. The people who stayed, on the other hand, were real proletarians. And there was indeed truth in this, for these hard-core militants certainly didn't come from the social register.

* * *

Inevitably Gold's last years were hard. His assault on poor apologetic Maltz was the last noteworthy thing he did; no one paid attention to him after that. In 1948 his house in New Jersey burned down (destroying his letters from famous writers, which he had hoped to sell). He took his French-Rumanian wife and two sons to France so the boys could meet their grandmother, and stayed three years. Then he returned to New York. Unfortunately for him, the Communist movement in the United States had in the interim shrunk to half its former size and was still shrinking; there was no longer an automatic living to be made in it. He was in his

late fifties, at the stage in life where Edmund Wilson retired to his ancestral home in upstate New York, and Dos Passos retired to his ancestral farm in Virginia. Gold moved to the Bronx. He was very poor. In his novel he described how his fictional family, strapped for enough to eat, was helped by the warm solidarity of the neighbors. Now it was a real-life solidarity that came to his aid. An old lunch-counter proprietor from the Bronx tells me that, recognizing the much-admired Comrade Gold among his regular customers, he insisted on feeding him on the house, which Gold was obliged to accept.

You Gotta Have Heart

Mike Gold, the Communists,
and the Jews



He went to work in a factory making window blinds, but couldn't keep his mind on the job. The lunch-counter proprietor found one of his boys a job with an optometrist. Then the old labor network pulled through, and Gold's son landed a union job in San Francisco. The family moved back out there (Gold had worked as a reporter in San Francisco for awhile in the '20s), and his wife went to work in a movement bookstore. He resumed his "Change the World" column, writing for a syndicate of the three Communist papers, *The Daily Worker*, *the People's World* (in California), and the *Morning Freiheit*, where the column was translated into Yiddish.

His health was bad, his energy low, and he didn't go out of the house much. Paul Novick, editor of the *Freiheit*, has told me that when he visited Gold in San Francisco, or when Gold visited in New York, he showed little inclination to discuss weighty matters. After 1956, the aging Jews in the Communist Party began to wonder whether they had made a mistake about Soviet Communism. They passed manifestos back and forth. They held urgent meetings; they were finally preparing to make their own break with Communism. (The preparations took a long time: the Yiddish wing of the American Communist Party formally announced its repudiation of the Party in 1977, 10 years after Gold died. Support for Israel was the principal reason for the split. The political evolution of the *Freiheit*, incidentally, has continued since then, and today you can read on the *Freiheit's* English-language editorial page thoughtful analyses of Jewish issues from an independent Marxist perspective.) Gold seems not to have participated in these discussions.

Michael Folsom, who spent time with him at the end, writes in one of his essays that Gold became cynical about things he had fiercely defended, such as the Moscow Trials. Maybe he

felt a little burned by all that stuff about the gang of wreckers. Manny Granich has told me he thinks Gold actually left the Party, as Granich himself did; but this seems unlikely. Paul Novick doesn't remember it. Hugo Gellert says that Gold never had any disagreements with the Party or any serious disillusionments. Gellert, who knew Gold for 52 years (they met at a meeting of *The Masses*), was indignant when I asked about Gold's views on Soviet anti-Semitism. "There never was any anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union—all that bunk is just dreamed up, it's a big lie. Could this have been the true voice of Mike Gold? Perhaps an accurate picture would be a composite of these recollections: Gold felt burned by some old Communist positions; but he didn't take much interest in politics in his later years; and in public he wasn't repudiating anything. Mostly he was sick.

Not everything was grim in the later years. In 1959 Gold contributed a 12-week series to the *People's World* about his childhood on the East Side (republished in Folsom's anthology). It was a sequel to his novel, a meandering afterword, without focus, cut up into the short segments appropriate for a newspaper—yet not without punch. Gold reminisced about adolescence, his work as a teamster, the neighborhood gangsters, and most interestingly of all, about the "sweatshop poets" of the old ghetto, who were authentically loved by the Jewish workers. He remembered his father stopping to point out one of these poets passing in the street: "Look and remember him!" his father whispered. "That is Morris Rosenfeld the poet." He remembered the inscription on the tomb of another of these poets in a Brooklyn cemetery: "O Passerby, pause in reverence. Here, silent in the dust, lies the faithful voice of his people." It is moving to see this because Gold himself sought to be—succeeded in being,

in his classic novel—just such a voice.

In these reminiscences he showed he had never lost the ability to weep over the Jews of his childhood. He still wrote like a Rumanian violin. And he retained his wry humor. He remembered his father looking up from a Yiddish paper after dinner one evening and saying to his mother: "Great news, Katie! The 20th century is coming next Thursday night!" And he remembered his mother's reply: "Whatever it is, it probably means more trouble for the Jews."

Jews Without Money is out of print, amazingly, but can be found in libraries. Michael Folsom's collection, *Mike Gold: A Literary Anthology* (International Publishers), has also gone out of print. The same publishers do, however, keep in print *New Masses: An Anthology of the Rebel Thirties*, edited by Joseph North, which contains some pieces by Gold. The only book-length account of him is John Pyros's *Mike Gold: Dean of American Proletarian Writers* (Dramatika Press, 63 W. Orange Street, Tarpon Springs, Florida 33589, \$3).

Paul Berman is a staff writer for the *Village Voice* (New York). His articles have also appeared in *In These Times* and other publications.

The Charles H. Kerr Company, the world's oldest nonsectarian publisher of socialist and labor literature, is putting together a compendium entitled *Who's Who in Prison: Class War Prisoners in the USA*. The book will gather short sketches of those imprisoned for labor, feminist, environmentalist, antiracist, peace, anti-imperialist and other political activities and for exercising free speech. It will also include persons whose offenses are not strictly political but who are victims of racist, sexist and anti-gay prosecutions. The Kerr Company asks defense committees and civil liberties organizations, as well as prisoners themselves, to write Charles H. Kerr Company, 1740 Greenleaf Avenue, Suite 7, Chicago, Illinois 60626 with information on such cases.

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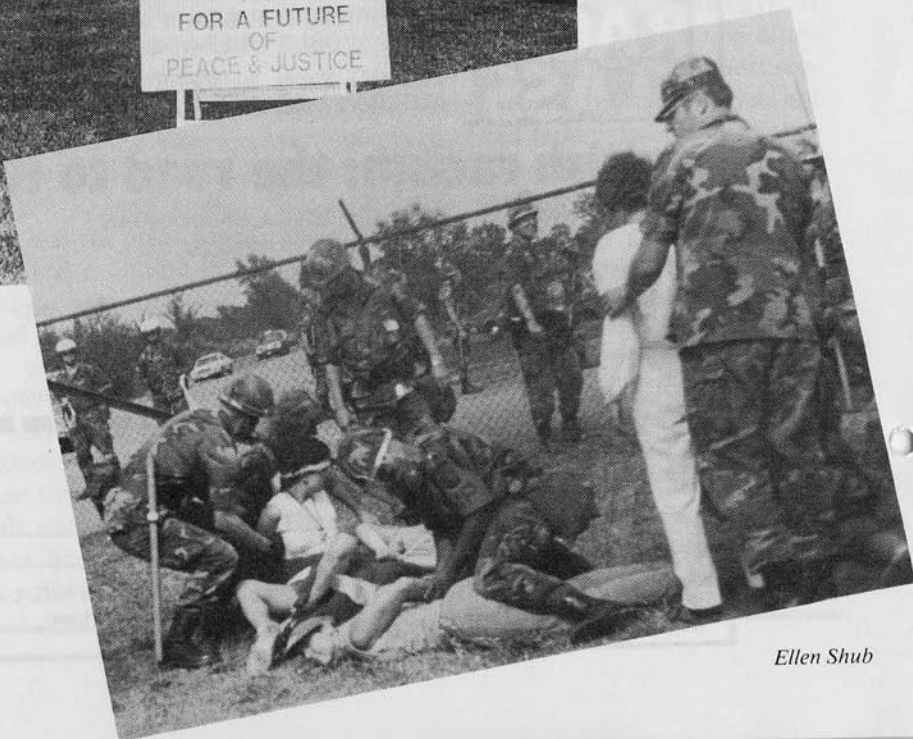
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SEPARATISM AND DISOBEDIENCE:

The Seneca Peace Encampment

Lois Hayes

“Non-violent direct action seeks to create a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.” —Martin Luther King, Jr.

Being a lesbian or gay man is an act of non-violent direct action, an act of civil disobedience in many parts of this country and around the world. We live our lives in direct contradiction to the laws and customs that forbid two people of one gender to look at each other as central sources of excitement and gratification. By refusing to hide our intimate truth, we “foster a tension” within the heterosexual world which has “constantly refused to negotiate” new concepts of gender and sex relations. The gay liberation movement has succeeded in “dramatizing the issue so that it can no longer be ignored.”

Lesbians joined the Women’s Peace Encampment to use non-violent direct action to dramatize their awareness of the threat posed by the nuclear weapons stored at the Seneca Army Depot. We wanted to show that women oppose these nuclear weapons and all violence, that our feelings were so strong that we would use everything—our minds and hearts and bodies—to make the most powerful statement possible. We didn’t go as commando saboteurs to wrest the weapons away from the guards. We agreed that only by maintaining a discipline of complete renunciation

of physical aggression could we effectively demonstrate our opposition to all the violence that confines our lives.

At Seneca, because many of us are lesbians, our lives were violated in a much more personal way than a mixed group of protestors would have experienced. The countless taunts of "dykes," "lezzies," and "queers" thrown from cars driving past our land showed us that the local community felt our presence deeply. They could not ignore us. And when we heard "pinko" and "commie," we knew that the locals understood the degree of change we felt would be necessary to finally gut the military mentality that strangles this country. Because we challenged and engaged the local community to that greater degree, I believe our action will have a more profound impact than protests focusing simply on peace or the nuclear freeze. Our message, voiced very simply in one of our songs, goes to the complex core of feminist non-violence: personal anger within a discipline of respect: "We are gentle, angry women and we are fighting, fighting for our lives."

Initially, it was our anger that engaged the local people and eventually it was the discipline of our gentleness that seemed to be persuading some of them that our anger was just. That we refused to answer taunt for taunt impressed them. And they were impressed by our complicated mutual self-respect, that we didn't try to trivialize our differences of age and "lifestyle," that we stood together in appreciation of our different attitudes and strategies. That we came together clearly to take support with each other so that we might go on to talk with hostile people about our strongest fears and desires, this too made them think twice about their judgments of us as frivolous or merely strange. For the women who had worn the "nuke the bitches" t-shirts and screamed at us, it must have been an immense, difficult

decision to come to the women of the camp in pained self-awareness on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima, to apologize for their hostility and to offer their help in communicating with their still-hostile neighbors. That we were all women had to be central to that dramatic change.

In our lesbian and feminist lives we say that men must change before we will include them fully in our lives. By choosing to exclude men from the encampment, the organizing women asserted a connection between the sexist behavior of individual men and the patriarchal behavior of the American military. The camp's separatism was the most powerful illustration of its feminist analysis but that tactic is not much better appreciated in the peace movement than it was in downtown Romulus.

There is a long history of women organizing for peace in separate, all-women groups. Increasingly in the last few years, the peace movement has been prodded to recognize the anger and insight of a specifically feminist anti-militarist analysis which challenges the naturalist "woman as mother/earth mother/pro-freeze" image promoted by Helen Caldicott and other non-feminist female peace activists. Third World groups are likewise prompting the peace movement to overcome its racist and middle-class bias to join with a progressive movement that seeks international justice as well as the cessation of warfare.

Feminist anti-militarists have also pushed the feminist movement to recognize that the military's domination of the domestic budget and its perpetuation of a system of dominance and hierarchy around the globe is anti-female in practice and philosophy. The anti-militarists remind feminists involved in fighting aspects of patriarchal violence such as rape, or economic discrimination or even the most awesome extension of such thought—the technological capac-



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ity to make extinct all human civilization and most other life on earth in a matter of minutes.

The massive weight of the nuclear threat has swelled the ranks of the peace movement. Feminists joining the peace movement have been able to wield significant degrees of power within some peace coalitions, because we have spent the last 15 years building networks. Women-only actions at the Pentagon, at Greenham Common in England and around the world have brought new emphasis to participatory protests emphasizing personal, emotional involvement, creativity and direct action. Women-only actions push back the boundaries of "politics as usual." They make space for wailing and quiet conversations—strategies which can be more productive than parading

rosters of "Who's Who for Peace."

The Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp had demonstrated, if nothing else, the tenacity of women committed to physical survival and the political muscle that can be flexed when 40,000 women show up to say "no" to more U.S. weapons in their country. The Greenham camp has become an inspiration to the more radical members of the peace community across Europe. It is clearly seen as a foremother of the Seneca encampment.

In every women-only demonstration, sexism is an inherent, if not overt, object of protest. In mixed demonstrations men are still too often assumed to be the leaders while women end up running errands and coordinating everything backstage. Women-only actions demonstrate

that we can mobilize ourselves and speak for ourselves and wield our collective power with effective, even revolutionary results.

Within the peace movement, it is especially important for women to speak as one of the groups that is cut off from the white, male ideology and structure that plan strategies and allocate funds for warmaking. And because women's economic power is so small, we are the hardest hit when social programs are cut for military spending. Women have an obligation to expose the lie of the "little wife" who needs security from the rapacious invaders. As American lesbians, we know that living under the world's biggest nuclear power contributes nothing to our security. It only brings us the condemnation of all peace and justice loving people worldwide and the privilege of greater proximity to complete annihilation in the climax of the superpower's stupidity.

Separatism within the peace movement is seen as divisive, but the fact is that the divisions already exist. For feminists not to put forward a feminist analysis of militarism is comparable to black activists not speaking about the draft's disproportionate effects on people of color and the poor of all races. For lesbians to pass as merely "peaceniks" in Seneca County would require a change in appearance and behavior on the scale of making a black revolutionary invisible at Harvard. Why would anyone suggest we try to be quiet when so much provocative thinking comes from our being open about who we are?

One of the strongest principles of non-violence is honesty—about who we are and what we think, and about our "opponent," who she is and what she thinks. In Seneca County we lesbians who came out within the assumption of lesbian separatism have had to listen to heterosexual women who felt "left out" and angry at our exclusiveness. When faced with angry

townspeople we have had to choose between turning into our supportive circle or reaching out to confront their anger with the force of our vision. We must have the option of our circles, but if we are going to make change happen we must also learn to face other people's anger.

Seneca County had seen peace demonstrations many times before but they never had seen a women-only encampment talking about peace and justice all summer long. They were angry that we were taking up so much space in their corner of the world and they were angry that we didn't accept one of the most basic assumptions in their lives: that women belong at home, or at least within the confines of assumed heterosexuality.

Not having men with us raised the level of outrage in the local community. Men who had sacrificed years of their lives as soldiers protecting the "women at home" had to confront women telling them we didn't want their protection in the first place. If men had been with us that message would have been totally obscured. The mere physical strength of pro-peace men would have made it emotionally easier for the local men to unleash the violence that was held somewhat at bay because we were "only" women and therefore too vulnerable or not threatening enough to attack physically. Perhaps at this point a non-violent direct action by men alone would challenge the men and women of Seneca County to see the sexual basis of their violent reactions even more clearly.

Queerbaiting was one of the most popular tactics of our local harassers, and it provided quite a test of our non-violent commitment. It's a fine line between "Yeah, I'm a dyke" and "Whatcha gonna do about it?" It's hard to say, "I'm a lesbian and I'm here because I don't want my lovers blown up in a nuclear war." I doubt it was ever said as plainly as that. But slowly I think we let them know who

we are, and slowly I think they figured out we weren't as bad as they'd expected us to be.

It was scary at the Depot protests and on the land itself. There was some deep-down confrontation going on and we were out there, not backing down. After we had been there for a while we could begin to feel the changes happening. That's why Seneca's important— because it wasn't just another symbolic protest. Our climbing over the fence was symbolic, but our camping out was real. We are in earnest about stopping deployment of the Pershing II and Cruise missiles. And we are in earnest about making radical social change in the way power is used in this country and around the world. It's a task that can keep us awake with fear and anger. We're doing it because the changes we see tell us we have at least a fighting chance. We plan to keep on fighting until that chance becomes real.

A Seneca Chronology

July 4: The Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice officially opens. Hundreds of women attend a blessing of the land by a Native American woman and march to the Seneca Army Depot to deliver demands that the Depot be converted to peaceful purposes.

Controversy has already developed over the camp's refusal to accept the gift of a U.S. flag by a local man. The women agreed to fly from clotheslines in the front yard any "flag" a woman makes, including some handmade U.S. flags. Local veterans groups give flags to residents to fly in protest of the camp.

July 4-29: Fifteen hundred to 2000 women visit the camp, most just for a weekend, others for unlimited stays. Religious services, theatrics, silent vigils are held daily at the main gate of the Depot. Local people gather most evenings across the road to watch, wave flags,

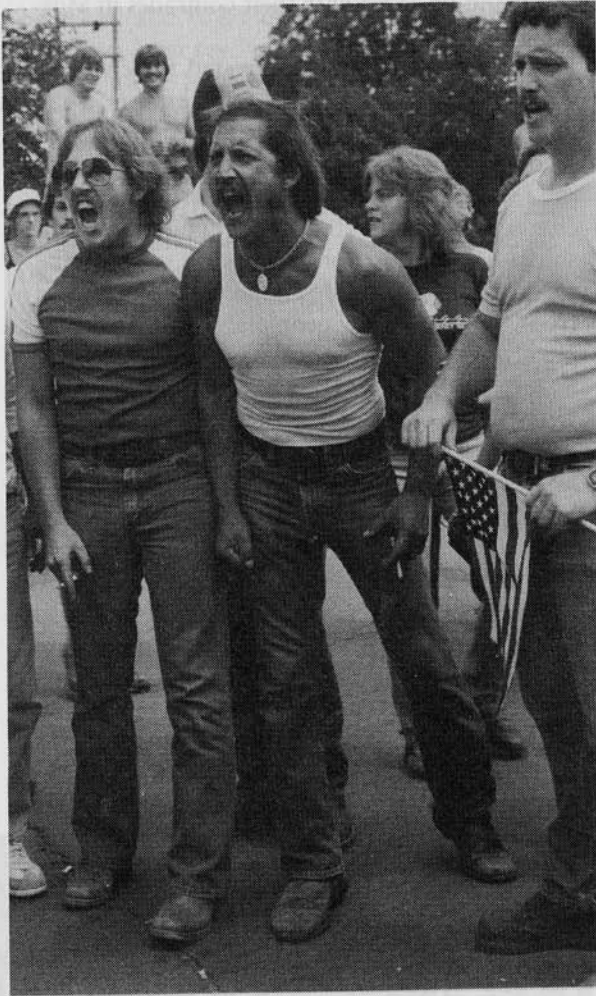
sing patriotic songs and taunt women: "Pinko dykes should camp with their comrades in Moscow."

About 150 women are arrested for civil disobedience. All first offenders are given "ban and bar" letters threatening prosecution upon second offense. Actions ranged from crossing the Depot boundary line in solitary witness, to climbing over the fence and painting Hiroshima-like shadows on the airstrip, to climbing the Depot water tower and changing its motto from "mission first, people always," to "people always."

July 30: Seventy-five women begin to march from Seneca Falls to the Encampment to commemorate the local area's history of women's activism. (Seneca Falls was the site of the 1848 Women's Rights Convention.) In the town of Waterloo, 300 angry local residents block the women's passage. The crowd's chants include, "Nuke the lezzies," "Kill the Jews," and "Go home, commies." The Sheriff's deputies are unable or unwilling to clear the road. Six women refuse to take the Sheriff's suggestion of re-routing. Others sit with them in an attempt to diffuse the crowd's violence and to demand that they be allowed to continue on



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their route. The Sheriff arrests 54 women, including a supportive Waterloo resident, and two or three local men. The women are eventually taken to a make-shift jail in Interlaken Junior High School.

July 31: Fear and outrage build at the camp with rumors of violence from local residents and lack of reassurance from local police and fire personnel. The camp considers a moratorium on actions for the day. Long discussions about the Waterloo events and conflict between supporting the "Waterloo 54" and proceeding with plans for August 1. Some argue that the mass civil disobedience should be cancelled.

Camp women vigiling outside the Interlaken school jail are forced to flee by flag-waving townspeople while local sheriff's deputies stand by. New York Governor Mario Cuomo declares a state of emergency, allowing state police and sheriff's deputies from other countries to be brought in.

Aug. 1: Two thousand women gather at Sampson State Park on the other side of the Depot from the camp and walk two miles to the Deput's explosives entrance. One hundred fifty local counter-demonstrators decide not to block the women's access to the gate. Among the anti-woman signs, one reads, "Traitors to America and womanhood, go home." Another 100 locals watch in support or non-aligned curiosity. Supportive men provide childcare, deliver food and drive vans for women who do not walk.

At the gate the fence is "converted" with banners, balloons, cardboard missiles and other symbols of life and death. Women mourn and rage, then move back from the fence to give room for civil disobedience. Two hundred forty-four women climb over the gate, are arrested and transported to the processing area. Many refuse to walk or identify themselves as a statement of their belief that their actions are just and should not be punished. The Military Police vary from silently kind to blatantly brutal. A woman's shoulder is dislocated while being carried off a bus.

All first offenders are released within three to six hours after receiving ban and bar letters.

Twelve second offenders are held overnight, taken to district court in Rochester the next day and are released pending trial at an unspecified future date.

Thirty women remain blocking the explosives entrance, sleeping there through the night. Townspeople, police and peacekeepers remain with them.

Aug. 2: Vigilers outside the Interlaken school shout stories of Monday's actions to the women inside and listen to songs the women have made up. Townspeople remain calm until night swells the crowd. Women joining the vigil that night are verbally and physically harassed. Three local young women walk past the taunts of their neighbors to sit and talk with the women for awhile. Police persuade most women to leave after the townspeople are moved back to the street. Six remain, standing firm on their right to peaceful assembly, are arrested and released pending trial.

Twenty-six women blocking the explosives entrance are arrested after successfully turning back two trucks carrying military supplies. All 26 are released with ban and bar letters, including second offenders.

Aug. 3: One hundred camp women, plus some local women carrying signs of support ("Seneca Falls women support First Amendment rights for *all* women") gather at the Waterloo fairgrounds where the "Waterloo 54" (now 43, since 11 have already accepted release on bail) will be arraigned. The "Jane Does," as they are called, have announced four demands: mass arraignment, unconditional release, dismissal of all charges and return of photographs and fingerprints.

When the motion for a mass arraignment is denied, camp women walk out of the court in protest and plan actions to support the women not cooperating with their individual arraignments. The first Jane Doe is carried into court and refuses to speak with the judge or to be represented by lawyers. The judge tells her she will be released on her own recognizance and

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must return for a future court date. A support woman stands and says, "This woman is being required to return for trial. This is not what the women want." Supporters begin to sing and surround the Jane Doe as the judge orders the courtroom to be cleared. A close friend of the Jane Doe comes and holds her, while a jail matron rests her hands on the tearful reunion. The tuneful disruption continues for 30 to 45 minutes until police eventually drag all supporters out of the building. Women block the entrances of the building after they are expelled. The Jane Doe is expelled. There's a pause in processing as blockaders and police position and re-position themselves. The blockade is not large enough to be effective and the individual arraignments resume. The Jane Does are still not talking or answering legal questions but they begin to make personal, political statements. They specify that they are not agreeing to return for trial and are assuming that their release means that all charges are dropped. Supporters greet the Jane Does coming into court and upon their release. Halfway through arraignments, the judge and district attorney decide to accept mass arraignment. Support women agree not to disrupt and are permitted to return to court. The Jane Does argue their politics and their motion for dismissal: motion granted, records returned.

At the camp, a few men from the local American Legion meet with some camp women to discuss conditions under which they would propose to their group that the Legion stop supporting anti-camp demonstrations. It's agreed that the women will attend an American Legion meeting to clarify the camp's focus on the Depot rather than the town, and that the men will make their proposal. A matron from the Interlaken jail brings garden produce to the camp.

Aug. 4 and 5: Eighteen second offenders (the total to date) and 50 supporters appear before District Court Magistrate Larimer in Rochester. The judge refuses to accept pleas of "nolo contendere." The women refuse translation of "nolo" to "guilty." Lengthy creative pleas ("I plead for the jobs that would be created in the conversion of the Depot") are presented. "Not guilty" pleas are entered. The women are released until unspecified future trials.

Aug. 6: Seven women are arrested at Griffiss Air Force Base, an hour's drive from the camp. A "die-in" is held at the Depot's main gate to commemorate Hiroshima Day. Twenty women begin a four-day fast and 10 stop speaking in a "word fast."



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Two local women very involved in counter-protests earlier (they had made t-shirts with a picture of two women hugging and the slogan "nuke the bitches") apologize to camp women for their past hostility. One initiates a discussion between 25 townspeople and 75 camp women the next day. Meetings between camp women and local people begin to be held in private homes and at Nicastro's, a sympathetic local restaurant.

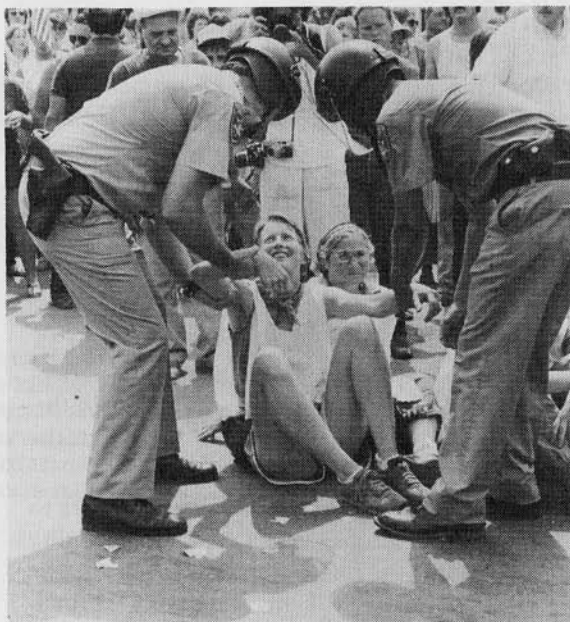
Aug. 7: Two local ministers give sermons in favor of the camp while some church goes leave in protest. A church bulletin is totally devoted to statements in support of the group.

Aug. 9: Another "die-in" is held at the main gate to commemorate Nagasaki Day. In a civil disobedience action early in the day, a second offender is arrested and released with a court date set for Aug. 23. Fourteen women are arrested later. Even the second offenders in this group are released with ban and bar notices.

Aug. 13 and 14: A national planning meeting is held at the camp with much talk of keeping the camp open past the scheduled Labor Day closing. An initial agreement is reached to begin weatherization of the main house so it can be used at least as caretaker's housing.

Aug. 15: A delegation of local clergy meet with the camp's local outreach coordinator wanting to know what they can do to help. An open meeting is planned in one of the churches as a forum to air local people's concerns about the camp.

Aug. 19: One hundred women attended a "special program to highlight women of color and the fight for freedom" in Auburn, N.Y., 24 miles east of the camp, including historical and theatrical presentations. The women visit the home, church and gravesite of Harriet Tubman, principal guide for blacks escaping from slave plantations in the early and mid-1800s.



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They sing slave code songs of the Underground Railroad as they walk.

Aug. 20 and 21: Another national planning meeting agrees that a volunteer caretaking collective will be housed in the main house during the fall.

Aug. 20: Fifteen women climb the Depot fence and walk to the airstrip. All, including second offenders, are released with ban and bar letters.

Aug. 23: The last second offender, arrested August 9, arraigned in Rochester, pleads "not guilty." She is released pending further trial date.

Aug. 25: Seven or eight women blockade the main gate. All are released with ban and bar letters.

Aug. 25-28: Twenty-five to 30 Encampment women join the Jobs, Peace and Freedom

March on Washington and camp in Lafayette Park Thursday and Friday nights. Friday, "Women's Equality Day," 125 women sing, picket and leaflet in front of the White House, then move into a circle dance, blocking Pennsylvania Ave. for 45 minutes. Women eventually dance back onto the sidewalk to avoid arrest. Early Saturday morning police arbitrarily arrest five of the 30 to 40 women sleeping in Lafayette Park. They are released with seven days to request a trial date or pay a \$50 fine within 15 days. Women form a feeder march from Lafayette Park to the main rally on the mall. At the Depot, 60 women march to the main gate in solidarity with the March on Washington.

Sept. 2: The first group of second offenders to reach trial in Rochester, NY, is found guilty after eight hours of arguments based on the Nuremberg "crimes against humanity" principles. The women declare they will not comply with either the \$50 fine or the three-month probation. The judge declines to take further action during the probation period.

Sept. 4: Hundreds of women march to the Depot and 60 are arrested for going over, under, or chaining themselves to the main gate. All are released with ban and bar letters except six second offenders held overnight in Rochester and given October court dates.

Sept. 5: Closing ceremonies are held on the land.

Paid staff positions end by mid-September but volunteers remain on the land taking responsibility for bookkeeping, resource inventory, correspondence, preparation of a report on the summer, continued local outreach, and house upkeep, and organizing a feminist presence at the October 22-24 Depot protest. Monthly region-wide meetings continue as the decision-making structure.

Oct. 21-24: A coalition of New York peace and justice groups will hold demonstrations and civil disobedience actions at the Depot. They will use the camp's main house as their communications center.

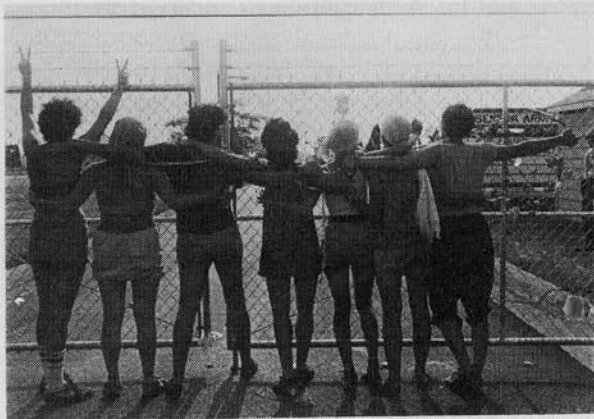
December: The planned deployment of the Cruise and Pershing II missiles to Europe. The Depot will be the final shipment point before the Pershing leaves the U.S.

Postscript: The author would like to extend thanks to "the community," and my affinity group, and especially Karen Kahn, Jess Shubow and Nancy Alach for helping to clarify these ideas.

The camp's address is 5440 Rte. 96, Romulus, NY 14541. Phone: (607) 869-5825.

Reprinted from *Gay Community News*, Vol. 11, No. 8, September 10, 1983.

Lois Hayes describes herself as "young and willing to learn." Comments or questions on her article are welcome. A member of Boston Women's Pentagon Action, her articles have appeared in Gay Community News and off our backs, among other publications.

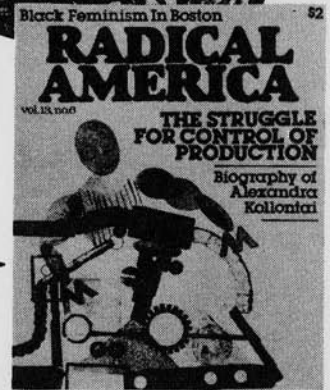
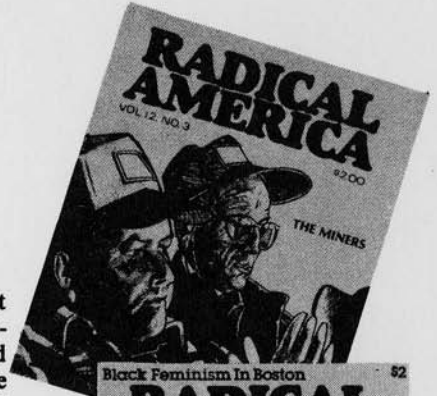


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