

THE REVISIONIST CLARION

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER ABOUT HISTORICAL REVISIONISM
AND THE CRISIS OF IMPERIAL POWERS

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TOWARDS THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL
AND THE ROLLING BACK OF USA

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By Peter Manseau

"Powell killer go home. Don't forget that civilians are being slaughtered in Najaf and a wall is being built in Palestine," read the banner, which was raised on one of the sides of the Acropolis Hill in Athens. Powell found himself busy somewhere else.

Sixty years ago

They Landed in France When are they going to climb back on their ships and steam away ?

These anniversaries, every ten years, of the US Landing in France are an enormous bore. Nobody had ever asked the Americans to come in anyway. They had come in 1917, they had done three little somersaults and off they went. They had left behind the sounds of the jazz and several writers who were happy to do the dishwashing in Gay Paree. Our far away cousins of America had shown what they really were worth: physically huge, a bit excited, simple minds, not to say simpletons. Our grandfathers, in the trenches, had realized that the American footsoldier had no value. A lot of military hardware, not much of discipline and almost no courage. The only thing that struck them was the use of Indian scouts who could shoot the German sentinels silently with a bow and arrows, before the attack. With these implements, the US technology did not look very advanced.

After the war President Wilson came to Versailles (1919) to do his tricks, to make untenable promises; he was mostly bent on dismembering the Central Empires (Germany, Austria and Turkey. Russia was already down). Probably they were seen as competitors dangerous to the American ambitions. Wilson projects were killed by Congress and he left in shame. Before his accession to power, he had thought that Jews did not exist anymore, outside of the Bible. But at the end of his mandate he recognized that Jews were everywhere and in particular around him. Stupidity and naivety have always prevailed in the small town of Washington.

One would have to be as stupid and as naive as an American President to believe that the Landing in 1944 was motivated by the love of democracy and the care for our freedom. These are things that Yankees did not care about at all. They had planned to put our freedom into an iron cage with a US military administration called AMGOT (American Military Government of Occupied Territory). The nominations had been done in advance. The project missed by a narrow margin. We were going to pass from one master to another, and maybe wonder about which one was the best, when de Gaulle, by a sheer exercise of the will and political blackmail succeeded in imposing himself as a potential governor, thus sending back the AMGOT to non-existence. Note that nobody ever mentions that episode. This tells us that the history we are supposed to buy is manipulated.

Democracy, in this context, does not need to be qualified. The USA experience a very weak and lame version of it, quite limited at that. Just remind that at this time Black Americans were in many places deprived of their civil rights. In the Army they had almost no role in the fighting units and were mostly confined in menial tasks in transports, cooking, washing, etc. The American democrat, very proud of his right to carry guns, even in his own garden, could not remain serene with the idea of entrusting guns to Blacks in the Army. Those could be tempted to use the same guns after going back home. Let's forget also the long series of dictatorships supported after the war by the US, from the Cuban Battista to... Saddam Hussein of Iraq, involved in a savage war with the official enemies of the West, Imam Khomeyni's Iran. Rumsfeld

himself was bringing the aerial photographs that allowed the Iraqis to gas Iranian troops with gas provided by the same Americans.

What followed 1944 was different from what had followed 1918. After the landing, the Americans selected, all over Europe, large tracts of land where to build military bases. They did not satisfy themselves with the countries they had fetched from the Germans. They imposed their bases on non-belligerent nations, like Iceland, Spain and Portugal.

When a foreign army established bases on your territory, there is only one word to qualify it: occupation. No way to avoid it. Today, 60 years after the landing, the USA maintain the occupation of Germany, Great-Britain, Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Greenland (Danish), Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, to which have been recently added Georgia, the Gulf countries, Macedonia, Bosnia and Kossovo (part of Serbia). They had to evacuate their troops from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines after they had been beaten into submission by the Vietnamese Communists. And from China in 1948. They are in the process of establishing new bases right now in Hungary, Rumania and probably elsewhere in a slight move from Western to Eastern Europe, to fill the vacuum left by the Soviet withdrawal.

This rearrangement of the occupation network, at a time when modern weapons are used on a long distance, thus rendering the proximity of the armed forces to a battlefiend useless, show that occupation is basically a political act. The Pentagon finances the project of a missile able to strike any place on earth from the US within two hours. Occupation is thus meaningless in military terms.

The US want to occupy for one simple reason: to show that they are the masters. To impinge on governments to force them to move in step. To intimidate public opinions, to control local armes forces and intelligence services, to watch, infiltrate and buy politicians, trade unionists and media personnel.

The 1944 Landing in Normandy almost failed. It has been a gigantic mess; half of the enormous losses are due to the military staff incompetence. Pushed forward, without issue, these poor GI's were like a cattle hacked down in small pieces by the German young chaps and old reservists manning the so-called Atlantic Wall. As always, the GI's ware saved by the airforce. It is not quite possible to transform a nation of grocers, rotten lawyers, hungry cowboys and black workers into a fighting forces in a matter of months. With the bayonet in the ass, they had to fight after all, and the sheer weight of military hardware prevailed and broke the Germans' back.

Since then, they remained here: fatsoes, sitting in their bases, eating enormous icecreams and hamburgers, playing pinballs and trafficking in the PX's. The wildest corruption, the most immoral barthers freely unfurl there, but the press always keep quiet on this subject. The best introduction to it remains the hilarious novel by Joseph Heller, *Catch-22*, written in 1961, but describing events taking place in Sicily in 1944. The same patterns can be obtained nowadays.

They manage huge stockpiles of weapons, including thousands of nuclear warheads, and the world-wide network of multimedia spying on everyone else which, under the guise of the military necessity provides Washington mostly with economic, undustrial and political intelligence. The only thing that save us till now is the American inability to treat the mass of items collected by their all-encompassing system. And most often they are just not able to understand what they have retrieved from this bottomless quagmire. It is enough for a guy to stop using his mobile phone to be able to slip through, like the astute Bin Laden, probably working now through his carrier pigeons.

They occupy our country, they impose their cultural shit, their unedible food for impotent overweights, they tax us by imposing the dollar as a currency. Without the threat of the guns, who would use a currency without a cover that they print freely, without limits ? The world would be better off without Saddam Hussein, said the butler Tony Blair. The world in fact would be much better off without the United States. The whole mankind knows that. This is why the destruction of this juggernaut is a world-wide demand. This would be a relief also for the US citizen, overloaded with tatxes, treated as an idiot, and pressured into sacrificing everything for the evasive bankers and banksters. Instead of tramping like the clown Berlusconi who lick the boot wich kicks him, we better fight to see the boys climbing on their boats for the return trip, the redeployment of the cow-boys in the wilderness of Utah and the giving back to Mexico of the territories stolen during 19. century. Then, it would be possible to start talking about freedom and democracy.

Serge Thion
July 2004

THE SECRET FILE OF ABU GHRAIB

**New classified documents implicate U.S. forces
in rape and sodomy of Iraqi prisoners**

By Osha Gray Davidson

07/29/04 "Rolling Stone" -- It has been months since the now-infamous photographs from Abu Ghraib revealed that American soldiers tortured Iraqi prisoners -- yet the Bush administration has failed to get to the bottom of the abuses. "There are some serious unanswered questions," says Sen. Susan Collins, a Republican on the Armed Services Committee. The Pentagon is stalling on several investigations, and congressional inquiries have ground to a halt. The foot-dragging is astonishing, given that Congress has access to classified documents detailing the abuses outlined by Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba in his report on Abu Ghraib. Rolling Stone obtained those files in June and offers this report on their contents. -The Editors

The new classified military documents offer a chilling picture of what happened at Abu Ghraib -- including detailed reports that U.S. troops and translators sodomized and raped Iraqi prisoners. The secret files -- 106 "annexes" that the Defense Department withheld from the Taguba report last spring -- include nearly 6,000 pages of internal Army memos and e-mails, reports on prison riots and escapes, and sworn statements by soldiers, officers, private contractors and detainees. The files depict a prison in complete chaos. Prisoners were fed bug-infested food and forced to live in squalid conditions; detainees and U.S. soldiers alike were killed and wounded in nightly mortar attacks; and loyalists of Saddam Hussein served as guards in the facility, apparently smuggling weapons to prisoners inside.

The files make clear that responsibility for what Taguba called "sadistic, blatant and wanton" abuses extends to several high-ranking officers still serving in command positions. Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, who is now in charge of all military prisons in Iraq, was dispatched to Abu Ghraib by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last August. In a report marked secret, Miller recommended that military police at the prison be "actively engaged in setting the conditions for successful exploitation of the internees." After his plan was adopted, guards began depriving prisoners of sleep and food, subjecting them to painful "stress positions" and terrorizing them with dogs. A former Army intelligence officer tells Rolling Stone that the intent of Miller's report was clear to everyone involved: "It means treat the detainees like shit until they will sell their mother for a blanket, some food without bugs in it and some sleep." In the files, prisoner after prisoner at Abu Ghraib describes acts of torture that Taguba found "credible based on the clarity of their statements and supporting evidence provided by other witnesses." The abuses took place at the Hard Site, a two-story cinder-block unit at the sprawling prison that housed Iraqi criminals and insurgents, not members of Al Qaeda or other terrorist organizations. In one sworn statement, Kasim Mehaddi Hilas, detainee number 151108, said he witnessed a translator referred to only as Abu Hamid raping a teenage boy. "I saw Abu Hamid, who was wearing the military uniform, putting his dick in the little kid's ass," Hilas testified. "The kid was hurting very bad." A female soldier took pictures of the rape, Hilas said.

During the Muslim holy period of Ramadan, Hilas saw Spc. Charles Graner Jr. and an unnamed "helper" tie a detainee to a bed around midnight. "They . . . inserted the phosphoric light in his ass, and he was yelling for God's help," the prisoner testified. Again, the same female soldier photographed the torture.

Another prisoner, Abd Alwhab Youss, was punished after guards accused him of plotting to attack an MP with a broken toothbrush. Guards took Youss into a closed room, poured cold water on him, pushed his head into urine and beat him with a broom. Then the guards "pressed my ass with a broom and spit on it," Youss said.

Mohanded Juma, detainee number 152307, testified that on his first day at Tier 1A, the west wing of the Hard Site where prisoners were brought for interrogation, he was stripped and left naked in his cell for six days. Graner, the guard in charge of the tier, entered Juma's cell at 2 a.m., cuffed his hands and feet, and took him to the shower room, where a female interrogator

questioned him. After she left, Graner and another man threw pepper in Juma's face, beat him with a chair until it broke and choked him until he thought he was going to die. The assault lasted for half an hour. "They got tired from beating me," Juma told investigators. "They took a little break, and then they started kicking me very hard with their feet until I passed out." In another instance, Graner and a fellow guard reportedly beat a detainee until his nose split open.

Torin Nelson, one of thirty-two private contractors who worked as interrogators at Abu Ghraib, told investigators that he spoke with an interpreter who witnessed an interrogator toss a handcuffed prisoner from a car. "The interrogator then yells at him for falling on the ground and starts dragging or pulling the detainee by the cuffs," Nelson testified. He believed the story, Nelson added, "based on the stuff that I have heard and seen."

The sworn statement of Amjed Isail Waleed, detainee number 151365, is especially graphic. On his first day at the Hard Site, he told investigators, guards "put me in a dark room and started hitting me in the head and stomach and legs." Then, one day in November, five soldiers took him into a room, put a bag over his head and started beating him. "I could see their feet, only, from under the bag. . . . Some of the things they did was make me sit down like a dog, and they would hold the string from the bag, and they made me bark like a dog, and they were laughing at me." A soldier slammed Waleed's head against the wall, causing the bag to fall off. "One of the police was telling me to crawl, in Arabic," he testified, "so I crawled on my stomach, and the police were spitting on me when I was crawling and hitting me on my back, my head and my feet. It kept going on until their shift ended at four o'clock in the morning. The same thing would happen in the following days."

Finally, after several beatings so severe that he lost consciousness, Waleed was forced to lay on the ground. "One of the police was pissing on me and laughing at me," the prisoner said. He was placed in a dark room and beaten with a broom. "And one of the police, he put a part of his stick that he always carries inside my ass, and I felt it going inside me about two centimeters, approximately. And I started screaming, and he pulled it out and he washed it with water inside the room. And the two American girls that were there when they were beating me, they were hitting me with a ball made of sponge on my dick. And when I was tied up in my room, one of the girls, with blond hair, she is white, she was playing with my dick. I saw inside this facility a lot of punishment just like what they did to me and more. And they were taking pictures of me during all these instances."

In the classified files, some of the photographed soldiers also provide firsthand accounts of the abuses. Pvt. Lynndie England testified that on November 8th -- the evening of her twenty-first birthday -- she went to the Hard Site to visit Spc. Graner, her boyfriend. Just after midnight, seven Iraqi detainees accused of taking part in a fight at one of the many tent compounds used to house prisoners at Abu Ghraib were brought to Tier 1A. For England, the evening was a break from the tedium of her job processing prisoners. For Nori Al-Yasseri, detainee number 7787, it quickly became a "night which we felt like 1,000 nights."

Al-Yasseri and the other prisoners arrived at the Hard Site with empty sandbags over their heads to prevent them from seeing where they were and their hands bound behind their backs with plastic handcuffs. The guards threw the men against the walls until they collapsed on the floor in what England called a "dog pile." Some of the MPs took turns running across the room and leaping on top of the men. "A couple of the detainees kind of made an 'ah' sound, as if this hurt them or caused them some type of pain," Spc. Jeremy Sivits testified in a sworn statement. While the Iraqis were on the floor, England and Sgt. Javal Davis stomped on their fingers and feet. Sivits was certain that the men felt pain this time because he heard them scream.

So did Sgt. Shannon Snider, who was working in an office on the top tier. Drawn by the cries of pain, Snider leaned over the railing and in a fury yelled down to Davis to stop abusing the prisoners. Davis stepped away from the men, and Snider left.

"I believe that Sgt. Snider thought it was an isolated incident," Sivits testified, "and that when he ordered Sgt. Davis to stop, it was over." But it was just getting started.

After Snider had gone, the MPs pulled the prisoners to their feet one by one and removed their handcuffs. Graner, who had learned a few key phrases in Arabic, ordered the detainees to strip. As one prisoner took off his clothes, Graner cradled the man's head in one arm and smashed his fist into the naked and hooded man's temple. "Damn, that hurt!" Graner complained, waving his hand in the air. The prisoner went limp, and someone removed his hood. "I walked over to see if the detainee was still alive," Sivits testified. "I could tell that the detainee was unconscious, because his eyes were closed and he was not moving, but I could see his chest rise and fall, so I knew he was still alive."

According to England, Staff Sgt. Ivan Frederick made an X on another prisoner's chest with his finger and said, "Watch this." Then the six-foot-tall Fredericks punched the man in the

chest. The hooded prisoner lurched backward and fell to his knees. He gasped for air. "Frederick said he thought he put the detainee in cardiac arrest," Sivits later told investigators. England was asked why she thought Frederick assaulted the man. "I guess just because he wanted to hit him," she said.

Eventually, all seven Iraqis were standing naked and hooded, and the MPs got out their cameras. A few pictures had been taken earlier in the evening, but now the abuse turned into a photo-op. Men taught to be ashamed of appearing naked in front of other men were forced to assume a series of humiliating and bizarre poses. Graner had them climb on top of each other to form a human pyramid, and the MPs took turns taking each other's picture standing behind the men. In one photo, Graner and England smile and give the thumbs-up sign behind the men, who are naked except for the green sandbags covering their heads. The Iraqis were made to crawl across the floor on their hands and knees while the guards rode on their backs. Two were posed as if performing oral sex on each other, and others were lined up against the wall and forced to masturbate while England pointed at their genitals and leered. And all the while, the Americans were laughing, cracking jokes and taking pictures.

An Army investigator later asked one of the seven Iraqis how he felt that night. "I was trying to kill myself," replied Hussein Al-Zayyadi, detainee number 19446, "but I didn't have any way of doing it."

The secret files make clear that day-to-day living conditions at Abu Ghraib were "deplorable" for soldiers as well as prisoners. The facility was under constant attack from mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. The files make no reference to the number of attacks, but a partial list obtained by Rolling Stone indicates that there were more than two dozen explosions between July and September alone. Six detainees and two soldiers were killed, and seventy-one were injured. But officers at Abu Ghraib told Taguba that their repeated requests for combat troops and armored vehicles to protect the facility were ignored by top brass. "I feel, and my soldiers feel, that we're just sitting out there, waiting to die," said Cpt. James Jones of the 229th MP Company. "As a commander, I'm charged with bringing my soldiers home, but how do I control that? It's frustrating. It's frightening."

The prison was filled far beyond capacity. Some 7,000 prisoners were jammed into Abu Ghraib, a complex erected to hold no more than 4,000 detainees. Prisoners were held in canvas tents that became ovens in the summer heat and filled with rain in the cold winter. One report found that the compound "is covered with mud and many prisoner tents are close to being under water." Another report described the conditions in one compound: "The area is littered with trash, has pools of water standing around latrines, and the bottles of water carried by detainees for water consumption are filthy. The tents lack floors and are inadequate to provide protection from the elements." Detainees wore soiled clothes because laundry facilities were inadequate; mentally ill detainees were "receiving no treatment."

In a series of increasingly desperate e-mails sent to his higher-ups, Maj. David DiNenna of the 320th MP Battalion reported that food delivered by private contractors was often inedible. "At least three to four times a week, the food cannot be served because it has bugs," DiNenna reported. "Today an entire compound of 500 prisoners could not be fed due to bugs and dirt in the food." Four days later, DiNenna sent another e-mail marked "URGENT URGENT URGENT!!!!!!!!!!" He reported that "for the past two days prisoners have been vomiting after they eat."

Officers reported that their repeated pleas for adequate food and supplies went unheeded, even though prisoners were attacking soldiers. "I don't know how they're not rioting every day," Jones told Taguba. The worst riot occurred on November 24th. According to an internal investigation, prisoners in one compound "were marching and yelling, 'Down with Bush,' and 'Bush is bad' and other slogans to that effect." The detainees threw rocks at guard towers and at soldiers on the other side of the concertina wire. One guard said that "the sky was black with rocks"; another added that he "feared for his life." The riot quickly spread to other compounds, where several guards were injured by flying debris. The soldiers fired nonlethal ammunition at the mob but quickly exhausted their meager supplies. Fearing they were on the verge of a mass prison break, the guards were given the go-ahead to use deadly force, and they opened fire with live ammunition. Three detainees were killed and nine were wounded. Nine soldiers were also injured in the riot.

That same evening, a detainee in Tier 1A told an MP that a prisoner had a gun and several knives. The informant even knew where he was: Cell 35. The guards instructed every prisoner on the tier to put their hands through the cell bars to be handcuffed, a standard precaution before searching a cell or moving a prisoner. But when the MPs came to Cell 35, the man inside refused to put his hands out. Instead, he told the guards he "had no gun."

No one had used the word gun around the prisoner. Sgt. William Cathcart, one of the MPs on duty that night, immediately made a grab for the man's wrists. The prisoner pulled away and fell to his knees to say a prayer. "At that point," Cathcart told investigators, "I knew it would be a gun battle." He was right. The detainee suddenly turned, withdrew a 9 mm pistol from under his pillow and opened fire on Cathcart from close range. A bullet struck the MP in the chest. Fortunately, before beginning the search, Cathcart had put on his "full battle rattle" - a Kevlar vest with pockets holding ceramic plates - and wasn't injured. Another MP shot the inmate with two nonlethal rounds, knocking the man down. But the prisoner jumped back up and continued to fire. An MP finally ended the incident by firing a load of buckshot into the man's legs.

How did a detainee in the Army's toughest prison in Iraq get his hands on a gun?

According to an internal Army investigation contained in the secret files, the civilian-run Coalition Provisional Authority had hired at least five members of Fedayeen Saddam -- a paramilitary organization of fanatical Saddam loyalists -- to work as guards at the prison. An Iraqi guard, probably one of "Saddam's martyrs," had smuggled the gun and two knives into the prison in an inner tube, placed them in a sheet and tossed them up to the second-story window of Cell 35. In May, when Taguba testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Sen. Wayne Allard asked him a direct question: "Did we have terrorists in the population at this prison?" Taguba answered, "Sir, none that we were made aware of." His own files make clear, however, that a more accurate response would have been: "Yes, sir -- but only among the guards."

Taguba was only authorized to investigate the role of military police in the torture at Abu Ghraib -- even though the Hard Site was controlled by military intelligence when the worst abuses occurred. Nevertheless, the classified annexes indicate that responsibility for the torture extends at least as high as several top-ranking officers in Iraq who have yet to be disciplined or removed from command. Maj. Gen. Barbara Fast, who remains director of military intelligence in Iraq, was aware of the conditions at Abu Ghraib and received regular reports from officers at the prison. Lt. Col. Steven Jordan, who directed intelligence at the prison, admitted to Taguba that he did not actually report to the British colonel who was supposedly his supervisor. "On paper, I work directly for him," Jordan told Taguba. "But between you, me and the fence post, I work directly for General Fast." Fast is currently under investigation, but unlike lower-ranking officers and soldiers, she has not been reprimanded or charged in the abuses.

Miller, who was sent by Rumsfeld to speed up interrogations at Abu Ghraib, spent ten days in Iraq touring prisons and meeting with intelligence officials. The two-star general was commander of the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba -- known as Gitmo -- where "enemy combatants" were already being subjected to harsh interrogation techniques, including the use of military dogs to frighten prisoners. According to Col. Thomas Pappas, who commanded the military intelligence brigade at Abu Ghraib, Miller spoke with him about using dogs on prisoners: "He said that they used military working dogs, and that they were effective in setting the atmosphere for which, you know, you could get information." Brig. Gen. Janis Karpinski, who was in charge of all military prisons in Iraq, told Rolling Stone that Miller described his plan to "Gitmo-ize interrogation operations" in Iraq and boasted that prisoners at Guantanamo "were treated like dogs, because you can never let them be in charge."

Miller has denied making either statement. But whatever he said, his plan to "rapidly exploit internees for actionable intelligence" was quickly adopted at Abu Ghraib. A slide presentation in the classified files spells out the new "Interrogation Rules of Engagement," specifying that soldiers, with proper approval, may subject prisoners to dietary manipulation, sleep deprivation, stress positions and the "presence of mil working dogs." In at least one instance documented by Taguba and photographed by soldiers, a prisoner at Abu Ghraib was bitten by a dog. Most of the MPs who have been charged with crimes say they were told by military intelligence officers to "soften up" prisoners prior to interrogations. "MI wanted to get them to talk," Spc. Sabrina Harman told investigators, saying she was told to keep detainees awake. Sgt. Davis, who jumped on the pile of seven detainees on November 8th, said intelligence officers would tell guards to "loosen this guy up for us" and "make sure he has a bad night."

The classified files also show that intelligence officers at Abu Ghraib felt pressured to produce results. "Sir," Lt. Col. Jordan told Taguba, "I was told a couple of times . . . that some of the reporting was getting read by Rumsfeld, folks out at Langley [the Central Intelligence Agency], some very senior folks."

In May, after photos of the torture were published, Rumsfeld declared that he would take "all measures necessary" to ensure that such abuse "does not happen again." But the defense secretary had already sent a clear signal to commanders in Iraq about his position on the proper

way to interrogate prisoners. In April, Rumsfeld transferred Gen. Miller from Guantanamo to Baghdad, putting him in charge of all military prisons in Iraq. Instead of court-martialing the man who authored the plan to subject prisoners at Abu Ghraib to harsh abuses, Rumsfeld has left him in charge of the facility.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have changed this," Miller told reporters in May. "Trust us. We are doing this right."

Rolling Stone, 28 July 2004.

< <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story?id=6388256&rnd=1091336776270&rnd=1091485011813&has-player=true> >

CHRISTIAN NIETZSCHE

Israel Shamir: Today's Christian Nietzsche!

I want to promote interest in Israel Shamir's
fantastic book, *Flowers of Galilee*.

Patrick McNally

First, some personal to explain the unusual claim, "Today's Christian Nietzsche." I did an MA in German and Russian Lit [1965-68] and no prof mentioned Nietzsche. I did a PhD in philosophy [1970-75] and no prof talked about Nietzsche. Luckily, I could not get a job teaching philosophy so I studied accounting, management, and economics. In the middle 1990s, I was looking for something to keep up my German and sort of stumbled on Nietzsche. Since then, two times every year I relisten to a 12-hour set of audio-tapes of "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" and reread his other works. The fantastic thing about Nietzsche is the way he reverses values and makes us see things in a completely opposed way. He writes like a rapierist and regularly shocks us with his cogent insights, but unfortunately many of Nietzsche's targets have been defeated or become irrelevant. So much for Nietzsche! Now on to Shamir!

Shamir takes on the big evils of today: globalization, mammonization, Judeo-Naziification, zionization of Christianity, etc. And he is great at making fun of those who use pseudo-issues to distract attention from the biggies. Even after reading the Israel Shahak and Norman Finkelstein, I am often jolted by many of Shamir's insights. I feel that cataracts are being removed from my eyes. These insights can involve shocking reformulations of conventional wisdom, obscure historical knowledge, current statistics, interesting travel anecdotes, quotes from old texts, or almost anything.

It is amazing and disappointing that so many Palestinian advocacy groups consider Shamir too strong a medicine. For a time, I belonged to a Palestinian-run "Academics for Justice," which would not allow the distribution of Shamir's articles. Just mentioning Shamir's name is a good way to sort out the phoney opposition and save oneself a lot of useless discussion time. Nietzsche said that 100 more years of books and the spirit itself will stink. Very true, but Shamir gives the spirit a good airing out. Unfortunately, one bad effect of reading Shamir is that Nietzsche now seems somehow irrelevant and pale.

The book can be purchased at

< <http://www.israelshamir.net> > or Amazon, Booksurge,

Dandelionbooks.net Don't read this book for an abstract cause, but for yourself!

MAIL

Thank you for sending me a copy of the June Clarion. Very interesting. This seems to be one of many journals edited by the ghost of the late Serge Thion

It has an "intro to revisionism" anonymously authored by someone who finds Senator McCarthy an impressive authority. This piece is full of error. Owing to ignorance or bad editing, it shows Rassinier claiming to have been a prisoner in Auschwitz.

Zionists wag their tails when they see this kind of mistake. Pull your socks up.

Best

George Brennan 28 may 2004

The mistake is regretted. We apologize for the errors. We'll look at our socks.

SHORT LIST

A short talk

by Kennett Love:

You don't have to be an anti-Semite to despise and fear Ariel Sharon. You don't have to be an anti-Semite to perceive that the United States of America has lost control of its politics to a Jewish lobby that puts Israel's interests above our own American interests. That loss would not be of paramount concern if Israel's interests were the same as or even vaguely similar to -- our American interests. And you don't have to be an anti-Semite to oppose and fear George W. Bush and the cruel war in Iraq into which he and the neo-cons and the evangelical fundamentalist Christian cults have led America with lies.

I cite the victory of Zionist Jewish money in the defeat of popular congressional incumbents in the Alabama and Georgia primaries for the national elections. Worse yet, and more recently, I cite the Pavlovian pro-Israel foot-licking adherence of John Kerrie to the pro-forma platform vows of the Bush administrations -- father and son -- and the cowardly, continuing congressional caucus touting their grossly partisan support for Israel against nearly the entire Muslim world and in defiance of public opinion in Europe and the rest of the Americas.

Israel's character and policies are criticized and courageously opposed by many of its Jewish citizens. But Israel's character and policies are diametrically opposed to American principles.

1. Israel is racist. Its law of return applies only to Jews born of Jewish mothers. It is not the only democracy in the middle east because it is not a democracy. The Arabs and other non-Jews under Israeli control are second class citizens at best. We have abated our racism and we enforce severe laws against it.

2. Israel is terrorist. It was founded on terror. It applied terror to make Arabs flee, across unfixed and non-legal borders, and then declared them to have forfeited their property and homes. Israel confiscated their possessions after their terrified flight and shot many of them when they tried to retrieve family jewelry. They were barred from return in favor of the influx of Jews. One of Israel's most horrendous acts was the massacre of hundreds of women, children, and old men at Deir Yasseen in the course of the war of conquest which began to escalate in 1947. The bodies were thrown down the village well. The young men were at work in the fields. The UN mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte, was assassinated while trying to establish borders in accord with the 1947 UN partition of Palestine. The murder was never solved. Israel never seriously investigated it. It was apparently an act of terror to get more territory for Israel. Israel proclaimed itself an independent state in 1948 on May 15, as part of Israel's permanent campaign to kill or expel all non-Jews in Palestine, -- Armenians, Greek orthodox Christians, and Roman Catholics among them -- Sharon led an invasion into Lebanon in 1982 and personally shepherded the massacre of nearly 1,000 Palestine refugees in the camps of Sabra and Shatilla outside of Beirut. Only a few weeks ago a Sharon cabinet minister told the New Yorker's Jeffrey Goldberg there were "innocent men among the Palestinians, but they are collectively guilty; we will have to kill them all.

This genocidal policy was born in 1897 in the mind of Theodore Herzl, author of *Der Judenstaat* [the Jewish State] and the founder of modern political Zionism. He used the term "transfer of populations. That has been a constant Israeli policy, resembling our own killings and forced relocations of native Americans.

3. Israel is theocratic. Our tradition is to separate church and state. Let me insert here that our traditions and our principles are often violated. Our president is a born-again evangelical who claims god told him to attack Saddam Hussein. He did -- with enormous bunker-busting bombs that inflicted incalculable "collateral damage. An estimated 10,000 Iraqis died, but we have not counted.

4. Iraq was targeted at the prompting of the jewish neo-cons because Iraq, unlike Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon is still officially at war with Israel. Iraq fired missiles at Israel in the

gulf war of Bush the father. This war is pre-emptive, a war of choice, not defense and now we are stuck with it.

5. Israel is a vigorous, anachronistic colonialist power. The world sees our "special relationship with Israel as a partnership in crusading, conquering colonialism. We serve Israel as armorer, banker, diplomatic protector, and relentless vetoer of UN efforts to curb Israel's violations of international laws. The UN's founding charter in 1945 prohibited using force or the threat of force to acquire territory. Just two years later Israel began doing just that in "liberating Palestine from hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in what it called its "war of liberation in 1947-1948 and in its stunning pre-emptive wars and massacres against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in 1967 and Lebanon in 1982. It seized upon its triumph in 1967 to occupy the West Bank and Gaza. They kill and demolish homes and institutions with appalling heartlessness and insultingly ignore our timid remonstrances. They run the special alliance; we don't. Some alliance! They don't bother to make a pretense of loyalty nor even compromise out of courtesy. They look the other way when we oppose at nuclear programs in Syria, North Korea, China, India, and Pakistan. They made us look the other way while they built a formidable nuclear and missile armory of their own. They corrupted an American citizen named Pollard to steal our secrets for years and scolded us bitterly for sending him to prison for life instead of letting him "return to the Jewish State.

In their 1967 war they ambushed our electronic surveillance ship, the "Liberty, in broad daylight with aircraft guns and bombs, motor torpedo boats, even a submarine, crippling the ship and killing some 35 of its crew and wounding dozens more. Israel pressed the day-long attack in the face of oversized American flags and radio identifications and may-days. Israel has given no explanation or expression of regret and has balked inquiry into the incident. And so have we. President Johnson called off a rescue sortie by the sixth fleet. Survivors of the "liberty attack have stubbornly sought to learn the reasons why. It is time we ended the "special relationship. It hasn't even a name or agreement to govern its conduct. President George Washington warned against such a special alliance in his farewell address, saying:

"the nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred or an habitual fondness is in some degree a slave. ... sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification.

"in innumerable ways, such attachments are particularly alarming to the truly enlightened and independent patriot. How many opportunities do they afford to tamper with domestic factions, to practice the arts of seduction, to mislead public opinion, to influence or awe the public councils! ... real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests.

President Truman in 1947 broke the 150-year-old spell of president Washington's warning against entangling alliances by launching the Marshall plan of aid for Western Europe and the Truman Doctrine to block communist influence in Greece and Turkey.

Israel is touchy about its "legitimate right to exist, citing most frequently the story of god's covenant with Abram, later Abraham, made before Abram had departed from Ur of the Chaldees, his ancestral birthplace in what is now Iraq. The story begins with god's promise of his favor for Abram and his descendants (genesis 12 passim): "now the lord had said to Abram, get thee out of thy country, ... unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, ... when Abram had reached Canaan, north of Palestine, god appeared to him again and said: "unto thy seed will I give this land. There was no mention of a covenant until genesis 15:18, when the lord said to Abram: "unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the River Euphrates.

The story has god giving land and other promises to Abram right and left. The details differed widely from promise to promise. Years later Joshua, the first conqueror of Palestine, quoted a surprisingly frank admission from god:

"I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and olive yards which ye planted not do ye eat.

I suggest that these stories came down in recitations from the days of mythology, all of it folklore, through centuries when Zeus and Venus and Athena were as real as Jehovah and Noah or Abraham or Moses "an ancient time as E.I. Doctorow put it, "when no distinction was possible between fact and fiction, ... as in Homer. As in Genesis.

Both parties to a covenant must be alive at the signing. When I covenanted to buy an apartment in New York while I was in Egypt covering the 1973 war for ABC my lawyer told me later that the deal was delayed until he thought to listen to a radio to hear my live broadcast.

The Muslims, although Abraham appears as Ibrahim in the Qurʾān, reject the idea that the covenant has any legal standing giving the Jews any right to trespass on the land of the Canaanites or the Palestinians or the Lebanese or the Syrians and the Egyptians. There is no independent evidence that Abraham ever existed, ever crossed the line between mythology and history. So the Abrahamic covenant has no firm basis in law. Perhaps in tradition.

And the brutal colonialist conduct of Israel is certainly not an acceptable underpinning for a "legitimate right to exist." Our reputation in the world has been tarred and feathered by our total and uncomplaining support of Israel's illegal occupation of nearly all of Palestine.

The author served as *The New York Times'* correspondent in the Middle East from 1953-1956, in London until 1959, and at the United Nations in New York until 1962. In these places he had access to the men who shook the world. He is the author of the most definitive book on the Suez wars, *Suez: The Twice-fought War* --Published in 1969.

See Kennett Love Papers:
http://infoshare1.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/finding_aids/kennlove

MAHDI ARMY DRAWS SUPPORTERS

Fallujah fighters provide military training for Sadrists forces.

By **Aqil Jabbar** in Najaf and Kufa

On the road leading to Najaf, six black-clad members of the Mahdi Army scrambled to set up three light-gauge mortars along the edge of a palm grove. Aiming at a walled compound they said was a US military base, they fired off 11 rounds at leisure - until two American helicopters appeared and sent them scrambling for cover.

This type of hit-and-run attack is typical of fighting in the streets, suburbs, and cemeteries of Najaf between US troops and Iraqi paramilitaries on one side, and the Mahdi Army militia of Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr on the other. But this time there was a key difference - the presence of Col Rifaat al-Janabi.

Dressed in the uniform of Saddam Hussein's Special Republican Guards, Janabi had come from his home in Fallujah to show Najaf's poorly-trained Mahdi militiamen how to use their weapons. "The Fallujah Consultancy Council of Mujahedin holy warriors sent me with nine other officers and forty soldiers who are well trained in using mortar and the RPG-7 grenade launcher," said Janabi, who unlike many Iraqi insurgents had no qualms about giving his name.

"We had to stand by our Shia brothers in Najaf, who stood by us in Fallujah," he said, referring to the long-running battle in that town with US troops. "It is an honourable stance of Fallujah people who sent us experts in using weapons," said one Mahdi militiaman, who added that "we are in need of military training".

Meanwhile, outside the Mahdi Army's base in the main mosque in Kufa, Najaf's twin city, other officers and soldiers from Fallujah could be seen drilling the Sadrists fighters in the use of RPG-7 grenade launchers. "We welcomed the mujahedin of Fallujah who came, without being asked to come, to help us out in training the fighters who lack experiences in using weapons," said Sheikh Kudair al-Ansari, in charge of Sadr's office in Kufa. While he spoke, militiamen offloaded AK-47 assault rifles from trucks, where they had been smuggled into the city under a load of watermelons.

Volunteers got out of minibuses recently arrived from the southern towns of Amara, Kut, and Diwaniya, gathering outside the mosque and chanting, "By our blood and souls, we sacrifice for you, Muqtada." "I left a wife and three children to come and defend Muqtada," said one volunteer from Diwaniya who refused to give his name.

"We could not protect his father Mohammed al-Sadr from Saddam, but now we can protect his son from the Americans and the Jews," he said, referring to the charismatic ayatollah killed in 1999 by alleged agents of the regime. Kufa appeared to be under full Mahdi Army control. Checkpoints, spaced about 200 metres apart, were manned by black-clad fighters, their foreheads wrapped in green cloths emblazoned with the name of the seventh-century Imam Ali.

"I am not a kid ... I can kill many Americans," said 13-year-old Hassan Kamel, a preparatory school student who stood guard with his rifle at one of the checkpoints. Not far away, fire engulfed the local police station.

In addition to their forces in Kufa, Mahdi Army officials said they had troops fighting the Americans in Sahla, in the centre of Najaf near the shrine of Imam Ali, and in the cemeteries

outside the holy city. In central Najaf, Sadrist fighters hid in the alleys behind the hotels formerly used by pilgrims. The sky was hidden by a pall of wind-borne dust and smoke from burning buildings.

In the al-Ameer neighbourhood, four uniformed policemen stood with three Mahdi Army fighters beside their car. Hidden behind a building, they were listening to their radios and informing the militiamen of their fellow officers' movements. "I have four cousins in the al-Mahdi army," one of the officers said.

He went on to explain, "According to the proverb, 'my brother and I are against my cousin, but my cousin and I are against the foreigner. Thus, I can't fight against my cousins and stand beside the Americans.'" Soon after, one of the fighters emerged into the street, and shouting "Ali!" he fired his RPG at a concrete barrier erected up the road by the Americans. Then he ran back into the alley, climbed into the police car, and was driven away.

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THE RECIPE FOR MORE WARS

Plan B

by Seymour M. Hersh

As June 30th approaches, Israel looks to the Kurds.

In July, 2003, two months after President Bush declared victory in Iraq, the war, far from winding down, reached a critical point. Israel which had been among the war's most enthusiastic supporters, began warning the Administration that the American-led occupation would face a heightened insurgency—a campaign of bombings and assassinations—later that summer. Israeli intelligence assets in Iraq were reporting that the insurgents had the support of Iranian intelligence operatives and other foreign fighters, who were crossing the unprotected border between Iran and Iraq at will. The Israelis urged the United States to seal the nine-hundred-mile-long border, at whatever cost.

The border stayed open, however. "The Administration wasn't ignoring the Israeli intelligence about Iran," Patrick Clawson, who is the deputy director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and has close ties to the White House, explained. "There's no question that we took no steps last summer to close the border, but our attitude was that it was more useful for Iraqis to have contacts with ordinary Iranians coming across the border, and thousands were coming across every day—for instance, to make pilgrimages." He added, "The questions we confronted were 'Is the trade-off worth it? Do we want to isolate the Iraqis?' Our answer was that as long as the Iranians were not picking up guns and shooting at us, it was worth the price."

Clawson said, "The Israelis disagreed quite vigorously with us last summer. Their concern was very straightforward—that the Iranians would create social and charity organizations in Iraq and use them to recruit people who would engage in armed attacks against Americans."

The warnings of increased violence proved accurate. By early August, the insurgency against the occupation had exploded, with bombings in Baghdad, at the Jordanian Embassy and the United Nations headquarters, that killed forty-two people. A former Israeli intelligence officer said that Israel's leadership had concluded by then that the United States was unwilling to confront Iran; in terms of salvaging the situation in Iraq, he said, "it doesn't add up. It's over. Not militarily—the United States cannot be defeated militarily in Iraq—but politically."

Flynt Leverett, a former C.I.A. analyst who until last year served on the National Security Council and is now a fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, told me that late last summer "the Administration had a chance to turn it around after it was clear that 'Mission Accomplished'—a reference to Bush's May speech—"was premature. The Bush people could have gone to their allies and got more boots on the ground. But the neocons were dug in—'We're doing this on our own.'"

Leverett went on, "The President was only belatedly coming to the understanding that he had to either make a strategic change or, if he was going to insist on unilateral control, get tougher and find the actual insurgency." The Administration then decided, Leverett said, to "deploy the Guantánamo model in Iraq"—to put aside its rules of interrogation. That decision failed to stop the insurgency and eventually led to the scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison.

In early November, the President received a grim assessment from the C.I.A.'s station chief in Baghdad, who filed a special field appraisal, known internally as an Aardwolf, warning that the security situation in Iraq was nearing collapse. The document, as described by Knight-Ridder, said that "none of the postwar Iraqi political institutions and leaders have shown an ability to govern the country" or to hold elections and draft a constitution.

A few days later, the Administration, rattled by the violence and the new intelligence, finally attempted to change its go-it-alone policy, and set June 30th as the date for the handover of sovereignty to an interim government, which would allow it to bring the United Nations into the process. "November was one year before the Presidential election," a U.N. consultant who worked on Iraqi issues told me. "They panicked and decided to share the blame with the U.N. and the Iraqis."

A former Administration official who had supported the war completed a discouraging tour of Iraq late last fall. He visited Tel Aviv afterward and found that the Israelis he met with were equally discouraged. As they saw it, their warnings and advice had been ignored, and the American war against the insurgency was continuing to founder. "I spent hours talking to the senior members of the Israeli political and intelligence community," the former official recalled. "Their concern was 'You're not going to get it right in Iraq, and shouldn't we be planning for the worst-case scenario and how to deal with it?'"

Ehud Barak, the former Israeli Prime Minister, who supported the Bush Administration's invasion of Iraq, took it upon himself at this point to privately warn Vice-President Dick Cheney that America had lost in Iraq; according to an American close to Barak, he said that Israel "had learned that there's no way to win an occupation." The only issue, Barak told Cheney, "was choosing the size of your humiliation." Cheney did not respond to Barak's assessment. (Cheney's office declined to comment.)

In a series of interviews in Europe, the Middle East, and the United States, officials told me that by the end of last year Israel had concluded that the Bush Administration would not be able to bring stability or democracy to Iraq, and that Israel needed other options. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's government decided, I was told, to minimize the damage that the war was causing to Israel's strategic position by expanding its long-standing relationship with Iraq's Kurds and establishing a significant presence on the ground in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan. Several officials depicted Sharon's decision, which involves a heavy financial commitment, as a potentially reckless move that could create even more chaos and violence as the insurgency in Iraq continues to grow.

Israeli intelligence and military operatives are now quietly at work in Kurdistan, providing training for Kurdish commando units and, most important in Israel's view, running cover operations inside Kurdish areas of Iran and Syria. Israel feels particularly threatened by Iran, whose position in the region has been strengthened by the war. The Israeli operatives include members of the Mossad, Israel's clandestine foreign-intelligence service, who work undercover in Kurdistan as businessmen and, in some cases, do not carry Israel passports.

Asked to comment, Mark Regev, the spokesman for the Israeli Embassy in Washington, said, "The story is simply untrue and the relevant governments know it's untrue." Kurdish officials declined to comment, as did a spokesman for the State Department.

However, a senior C.I.A. official acknowledged in an interview last week that the Israelis were indeed operating in Kurdistan. He told me that the Israelis felt that they had little choice: "They think they have to be there." Asked whether the Israelis had sought approval from Washington, the official laughed and said, "Do you know anybody who can tell the Israelis what to do? They're always going to do what is in their best interest." The C.I.A. official added that the Israeli presence was widely known in the American intelligence community.

The Israeli decision to seek a bigger foothold in Kurdistan—characterized by the former Israeli intelligence officer as "Plan B"—has also raised tensions between Israel and Turkey. It has provoked bitter statements from Turkish politicians and, in a major regional shift, a new alliance among Iran, Syria, and Turkey, all of which have significant Kurdish minorities. In early June, *Intel Brief*, a privately circulated intelligence newsletter produced by Vincent Cannistraro, a retired C.I.A. counterterrorism chief, and Philip Giraldi, who served as the C.I.A.'s deputy chief of base in Istanbul in the late nineteen-eighties, said:

Turkish sources confidentially report that the Turks are increasingly concerned by the expanding Israeli presence in Kurdistan and alleged encouragement of Kurdish ambitions to create an independent state... The Turks note that the large Israeli intelligence operations in Northern Iraq incorporate anti-Syrian and anti-Iranian activity, including support to Iranian and Syrian Kurds who are in opposition to their respective governments.

In the years since the first Gulf War, Iraq's Kurds, aided by an internationally enforced no-fly zone and by a U.N. mandate providing them with a share of the country's oil revenues, have managed to achieve a large measure of independence in three northern Iraqi provinces. As far as most Kurds are concerned, however, historic "Kurdistan" extends well beyond Iraq's borders, encompassing parts of Iran, Syria, and Turkey. All three countries fear that Kurdistan, despite public pledges to the contrary, will declare its independence from the interim Iraqi government if conditions don't improve after June 30th.

Israeli involvement in Kurdistan is not new. Throughout the nineteen-sixties and seventies, Israel actively supported a Kurdish rebellion against Iraq, as part of its strategic policy of seeking alliances with non-Arabs in the Middle East. In 1975, the Kurds were betrayed by the United States, when Washington went along with a decision by the Shah of Iran to stop supporting Kurdish aspirations for autonomy in Iraq.

Betrayal and violence became the norm in the next two decades. Inside Iraq, the Kurds were brutally repressed by Saddam Hussein, who used airpower and chemical weapons against them. In 1984, the Kurdistan Workers Party, or P.K.K., initiated a campaign of separatist violence in Turkey that lasted fifteen years; more than thirty thousand people, most of them Kurds, were killed. The Turkish government ruthlessly crushed the separatists, and eventually captured the P.K.K.'s leader, Abdullah Ocalan. Last month, the P.K.K., now known as the Kongra-Gel, announced that it was ending a five-year unilateral ceasefire and would begin targeting Turkish citizens once again.

The Iraqi Kurdish leadership was furious when, early this month, the United States acceded to a U.N. resolution on the restoration of Iraqi sovereignty that did not affirm the interim constitution that granted the minority Kurds veto power in any permanent constitution. Kurdish leaders immediately warned President Bush in a letter that they would not participate in a new Shiite-controlled government unless they were assured that their rights under the interim constitution were preserved. "The people of Kurdistan will no longer accept second-class citizenship in Iraq," the letter said.

There are fears that the Kurds will move to seize the city of Kirkuk, together with the substantial oil reserves in the surrounding region. Kirkuk is dominated by Arab Iraqis, many of whom were relocated there, beginning in the nineteen-seventies, as part of Saddam Hussein's campaign to "Arabize" the region, but the Kurds consider Kirkuk and its oil part of their historic homeland. "If Kirkuk is threatened by the Kurds, the Sunni insurgents will move in there, along with the Turkomen, and there will be a bloodbath," an American military expert who is studying Iraq told me. "And, even if the Kurds do take Kirkuk, they can't transport the oil out of the country, since all of the pipelines run through the Sunni-Arab heartland."

A top German national-security official said in an interview that "an independent Kurdistan with sufficient oil would have enormous consequences for Syria, Iran, and Turkey" and would lead to continuing instability in the Middle East—no matter what the outcome in Iraq is. There is also a widespread belief, another senior German official said, that some elements inside the Bush Administration—he referred specifically to the faction headed by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz—would tolerate an independent Kurdistan. This, the German argued, would be a mistake. "It would be a new Israel—a pariah state in the middle of hostile nations."

A declaration of independence would trigger a Turkish response—and possibly a war—and also derail what has been an important alliance for Israel. Turkey and Israel have become strong diplomatic and economic partners in the past decade. Thousands of Israelis travel to Turkey every year as tourists. Turkish opposition to the Iraq war has strained the relationship; still, Turkey remains oriented toward the West and, despite the victory of an Islamic party in national elections in 2002, relatively secular. It is now vying for acceptance in the European Union. In contrast, Turkey and Syria have been at odds for years, at times coming close to open confrontation, and Turkey and Iran have long been regional rivals. One area of tension between them is the conflict between Turkey's pro-Western stand and Iran's rigid theocracy. But their mutual wariness of the Kurds has transcended these divisions.

A European foreign minister, in a conversation last month, said that the "blowing up" of Israel's alliance with Turkey would be a major setback for the region. He went on, "To avoid chaos, you need the neighbors to work as one common entity."

The Israelis, however, view the neighborhood, with the exception of Kurdistan as hostile. Israel is convinced that Iran is on the verge of developing nuclear weapons, and that with Syria's help, it is planning to bolster Palestinian terrorism as Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip.

Iraqi Shiite militia leaders like Moqtada al-Sadr, the former American intelligence official said, are seen by the Israeli leadership as "stalking horses" for Iran—owing much of their success in defying the American-led coalition to logistical and communications support and

training provided by Iran. The former intelligence official said, "We began to see telltale signs of organizational training last summer. But the White House didn't want to hear it: 'We can't take on another problem right now. We can't afford to push Iran to the point where we've got to have a showdown.'"

Last summer, according to a document I obtained, the Bush Administration directed the Marines to draft a detailed plan, called Operation Stuart, for the arrest and, if necessary, assassination of Sadr. But the operation was cancelled, the former intelligence official told me, after it became clear that Sadr had been "tipped off" about the plan. Seven months later, after Sadr spent the winter building support for his movement, the American-led coalition shut down his newspaper, provoking a crisis that Sadr survived with his status enhanced, thus insuring that he will play a major, and unwelcome, role in the political and military machinations after June 30th.

"Israel's immediate goal after June 30th is to build up the Kurdish commando units to balance the Shiite militias—especially those which would be hostile to the kind of order in southern Iraq that Israel would like to see," the former senior intelligence official said. "Of course, if a fanatic Sunni Baathist militia took control—one as hostile to Israel as Saddam Hussein was—Israel would unleash the Kurds on it, too." The Kurdish armed forces, known as the peshmerga, number an estimated seventy-five thousand troops, a total that far exceeds the known Sunni and Shiite militias.

The former Israeli intelligence officer acknowledged that since late last year Israel has been training Kurdish commando units to operate in the same manner and with the same effectiveness as Israel's most secretive commando units, the Mistaravim. The initial goal of the Israeli assistance to the Kurds, the former officer said, was to allow them to do what American commando units had been unable to do—penetrate, gather intelligence on, and then kill off the leadership of the Shiite and Sunni insurgencies in Iraq. (I was unable to learn whether any such mission had yet taken place.) "The feeling was that this was a more effective way to get at the insurgency," the former officer said. "But the growing Kurdish-Israeli relationship began upsetting the Turks no end. Their issue is that the very same Kurdish commandos trained for Iraq could infiltrate and attack in Turkey."

The Kurdish-Israeli collaboration inevitably expanded, the Israeli said. Some Israeli operatives have crossed the border into Iran, accompanied by Kurdish commandos, to install sensors and other sensitive devices that primarily target suspected Iranian nuclear facilities. The former officer said, "Look, Israel has always supported the Kurds in a Machiavellian way—as balance against Saddam. It's Realpolitik." He added, "By aligning with the Kurds, Israel gains eyes and ears in Iran, Iraq, and Syria." He went on, "What Israel was doing with the Kurds was not so unacceptable in the Bush Administration."

Senior German officials told me, with alarm, that their intelligence community also has evidence that Israel is using its new leverage inside Kurdistan, and within the Kurdish communities in Iran and Syria, for intelligence and operational purposes. Syrian and Lebanese officials believe that Israeli intelligence played a role in a series of violent protests in Syria in mid-March in which Syrian Kurdish dissidents and Syrian troops clashed, leaving at least thirty people dead. (There are nearly two million Kurds living in Syria, which has a population of seventeen million.) Much of the fighting took place in cities along Syria's borders with Turkey and Kurdish-controlled Iraq. Michel Samaha, the Lebanese Minister of Information, told me that while the disturbances amounted to an uprising by the Kurds against the leadership of Bashar Assad, the Syrian President, his government had evidence that Israel was "preparing the Kurds to fight all around Iraq, in Syria, Turkey, and Iran. They're being programmed to do commando operations."

The top German national-security official told me that he believes that the Bush Administration continually misread Iran. "The Iranians wanted to keep America tied down in Iraq, and to keep it busy there, but they didn't want chaos," he said. One of the senior German officials told me, "The critical question is 'What will the behavior of Iran be if there is an independent Kurdistan with close ties to Israel?' Iran does not want an Israeli land-based aircraft carrier—that is, a military stronghold—"on its border."

Another senior European official said, "The Iranians would do something positive in the south of Iraq if they get something positive in return, but Washington won't do it. The Bush Administration won't ask the Iranians for help, and can't ask the Syrians. Who is going to save the United States?" He added that, at the start of the American invasion of Iraq, several top European officials had told their counterparts in Iran, "You will be the winners in the region."

Israel is not alone in believing that Iran, despite its protestations, is secretly hard at work on a nuclear bomb. Early this month, the International Atomic Energy Agency, which i

responsible for monitoring nuclear proliferation, issued its fifth quarterly report in row stating that Iran was continuing to misrepresent its research into materials that could be used for the production of nuclear weapons. Much of the concern centers on an underground enrichment facility at Natanz, two hundred and fifty miles from the Iran-Iraq border, which, during previous I.A.E.A. inspections, was discovered to contain centrifuges showing traces of weapons-grade uranium. The huge complex, which is still under construction, is said to total nearly eight hundred thousand square feet, and it will be sheltered in a few months by a roof whose design allows it to be covered with sand. Once the work is completed, the complex "will be blind to satellites, and the Iranians could add additional floors underground," an I.A.E.A. official told me. "The question is, will the Israelis hit Iran?"

Mohamed ElBaradei, the I.A.E.A. director, has repeatedly stated that his agency has not "seen concrete proof of a military program, so it's premature to make a judgment on that." David Albright, a former U.N. weapons inspector who is an expert on nuclear proliferation, buttressed the I.A.E.A. claim. "The United States has no concrete evidence of a nuclear-weapons program," Albright told me. "It's just an inference. There's no smoking gun." (Last Friday, at a meeting in Vienna, the I.A.E.A. passed a resolution that, while acknowledging some progress, complained that Iran had yet to be as open as it should be, and urgently called upon it to resolve a list of outstanding questions.)

The I.A.E.A. official told me that the I.A.E.A. leadership has been privately warned by Foreign Ministry officials in Iran that they are "having a hard time getting information" from the hard-line religious and military leaders who run the country. "The Iranian Foreign Ministry tells us, 'We're just diplomats, and we don't know whether we're getting the whole story from our own people,'" the official said. He noted that the Bush Administration has repeatedly advised the I.A.E.A. that there are secret nuclear facilities in Iran that have not been declared. The Administration will not say more, apparently worried that the information could get back to Iran.

Patrick Clawson, of the Institute for Near East Policy, provided another explanation for the reluctance of the Bush Administration to hand over specific intelligence. "If we were to identify a site," he told me, "it's conceivable that it could be quickly disassembled and the I.A.E.A. inspectors would arrive"—international inspections often take weeks to organize—"and find nothing." The American intelligence community, already discredited because of its faulty reporting on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, would be criticized anew. "It's much better," Clawson said, "to have the I.A.E.A. figure out on its own that there's a site and then find evidence that there had been enriched material there."

Clawson told me that Israel's overwhelming national-security concern must be Iran. Given that a presence in Kurdistan would give Israel a way to monitor the Iranian nuclear effort, he said, "it would be negligent for the Israelis not to be there."

At the moment, the former American senior intelligence official said, the Israelis' tie to Kurdistan "would be of greater value than their growing alliance with Turkey. 'We love Turkey but got to keep the pressure on Iran.'" The former Israeli intelligence officer said, "The Kurds were the last surviving group close to the United States with any say in Iraq. The only question was how to square it with Turkey."

There may be no way to square it with Turkey. Over breakfast in Ankara, a senior Turkish official explained, "Before the war Israel was active in Kurdistan, and now it is active again. This is very dangerous for us, and for them, too. We do not want to see Iraq divided, and we will not ignore it." Then, citing a popular Turkish proverb—"We will burn a blanket to kill a flea"—he said, "We have told the Kurds, 'We are not afraid of you, but you should be afraid of us.'" (A Turkish diplomat I spoke to later was more direct: "We tell our Israeli and Kurdish friends that Turkey's goal will lie in keeping Iraq together. We will not support alternative solutions.")

"If you end up with a divided Iraq, it will bring more blood, tears, and pain to the Middle East, and you will be blamed," the senior Turkish official said. "From Mexico to Russia, everybody will claim that the United States had a secret agenda in Iraq: you came there to break up Iraq. If Iraq is divided, America cannot explain this to the world." The official compared the situation to the breakup of Yugoslavia, but added, "In the Balkans, you did not have oil." He said, "The lesson of Yugoslavia is that when you give one country independence everybody will want it." If that happens, he said, "Kirkuk will be the Sarajevo of Iraq. If something happens there, it will be impossible to contain the crisis."

In Ankara, another senior Turkish official explained that his government had "openly shared its worries" about the Israeli military activities inside Kurdistan with the Israeli Foreign Ministry. "They deny the training and the purchase of property and claim it's not official but done by private persons. Obviously, our intelligence community is aware that it was not so. This policy is not good for America, Iraq, or Israel and the Jews."

Turkey's increasingly emphatic and public complaints about Israel's missile attacks on the Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip is another factor in the growing tensions between the allies. On May 26th, Turkey's Foreign Minister, Abdullah Gul, announced at a news conference in Ankara that the Turkish government was bringing its Ambassador in Israel home for consultations on how to revive the Middle East peace process. He also told the Turkish parliament that the government was planning to strengthen its ties to the Palestinian Authority, and, in conversations with Middle Eastern diplomats in the past month, he expressed grave concern about Israel. In one such talk, one diplomat told me, Gul described Israeli activities, and the possibility of an independent Kurdistan, as "presenting us with a choice that is not a real choice—between survival and alliance."

A third Turkish official told me that the Israelis were "talking to us in order to appease our concern. They say, 'We aren't doing anything in Kurdistan to undermine your interests. Don't worry.'" The official added, "If it goes out publicly what they've been doing, it will put your government and our government in a difficult position. We can tolerate 'Kurdistan' if Iraq is intact, but nobody knows the future—not even the Americans."

A former White House official depicted the Administration as eager—almost desperate—late this spring to install an acceptable interim government in Iraq before President Bush's declared June 30th deadline for the transfer of sovereignty. The Administration turned to Lakhdar Brahimi, the United Nations special envoy, to "put together something by June 30th—just something that could stand up through the Presidential election, the former official said. Brahimi was given the task of selecting, with Washington's public approval, the thirty-one members of Iraq's interim government. Nevertheless, according to press reports, the choice of Iyad Allawi as interim Prime Minister was a disappointment to Brahimi.

The White House has yet to deal with Allawi's past. His credentials as a neurologist, and his involvement during the past two decades in anti-Saddam activities, as the founder of the British-based Iraqi National Accord, have been widely reported. But his role as a Baath Party operative while Saddam struggled for control in the nineteen-sixties and seventies—Saddam became President in 1979—is much less well known. "Allawi helped Saddam get to power," an American intelligence officer told me. "He was a very effective operator and a true believer." Reuel Marc Gerecht, a former C.I.A. case officer who served in the Middle East, added, "Two facts stand out about Allawi. One, he likes to think of himself as a man of ideas; and, two, his strongest virtue is that he's a thug."

Early this year, one of Allawi's former medical-school classmates, Dr. Haifa al-Azawi, published an essay in an Arabic newspaper in London raising questions about his character and his medical bona fides. She depicted Allawi as a "big husky man . . . who carried a gun on his belt and frequently brandished it, terrorizing the medical students." Allawi's medical degree, she wrote, "was conferred upon him by the Baath party." Allawi moved to London in 1971, ostensibly to continue his medical education; there he was in charge of the European operations of the Baath Party organization and the local activities of the Mukhabarat, its intelligence agency, until 1975.

"If you're asking me if Allawi has blood on his hands from his days in London, the answer is yes, he does," Vincent Cannistraro, the former C.I.A. officer, said. "He was a paid Mukhabarat agent for the Iraqis, and he was involved in dirty stuff." A cabinet-level Middle East diplomat, who was rankled by the U.S. indifference to Allawi's personal history, told me early this month that Allawi was involved with a Mukhabarat "hit team" that sought out and killed Baath Party dissenters throughout Europe. (Allawi's office did not respond to a request for comment.) At some point, for reasons that are not clear, Allawi fell from favor, and the Baathists organized a series of attempts on his life. The third attempt, by an axe-wielding assassin who broke into his home near London in 1978, resulted in a year-long hospital stay.

The Saban Center's Flynt Leverett said of the transfer of sovereignty, "If it doesn't work, there is no fallback—nothing." The former senior American intelligence official told me, similarly, that "the neocons still think they can pull the rabbit out of the hat" in Iraq. "What's the plan? They say, 'We don't need it. Democracy is strong enough. We'll work it out.'"

Middle East diplomats and former C.I.A. operatives who now consult in Baghdad have told me that many wealthy Iraqi businessmen and their families have deserted Baghdad in recent weeks in anticipation of continued, and perhaps heightened, suicide attacks and terror bombings after June 30th. "We'll see Christians, Shiites, and Sunnis getting out," Michel Samaha, the Lebanese Minister of Information, reported. "What the resistance is doing is targeting the poor people who run the bureaucracy—those who can't afford to pay for private guards. A month ago, friends of mine who are important landowners in Iraq came to Baghdad to do business. The cost of one day's security was about twelve thousand dollars."

Whitley Bruner, a retired intelligence officer who was a senior member of the C.I.A.'s task force on Iraq a decade ago, said that the new interim government in Iraq is urgently seeking ways to provide affordable security for second-tier officials—the men and women who make the government work. In early June, two such officials—Kamal Jarrah, an Education Ministry official, and Bassam Salih Kubba, who was serving as deputy foreign minister—were assassinated by unidentified gunmen outside their homes. Neither had hired private guards. Bruner, who returned from Baghdad earlier this month, said that he was now working to help organize Iraqi companies that could provide high-quality security that Iraqis could afford. "It's going to be a hot summer," Bruner said. "A lot of people have decided to get to Lebanon, Jordan, or the Gulf and wait this one out."

The New Yorker, Issue of 2004-06-28, Posted 2004-06-21.
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THE ZIONIST ATTEMPT AT GLOBAL CONTROL

Anti-Semitic Trends In Post-Communist Eastern European States - An Overview*

Yosef Govrin

This essay outlines the main factors characterizing the anti-Semitic movements and manifestations in the former Soviet Union (FSU) republics and Eastern European countries in the post-communist era, following the democratization and liberalization process taking place in these areas since the early 1990s.

This process enabled, in parallel, the Jewish communities in these countries to develop their educational, cultural, and social activities as well as their links with Israel and the Jewish world.

Some governments took up legal and administrative measures to ban anti-Semitism, but unfortunately they are not sufficiently effective, although there are some positive tendencies that are effective. Israel could and should do more to collaborate with the respective governments on this matter.

The gradual process of democratization of the Eastern European regimes in the post-Communist era was accompanied by a liberalization process in the economic, educational, and cultural fields; the organization of various Jewish communities; and the formation of political parties - from the extreme right to the extreme left - whose ideologies are spread in the print media, in the parliament, and from any public rostrum. All this has created social phenomena unknown in the communist era, for good and for bad.

Anyone who happens to examine these phenomena and their influence and implications for the Jewish public - from the smallest to the biggest - in each of the former Soviet Union (FSU) republics and Eastern European states encounters a trend of parallel forces between the constructive and destructive ones. This trend borders, at times, on what one may call a madness of the senses and logic, a kind of return to the fascist times in Europe on the eve of World War II. It is in total contradiction to the enlightened democratic values and human civilization that these states claim to embrace and promote.

It is true that full, unlimited constitutional freedom was granted to the Jewish public to organize itself in communities and social frameworks on national, religious, and social bases. This public is entirely free to maintain and foster links with the State of Israel and with the Jewish diaspora the world over, and to develop an educational and cultural network as well as its own communications media.

At the beginning of 2000, this extended area had about 560 Jewish organizations and about 230 Jewish educational institutions, starting from kindergartens, day, and Sunday schools through to Hebrew courses for adults. In general, thousands of students and thousands of teachers were trained in Hebrew seminars and seminars for Jewish culture, with the assistance of Israel's Ministry for Education, the World Zionist Organization, and the Liaison Bureau, Nativ.

Some sixty Jewish newspapers and magazines are published, and they play an important informative role by following events in Israel and the Jewish world. They also constitute a forum

for self-expression and debates on daily problems. There are also Jewish colleges and universities in Moscow, Petersburg, Kiev, Minsk, and elsewhere in addition to faculties of Jewish Studies established over the past ten years in the universities of Eastern Europe. Jews are free to emigrate and have become involved in political parties (with the exception of the anti-Semitic ones) and in economic, public, and local organizations in each of the Eastern European states previously ruled by communist regimes. (The Jewish community of Romania is an exception to this, since even during the Ceausescu era, it enjoyed a national, religious, and social standing to an extent that none of the other Eastern European Jewish communities shared.)

A glimpse at the demographic situation of the Jewish communities in this part of the world shows a constant process of diminishing population to an extent of 11 percent annually - because of emigration to Israel and Western countries and/or because of assimilation and a negative birth balance.

At the beginning of 2000 the Jewish population in the FSU (including the Baltic states) numbered 704,000. From the beginning of 1990 (when it numbered 2,300,000) to the beginning of 2000, the Jewish population declined by 65 percent.

A similar situation exists in the rest of the Eastern European countries. Estimations put the Jewish population in these countries in 1998 at about 118,000: Hungary - 80,000, Romania - 12,000, Poland - 8,000, Czech Republic - 5,000, Slovakia - 7,000, Bulgaria - 3,000, Croatia - 2,000, and Serbia - 2,000.** One may presume that in the not too distant future - if this process continues - almost no Jews at all will be left in the communities that currently have several hundred members, while in the large communities that presently have several thousand members, Jewish life will continue in the religious, educational, and cultural institutions.

In the other direction, the liberalization process enabled the ultra-nationalistic and anti-Semitic movements to organize themselves. Their public weight is constantly growing, reaching an extent unknown during the communist era. They conduct harsh anti-Semitic propaganda in hundreds of magazines and newspapers all over Eastern Europe.

The increased number of anti-Semitic movements is attributed to several factors, of which the major ones are as follows:

1. The severe economic crisis that characterized the drastic transition from a concentrated economy to a liberal one. As a result of the privatization process, many people were left without any source of income, whereas a small but prominent percentage became very rich, including Jews.

2. The deep hatred of the extreme right and the extreme left towards the foreigner - and the Jews are defined as such - and the nouveau riche who gained their wealth at the expense of the workers. A strange coalition was formed between these ends of the spectrum, where one side (the communists) accuses the Jews of causing the collapse of the communist regime, and the other side, the Right, accuses them of ruling the economy of their state, having robbed its properties and assisted the communist regimes to establish themselves in each country. The roots of hatred towards the Jews are ages deep, so there is no wonder that it unites the Right with the Left in one anti-Semitic coalition. In Russia anti-Semitism became an ideological and political tool of the Right and of the Left in their struggle to gain power.

3. The tendency to strengthen the myth of the national hero who fought or opposed the communist regime. No doubt this stems from the search for a national identity, which the communist regime tried to obliterate. In this connection, the nationalistic movements tend to rehabilitate fascist rulers who cooperated with Nazi Germany (in Romania it was Marshal Ion Antonescu, in Slovakia it was the priest Tiso; both were condemned to death immediately after the end of World War II as Nazi criminals). The Jewish communities in the diaspora and in Israel strongly oppose rehabilitating them, stressing their crimes against Jews during the Holocaust period. In Romania streets were named after Antonescu with the blessing of local municipalities, and a statue of Antonescu was even erected in one of the Bucharest churches. In Slovakia the nationalistic circles annually commemorate the day of Tiso's execution.

4. The influence of the Orthodox Church over its worshipers in the spirit of classic anti-Semitic Christian propaganda, claiming inter alia that the Jews wish to convert Christians to the Jewish religion.

5. The efforts of the Jewish organizations to redeem public Jewish property that was either captured during the Holocaust or nationalized during communist rule.

6. The weakness of the central authorities in most Eastern European countries in confronting the anti-Semitic movements despite legislation prohibiting the dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda and the existence of anti-Semitic organizations. The October 1998 call of "All Jews to graves" by General Robert Makashov, a Russian parliament member representing the Communist Party, is still remembered. Unlike the Czarist era call "Beat the Jews and save

Russia," this was an actual call for genocide. A vote to censure Makashov for his declaration did not receive the necessary majority in parliament, nor did that body disqualify him as a member of parliament. In Latvia, however, several anti-Semitic organizations were outlawed and a number of anti-Semites were apprehended and arrested, as were those who desecrated monuments in memory of Holocaust victims. In Lithuania and Estonia, the presidents and governments condemned anti-Semitism and also supported the prosecution of local collaborators with the Nazis during World War II. But in other states attempts were made to establish parliamentary coalitions between the ruling party and the nationalist ones.

Types of Propaganda Used by the Anti-Semitic Movements

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion as well as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* are printed by the thousands as reliable documents attesting to the Jewish compulsion to control the world economy in general and the economies of the countries where Jews have integrated into the local hierarchy in particular. It is also claimed to be true that Jews try to impose their influence on local leaders and on world leadership. In Russia, Romania, and Poland accusations were raised during election campaigns that candidates for local leadership were of Jewish origin, using the anti-Semitic defamation as a weapon aimed at deterring the masses from voting for a rival candidate in the presidential elections.

The exploitation of motifs taken from Christian anti-Semitic propaganda from the early and late Middle Ages, such as claims that the Jews crucified and robbed Jesus or the resurrection of blood libels against Jews by accusing them of using Christian blood for their religious rituals.

In the Baltic states, anti-Semites justify the Holocaust of the Jews on the basis of the well-known anti-Semitic accusation that the Jews collaborated with the Soviet authorities in 1940–1941 in deporting Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians to Siberia. The anti-Semites totally disregard the fact that Jews from among the Zionist leadership and Jews who were considered wealthy by the Soviet authorities were also deported to Siberia in that period. This approach results in propaganda justifying the cruel mass murder of Jews by the local population when the German Nazi army invaded these countries, "liberating" them from the Soviet yoke.

Another widespread motif in the other Eastern European countries asserts that the Jews were responsible for bringing the communists to power, while, conversely, the communists claim that Jewish influence caused the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

The Holocaust is compared with what is called "the communist annihilation." A well-known anti-Semitic publicist in Hungary, Istvan Lubas, claims that the number of victims of communism is much greater than the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. He emphasizes the Jewish origin of the communist leaders in Hungary, while the Jews try to preserve the uniqueness of the Holocaust.

The anti-Semitic movements ignore the extent of the Holocaust. The director of the Jewish Museum in Prague, Leo Pavlat (former counselor for cultural affairs of the Czech Embassy in Israel) asserted that history textbooks disregard the Holocaust and the fate of the Jews in Czechoslovakia.

In Romania there is continued disregard of the Holocaust of the Jews of Bessarabia and Bucovina districts who were executed by the Romanian Army when it invaded these areas at the beginning of the German-Soviet war (July 1941). (The same disregard existed during the communist era.) Moreover, in a speech (on January 2001) at the Central Synagogue of Bucharest commemorating the pogrom against the Jews in Bucharest that had occurred 60 years before, the current president of Romania, Ion Iliescu, even declared that the numbers of victims attributed to the Holocaust of Romanian Jews by historians (referring apparently to historians in Israel, the USA, and even in Romania) are "inflated," and that in his opinion the Holocaust of the Jews in Romania should not be considered part of the Holocaust per se but rather perceived as "craziness." (According to historical research over 350,000 Jews perished in the areas under Romanian administration. Half of them were murdered during the Romanian invasion into Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina. The other half perished during the cruel deportation of the survivors to Transnistria - between the Dniester and the Bug rivers - which were also under Romanian administration (summer 1941), and in the ghettos of Transnistria itself (during 1941–1944).)

This was a turnabout from the attitude expressed by his predecessor, President Constantinescu, who, in a note he sent to the president of the Federation of Jewish communities in Romania (April 1997), admitted - for the first time by a Romanian president - that the Romanian nation feels itself responsible for the great tragedy that befell the Jews of Romania under the fascist regime...and that the death of hundreds of thousands of Jews on Romanian soil would not be forgotten nor forgiven.

The Nature of Anti-Semitic Acts

The violent nature of anti-Semitic acts is revealed by the burning of synagogues, desecration of tombstones in Jewish cemeteries and monuments commemorating Holocaust victims, and the leading of unrelenting anti-Semitic campaigns against the Jews in the print media and on public stages. This includes, as noted, parliamentary debates, carrying slogans, and drawing caricatures - whether for news magazines or on walls or, as happened recently in Romania, in a book of anti-Semitic jokes calling for the killing of Jews. (The prime minister of Romania ordered an investigation of this case, but it is doubtful whether any practical administrative steps will be taken, first in prohibiting the distribution of the book and, secondly, against its authors.)

The Attitude of the Local Authorities to Anti-Semitism

All Eastern European states adopted laws against anti-Semitic manifestations. From time to time the presidents of the states make statements condemning them. Some countries (Ukraine and the Czech Republic) have taken administrative measures to ban them. However, in the majority of Eastern European states (Russia, Hungary, Romania, and the Baltic states) no definite steps have been taken to prohibit them, especially not the dozens of anti-Semitic newspapers and magazines that daily spread anti-Semitic poison under the guise of so-called respect for freedom of expression. Also, the majority of the states have not carried out a basic review of how history textbooks present the dimensions of the Holocaust and explain the historical background preceding it.

Summary and Evaluation

The background of the anti-Semitic outbursts and the types of anti-Semitic propaganda are more or less similar in all Eastern European states. However, it is still possible to see differences in the attitude of some of these countries when they are looked at thematically, as well as differences in the administrative, legal, and educational measures taken by the authorities to combat the increasing manifestations of anti-Semitism.

These differences in attitude may be assessed as follows:

Denial of the dimensions of the Holocaust in Romania

Public efforts to rehabilitate the state leaders who cooperated with the Nazis - a foremost characteristic of Romania and Slovakia.

Comparisons between Holocaust victims and the victims of the communist regimes - characteristic of the Baltic states, Hungary, and partly of Russia.

Of late there are indications on the part of the central authorities in Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Baltic states, that various anti-Semitic activities are being curbed and those who desecrate Jewish tombstones and monuments are being brought to justice. Therefore, in these countries, a certain decline is evidenced in the dimensions of anti-Semitic activity. Yet, in the remainder of the Eastern European countries, and particularly in Russia, no tendency has been noted on the part of the authorities and parliaments to apply the laws forbidding anti-Semitic activities and propaganda in all forms. Of note, however, is the ongoing intellectual curiosity of many members of the younger generation in Eastern Europe. It prods them to deepen their knowledge about the fate of the Jews both on the eve of World War II and during it, as well as about the Jews' contribution to economic, social, cultural, and scientific development in each of the countries concerned.

Besides the legal and administrative measures that the authorities are expected to take to ban anti-Semitism in all its forms, there is also great importance in their using educational means to combat anti-Semitism. In this regard, Israel - with its educational and research institutions - could and should work in conjunction with all these countries. This collaboration has already begun in some Eastern European countries, within the framework of cultural agreements existing between these countries and Israel. Secondary school history textbooks are being revised or courses are organized **in which participants gain knowledge about the Holocaust and how to teach it**. Hopefully the institutions responsible for this subject in Israel will increase their efforts to extend all possible assistance to raise the younger generation's consciousness of the dangers inherent in anti-Semitism for the Jews living in those countries and for their own nations.

* * *

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Notes

* Based on a paper given at the 16th World Congress for Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 16 July 2001.

** According to the data of Antisemitism Worldwide 2000/2001 the Jewish population declined as follows: Hungary 60-80,000; Romania 6,000; Poland 5,000; Czech Republic 5,000; Slovakia 3,000; Bulgaria 2,000; Croatia and Serbia 2,000.

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THEOLOGY, AAARGH AND ELIE WIESEL

The Hazards of Holocaust Theology

In making the Holocaust a matter of theological concern, does Elie Wiesel court historical revisionism?

By Peter Manseau

Try to imagine the ideological gap that exists between those who struggle to find meaning in the Holocaust and those who deny its reality. Try to see the size of it: an H-Bomb crater, a city-shaped hole in the earth. On the one side we find survivors, clergy, scholars and the simply concerned engaged, whether they realize it or not, in a theology of destruction, taking measure of a darkness so vast it nearly looks like God. On the other we have the likes of David Irving, Michael Hoffman, Robert Faurisson -- the kind of historians-on-the-side who assert that Zyklon B was merely a pesticide, that the number of Jews murdered was actually far less than is contended, that anyway they died of typhus, and that, really, nothing much happened at all.

"These are morally sick individuals," Nobel Prize winner Elie Wiesel has said of revisionists. "While I am able to fight against injustice, I have no idea how to go about fighting against ugliness." For their part, Faurisson and company refer to Wiesel -- a man the *Washington Post* once referred to as "a symbol, a banner, a beacon, perhaps the survivor of the Holocaust." -- as the "Prominent False Witness," and, when good old-fashioned name-calling will do, "Elie Weasel." When it comes to the Holocaust, theologians and revisionists shout at each other from across the expanse, openly despising what the other represents.

Yet what is theology if not a kind of revisionism? In the landscape of human discourse, theology occupies the place between fiction and history, myth and memory. It is from this place that Wiesel has said, "Auschwitz is as important as Sinai." Insofar as the Holocaust has changed humanity's relationship with God every bit as much as the giving of the Law, there is no denying that this is true. It is similarly true that, like Moses, Wiesel has served as mediator of

an ineffable Event. While he considers different responses to this Event in each of his books, throughout his work Wiesel treats the Holocaust first of all as a theological occurrence. As with God's word at Mount Sinai, as with God's test at Mount Moriah, the occasion of God's greatest silence exists for Wiesel outside of time. It is an Event of such magnitude it transcends history.

Transcending history, though, is a tricky business. Sinai need not be historical for it to have meaning. If Auschwitz is granted the same status, is it not at risk of sharing this implication? In making the Holocaust primarily a matter of theological concern, does Elie Wiesel, witness to the world, court a benign sort of revisionism? At a time when it has become commonplace for revisionists to snarl that the Holocaust is a religion and Wiesel its prophet, what are we to do with a theological Auschwitz?

Uncomfortable questions have uncomfortable answers. To the first: If you traffic in faith, doubt is inevitable. To the second: A writer revises, it's part of the job. And to the third? Think again of that gap between piety and denial. Now stand in the ditch. We are implicated even by asking.

"That the extermination of the Jews of Europe ought to arrest the attention of theologians seems obvious," the historian Amos Funkenstein once wrote. "That it has actually done so... is a fact." Yet the responses provided by Holocaust theologians are seldom parsed; rarely examined. Regardless of results, the willingness to struggle with the meaning of atrocity is often deemed noble enough to safeguard it from critique.

Naturally, there are exceptions. Funkenstein, for one, has identified three distinct varieties of theological response to the Holocaust, and he treats them all with disdain.

The first he names the direct theological response: it is the attempt "to salvage a theodicy from the rubble left by the eruption of evil as an apparently autonomous force." On the one hand this may mean religious Zionism: the phoenix Israel born of Diaspora's ashes. On the other, it is the rarely voiced haredim we-told-you-so: European Jewry did not die because they were Jews, but rather because they had forgotten they were Jews. With the Holocaust, in other words, God reopened the floodgates. Those left alive to make such a claim have implicitly been rescued in an Ark of righteousness.

Funkenstein rightly regards this sort of theological response as offensive. He is only slightly less critical of the other options. The second possible response is the "polemical" -- a strategy of blaming rival theologies for not holding true to their spirit; asking Christians why they do not act like Christ. Hypocrisy, says Funkenstein. Similarly, the third response, "the critical reflexive," the willingness to question theology itself in the face of catastrophe, he regards as honest but rarely honest enough.

Elie Wiesel's Holocaust theology does not fit neatly into any of Funkenstein's categories. This is not surprising, as the exact nature of his theology has been seldom addressed. Theological critique often becomes a kind of blasphemy, and this is especially true in the case of a doubly sacred survivor-theologian like Wiesel. While his religious voice remains much discussed, it is little dissected. For fear of the implications of approaching a witness critically, few have been willing even to make the attempt.

One who has is Naomi Seidman, a professor of Jewish Culture at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. She tried recently to find answers to questions raised by Wiesel's theological understanding through textual analysis, and in the process learned first hand the hazards of Holocaust theology.

In the last months of 1996, the young Yiddish literary scholar published a paper greeted by some as heresy, by others as the long-awaited slaying of a sacred cow. By comparing Wiesel's *Night* to its earlier draft, *Un di velt hot geshvign* ("And the world remained silent") published in Yiddish in 1956, Seidman undertook the first genuine criticism of the much revered book, shedding light on its journey from a bare-bones accounting of events to the existentialist memoir that for many has come to typify the Holocaust. What she documented, essentially, is Wiesel's growth -- his translation, perhaps -- from survivor/witness to writer/theologian.

Using a method akin to biblical source criticism, Seidman's paper traced the text's development layer by layer, and predictably ruffled fundamentalist feathers. Letters written in response to the paper declared it a "futile and ugly performance." Critics railed its author as "ill-informed," incompetent in the language of her scholarship, and worse: "Ms. Seidman's brand of Holocaust revisionism is more deadly than Holocaust denial," one of the letters said, "it is a corrosive poison that destroys from within." Even to research Holocaust theology, apparently, is to court revisionism -- or, at least, to appear to do so.

Writing in Seidman's defense, Steven Zipperstein, the editor of *Jewish Social Studies*, in

which the article appeared, knew what he was up against. The attack on Seidman, Zipperstein wrote, "conflates Mr. Wiesel with the Holocaust itself in its contention that his work cannot be interpreted critically without resorting to Holocaust revisionism."

Elsewhere Seidman was lionized as "foremost among our younger generation of scholars," and, with such support, ultimately she won the day. Rightly so: original, challenging, and crucial to reaching an understanding of Wiesel and the development of his thought, Seidman's paper is a careful and important piece of work. It will be discussed at some length. But first, a relevant aside:

Employed at the time by a Jewish cultural organization, moving in Yiddishist and Judaic Studies circles, I had heard about the paper and its mixed reception when it first was published. Yet I did not read it until recently. While trying to track down a copy of *Un di velt hot geshvign*, I remembered Professor Seidman had done work with it, and so did a web search on her name. Along with her homepage at GTU, up popped a link in blue letters: "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage."

Pleased as I was to stumble across the storied essay, I was puzzled that the link was not to the website of *Jewish Social Studies*, but to that of a group called AAARGH: *L'Association des Anciens Amateurs de Recits de Guerre et d'Holocauste*. My French is far from fluent; it took me few minutes to realize exactly what I had found.

From AAARGH's introduction:

"Cet article décrit les premières phase du processus de formation d'un des plus grands imposteurs de notre temps... La littérature holocaustique est le plus énorme formage de notre époque et Wiesel est son prophète".

["This article describes the first phases of the formation of one of the great impostors of our time... Holocaust literature is the largest construction of our era, and Wiesel is its prophet."]

Having survived one round of controversy, Naomi Seidman's careful, important piece of work happened upon another. It had found new life in a forum devoted to denying the Holocaust. It was an intellectual hijacking that had as much to do with her subject as her findings.

As its title suggests, "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage" is concerned with anger, more specifically with the consideration of vengefulness as a common, appropriate and yet rarely acknowledged response to Jewish suffering. It deals also, however, with the historical development of Wiesel's theology.

Finding *Night* lacking "Jewish rage" in sufficient quantity in relation to both the circumstances which inspired it and the Yiddish text from which it was born, Seidman alleges that Wiesel excised all traces of the survivor's desire for retribution when *Un di velt hot geshvign* became *Night*. In a news item which sparked much of the controversy of the paper's initial publication, the *Jewish Daily Forward* reported, "In editing his Yiddish memoir for his French publisher, Ms. Seidman told the *Forward* by telephone from her Berkeley office, Mr. Wiesel 'replaced an angry survivor desperate to get his story out, eager to get revenge and who sees life, writing, testimony as a refutation of what the Nazis did to the Jews, with a survivor haunted by death, whose primary complaint is directed against God, not the world, [or] the Nazis.'"

Building a case that the two memoirs tell significantly different stories, Seidman provides cogent examples of curious choices Wiesel made when reworking the original into French. Some of these are arguably matters of perception. In the first book, for example, the Wiesel family's home, Sighet, is referred to as a *shtot*, a city, while in the second it is "that little town... where I spent my childhood" -- essentially the archetypal shtetl. Such a change could easily be accounted for by nostalgia, or by the fact that by the time the second book was written the author, working as he did between one book and the next as a foreign correspondent, had seen far more of the world. Cambridge too would seem a city if one has never visited New York.

In other instances, however, the differences are such that it is hard not to see an agenda. When describing the post-emancipation activities of some of the camp survivors, for example, Wiesel reports some of the boys run off, in Yiddish, "*tsu fargvaldikh daytshe shikses*," while in French they merely go "*coucher avec des filles*..."

"To sleep with young girls," as the French has it, is hardly an adequate translation of the Yiddish, "to rape German shikses." Obviously, it is an entirely different telling of the event. "There are two survivors," Seidman writes, "a Yiddish and a French" -- and two survivors will of course tell different stories.

Seidman's contention is that far from being mere matters of word choice, episodes like the one involving *fargvaldikn* and *coucher avec* suggest that the latter book is not merely a translated and edited edition, but rather an entirely different book written for an entirely different audience for entirely different reasons.

Well aware of the implications of this claim, and perhaps back-peddling the face of the assault she received, Seidman elaborated in a letter to the *Forward*: "To speak differently when you speak in a differently language, is neither hypocritical nor inauthentic; it is merely human, rarely deliberate, and perhaps inevitable."

The editors of AAARGH apparently disregarded this clarification. Already they had found enough damning material to warrant conscripting Seidman's words to their cause.

Because *Night* is not, as the paper shows, the unmediated experience its more naive readers may suppose it to be, it is for the revisionists entirely false, a lie upon which larger lies have been built. Thus the revisionists' ostensible reason for republishing "Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage" is the implication, as they read it, that its subject, their nemesis, is a fraud.

Not surprisingly, this is a surface take on Seidman's reading of Wiesel. The import of "...The Scandal of Jewish Rage" is found not in the factual discrepancy between a book and its rewrite, nor in the headline grabbing contentions that Wiesel clothed such crimes as rape in the stubborn vitality of the Jewish people. Neither is the heart of the paper Wiesel's supposed suppression of further incidents of Jewish retribution.

Rather the real story here is of the development of Wiesel's theology. The differences between the Yiddish telling and the French can be accounted for by this theology, as can revisionist interest in Seidman's work. So too, in fact, can the endless revisionist obsession with Wiesel himself.

"Let me be clear," Seidman writes. "The interpretation of the Holocaust as a religious theological event is not a tendentious imposition on *Night* but rather a careful reading of the work." That this is true can best be seen when *Night* is set against *Un di velt*, of which the same could not be said.

According to Seidman, Wiesel's first book should be considered as part of the larger genre of Yiddish Holocaust memoirs, which "often modeled themselves on the local chronicle (*pinkes*) or memorial book (*yizker-bukh*) in which catalogs of names, addresses, and occupations served as form and motivation."

Though it is largely a work of history, however, the earlier book does allow God his place. One letter writer to the *Forward* was right to insist, "Not only are all the French version's famous passages about God present in the Yiddish volume, but the latter contains other equally harrowing examples of the young death camp inmate's struggle with his faith."

In fact, God's role in *Un di velt* is not entirely unlike that in *Night*. In both God is wholly and substantially absent. In the Yiddish, though, this is a different sort of absence. It is the immediate, obvious absence faced by the victim rather than the reflective, philosophical absence later experienced by the survivor. It is the difference between an absence felt by a man under duress and one who is trying to rebuild his life.

As Wiesel tells it in his memoir, *All Rivers Run to the Sea*, *Un di velt hot geshvign* was written years after liberation, while en route to Argentina.

"I spent most of the voyage in my cabin working. I was writing my account of the concentration camp years -- in Yiddish. I wrote feverishly, breathlessly, without rereading. I wrote to testify, to stop the dead from dying, to justify my own survival."

Yet as he explains in the final pages of the book itself -- written earlier, closer to the event and so perhaps more reliably -- the composition of *Un di velt* actually began far sooner, sooner even than seems imaginable. *Night* reads: "Three days after the Liberation of Buchenwald I became very ill with food poisoning. I was transferred to the hospital and spent two weeks between life and death." *Un di velt* continues: "I stayed in bed for a few more days, in the course of which I wrote the outline of the book you are holding in your hand, dear reader..." Thus Wiesel's telling of story began even before he had lived its end. In fact, he began telling the story before he knew he would live at all: "So I thought it would be a good idea to publish a book based on the notes I wrote in Buchenwald."

Taking the book at its word, it seems possible that something like a rough draft of *Un di velt hot geshvign* was written, or at least considered, even while Wiesel remained in the camps. It's no surprise, then, that unlike *Night*, it is difficult to read the earlier book as theology. At times, in fact, it reads as a clear rebuke of the religious response to suffering.

The most telling scene in this regard did not have problems of translation moving from Yiddish to French -- because it does not appear in *Night* at all.

The opening lines of *Un di velt hot geshvign* are missing not only from *Night* but,

strangely, from Seidman's comparison of the works.

Un di velt hot geshvign begins "in onheyb," "in the beginning," as do most Yiddish translations of Genesis and the Gospel of John. By the time he put pen to paper, perhaps making notes in Buchenwald, Wiesel certainly would have read the former, and, a curious young man, a budding intellectual, very likely the latter. Beginning as he does, Wiesel leans in close to scripture, unafraid to show his resemblance to it. He nods graciously to his influences, and then he spits on them:

"In the beginning was belief, foolish belief, and faith, empty faith, and illusion, the terrible illusion... We believed in God, had faith in man, and lived with the illusion that in each one of us is a holy spark from the fire of the shekinah, that each one carried in his eyes and in his soul the sign of God. This was the source -- if not the cause -- of all our misfortune."

These are Wiesel's first published words, and there is no indictment like it in anything he has written since. In the form of this past-tense creed -- not "we believe," but "we believed" -- the young Wiesel refutes religion as a whole; in its content, he refutes Judaism particularly; in its details, Kabbalah, Jewish mysticism, a mainstay of his later work, specifically. Belief is foolish, faith is empty, the in-dwelling God is a fantasy long purchased but still not worth the price. This is Wiesel's theology as seen through the dark lens of *Un di velt hot geshvign*.

What becomes of this in *Night*? The easy answer is shocking and simple: it disappears.

Night's beginning, "They called him Moche the Beadle," can be found several pages into *Un di velt*. Wiesel has stated that the only real difference between the books is the length; that he "shortened, shortened, shortened" the manuscript for purposes of concision. Looking at one beginning and the other, however, it is clear that there were also theological considerations at work. The original opening has in effect been replaced by French Catholic intellectual Francois Mauriac's problematic christological introduction:

"And I [Mauriac], who believes that God is love, what answer could I give my young questioner [Wiesel], whose dark eyes still held the reflection of that angelic sadness which had appeared one day upon the face of the hanged child? What did I say to him? Did I speak of that other Jew, his brother, who may have resembled him -- the Crucified, whose Cross has conquered the world?"

The very religious principles made to bear the weight of Wiesel's scorn in *Un di velt*... are in *Night* enshrined in a narrative of a holy Jewish childhood. "I believed profoundly," Wiesel writes. "During the day I studied the Talmud, and at night I ran to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple." There is no mention anywhere in *Night* that Jewish belief was the cause of Jewish misfortune. Thus faith is pulled from the rubble. Also patched and salvaged from the wreck of *Un di velt* is Kabbalah, which in *Night* is not maligned but rather sought out as the height of knowledge. Another sentence not to be found in Yiddish: "One day I asked my father to find me a master to guide me in my studies of the cabbala."

What was regarded as illusion in one book becomes deepest truth in another. Why? Wiesel was kind enough to provide a possible explanation: "Maimonides said it was only at thirty that one had the right to venture into the perilous world of mysticism. You must first pass the basic subjects within your own understanding." And that seems precisely what Wiesel, at thirty, did in rewriting his first book. Having exhausted his historical understanding of events in *Un di velt hot geshvign* he moved on to mystery with *Night*.

As *Night* makes clear, Wiesel's unique brand of mysticism is crucial to understanding his theology. The key to both can be found in the figure of Moche the Beadle, and in the differences, again, between this character and his Yiddish counterpart. For purposes of clarity while discussing these differences, I'll refer to the Beadle (or *Shamas*) of *Un di velt* as Moshele, as he called in Yiddish, and that of *Night* as Moche.

In the Yiddish, Moshele has just one role in the narrative. He is introduced immediately as one who had come back, "from there! from there" That is, he is one who has been where the truth of the Holocaust is well known. He reports what he knows and has seen to the Jews of Sighet and they, to his dismay, do not believe him.

Moche serves this purpose also in *Night*. Returning to Sighet months after deportation, he is found sitting by the synagogue door:

"He told his story and that of his companions. The Jews... were made to dig huge graves, And when they had finished their work, the Gestapo began theirs. Without

passion, without haste, they slaughtered their prisoners. Each one had to go up to the hole and present his neck. Babies were thrown into the air and the machine gunners used them as targets. This was in the forest of Galicia, near Kolomaye. How had Moche the Beadle escaped? Miraculously..."

In each book the Beadle serves as first witness. Like Wiesel himself, Moche and Moshele are privy to awful truths the world does not want to hear. This, it must be stressed, is Moshele's only function in *Un di velt hot geshvign*. To put it bluntly: he is introduced, he testifies, he is doubted and then, of course, proven correct.

In *Night*, however, Moche serves a more complex narrative and theological purpose. Taking on another and equally important role, it is he who initiates Eliezer into the mysteries of Kabbalah. The following does not appear in the original book: "He had noticed me one day at dusk, while I was praying... 'Why do you pray?' he asked me, after a moment. Why do I pray? A strange question. Why do I live? Why do I breath?... After that day I saw him often. He explained to me with great insistence that every question possessed a power that did not lie in the answer."

That nearly every word in *Night* regarding Kabbalah and other of the more esoteric aspects of Judaism has been added to a text that was supposedly "shortened, shortened, shortened" suggests that the most striking and intentional difference between the Yiddish in the French is not the suppression of Jewish rage, as Seidman contends, but rather the imposition of a theological frame on the story.

Just as there are two survivors responsible for the presentation of Wiesel's story, there are two witnesses within it. One is historical, Moshele; the other is theological, Moche. In the translation of Moshele, who is only witness, into Moche, who is witness and sage, Wiesel has created a mouthpiece for his theology. It is a unique Holocaust theology, a theology of questions without answers; one that equates knowledge of the depths of man's depravity with knowledge of the heights of man's wisdom. Moche is Master of both, and through him Wiesel the writer gives voice to Wiesel the theologian:

"Man raises himself toward God by the question he asks Him," he was fond of repeating. "That is the true dialogue. Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand His answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depths of the soul, and they stay there until death. You will find the true answers only within yourself."

"There are a thousand and one gates leading into the orchard of mystical truth. Every human being has his own gate. We must never make the mistake of wanting to enter the orchard by any gate but our own..."

To speak of questions and gates here is portentous, foreshadowing the gates of the camps and the questions to God the camps will raise. Already we begin to see the theologizing of the Event. In *Night* the teacher of the mystical secrets becomes also the teacher of the truth of the camps. Who is to say whether it was the theologian or the writer in Wiesel who could not resist the symmetry of it? Regardless, this development marks the birth of the theology that informs all of Wiesel's work. Through Moche, Auschwitz for Wiesel comes to stand for the mystery of darkness, Kabbalah, the mystery of light. To create such a schema, though, is to fit the Holocaust into a rather tidy cosmology. Whatever this says for the skills and imagination of a writer, it does little service to history.

"Revisionism is an ancient practice," Pierre Vidal-Naquet wrote, "but the revisionist crisis occurred in the West only after the turning of the genocide into a spectacle, its transformation into pure language..."

"Pure language": To this we should add the word "religious," for the latest trends in Holocaust revisionism seem to focus on and make use of religious or theological language more than any other.

At the risk of giving attention where attention surely is not due, the leader of this movement seems to be the American revisionist Michael Hoffman. A fairly typical quote:

"The 'Holocaust' has become a media religion, the last truly believed religion in the otherwise agnostic West. It is a civic religion, one of the aims of which is to replace the

crucifixion of Christ at Calvary with the experience of the Jews at Auschwitz, as the central ontological event of Western history."

What is most troubling about this is that, breaking it down and considering it piece by piece, it would be possible to find reasonable people who might agree.

Elsewhere in *The Forward* of November 15, 1996, for example, while sparks were flying over Yiddish scholarship on the letters page, in the arts section we may read: "the Holocaust... has already passed from historical event to secular religion." Continuing on, to the connection between the Holocaust and the crucifixion, we must remember that theologically it is not just acceptable but incumbent upon Christians to look on the Holocaust and see Calvary. John Paul II has called Auschwitz the "Golgotha of the modern world." Given the choice Jews generally would forego this kind of empathy. For empathy too can be a kind of revisionism. The Church is built on co-opted Jewish tragedy; left unchecked it would surely build again. Yet wouldn't Wiesel himself agree with the pope's implication -- and Hoffman's charge -- that Auschwitz is the central ontological Event of our time? "Ontological Event," in fact, is shorthand Wiesel favors. Perhaps Hoffman even borrowed the term, just as AAARGH borrowed Naomi Seidman's scholarship.

Such are the hazards of language. Words often say one thing and mean another. It seems there is bound to be a time in every Jewish writer's life when she will be quoted by an anti-Semite.

Is the solution, then, silence -- as is so often suggested? Or, in fact, is the solution a greater willingness to speak?

While it has not always been the case, in the modern world theology has no defense against revisionism. Particular theology in a pluralistic society is a to-each-his-own affair. Thus to speak of the Holocaust in religious terms -- to preach the ineffability of the Event, to invoke the incomprehensibility of the camps, to use all those units of theological language to say what we believe cannot be said and thus to remove it from the mundane -- this too is a kind of denial. Again, Hoffman: "Belief is not incumbent. I can live my life and be a good, productive citizen without accepting a single iota of Jewish theology about their 'Shoah.' If Jews want to believe it, fine. Every religion is entitled to its own story."

Some would counteract this abuse of both religion and language with the radical assertion that, in fact, we can speak of the unspeakable, we can comprehend that which is cheapened by thought.

"The crime committed by the Nazis was of immense proportions," Amos Funkenstein writes, "the horror and the suffering transgress our capacity of imagination, but it is possible to understand them rationally... The prehistory of genocide, its necessary preconditions, can be illuminated more and more. The mental mechanisms by which Nazi ideology justified mass murder can be followed step by step."

Such thinking offers a strong prescription, but even a bitter pill can be a placebo. If we continue to speak of atrocity in religious terms we will never take full responsibility for it. And so we will never learn. And so it will continue to be denied. And so it will happen again. And yet, as Elie Wiesel is found of saying, and yet: Even a practical theology, a thoroughly human theology, remains a theology. It remains an attempt at universal understanding, and so can only come up short. While we who believe believe generally, and those who deny deny generally, we live in particulars. We die specifically, even in mass graves. It may well be that God alone can give meaning to six million, but one by one theology is meaning's thief.

11 April 2001

Peter Manseau is an editor of Killing the Buddha. And in fact its owner. the name, somewhat puzzling, is explained on the homepage. it's a silly zen pun.

<http://www.killingthebuddha.com/dogma/hazards_holocaust.htm>

This interesting essay should help us to be more precise: It is obvious, to us, that Wiesel does not believe in any God or devil, Jewish or else, but he has understood, between the first (Yiddish) and the second (French) writing of his book that the main purpose of writing was to "make-believe". All his theology is empty bullshit. He spent some evenings reading the Talmud in Sighet but never got into a proper Jewish curriculum. He wanted a cabbalah master but never got one. He uses the fragments of knowledge he never managed to master, and hide his ignorance by using mysteries and unspeakable truths. This is all fake, pretense, hoaxing. By adding to this system of "void surrounded by unspeakable truths", he built a pyramide of books which, at the end of the day, makes him a millionaire. Not a bad result for a little boy of Sighet, uneducated by knowing how uneducated he was.

aaargh

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