

# The Deadly Innocences of American Jews

*Earl Raab*

IN 1902, American Jews asked their government to protest the persecution of Jews in Rumania. The Roosevelt administration, having nothing to lose, sent such a protest on grounds that the persecuted refugees were fleeing to America. The note had no noticeable effect on the Rumanians, but delighted the American Jews. Secretary of State Hay commented privately, and with some amusement: "The Hebrews—poor dears!—all over the country think we are bully. . . ."

A half century later such condescension would have seemed incredible, especially to American Jews. Their government had just defeated the Nazis and sponsored the establishment of the State of Israel. As a religious group, the Jews appeared to have acquired as much political power as the Catholics, individual wealth as the Episcopalians, religious respectability as the Methodists. By those tokens the Golden Age of the American Diaspora flourished for about two decades after World War II.

But in the last few years, the confidence of American Jews has been draining. Some of the events connected with the Black Revolution have disturbed their sense of security as American Jews; the campus revolts have made them peculiarly uneasy. But there have been more direct blows to confidence. No one, for example, has yet quite acknowledged the shock which ran through the Jewish community when it found, for the first time in most living memories, that there was no Jew on the Supreme Court. This was met by relative silence, punctuated by occasional muttered protestations that it didn't make any difference—any more than did the general diminution in the number of Jewish officials and influentials in Washington. However, Mayor Lindsay found it worthwhile to say, in one metropolitan breath, that while, happily, there was no religious quota on the Supreme Court, it was too bad that the "tradition of Brandeis, Cardozo, Frankfurter, and Goldberg" had been broken.

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When, following an overblown incident in Chicago, President Nixon made an unscheduled flight to apologize personally to Premier Pompidou for the behavior of American Jews, there was again a rather uneasy silence. An uncomfortable mood had begun to settle over much of the Jewish community. With the direct military intervention of the Soviet Union, Israel was in deeper trouble than it could handle, the active support of the American government was crucial, and the Jews felt a growing sluggishness of response to them in Washington. A climax came at the end of 1969, when Jews from all over the country went as petitioners to the government, preceded by special delegations. They exerted their fullest effort. The President made a good ceremonial statement which was promptly hedged in the next few days. Acknowledge it or not, the Jews around the country began to feel more and more like Hay's "Hebrews—poor dears." It was not that the government was about to abandon Israel, but clearly its actions did not depend on the sentiments of American Jewry. The United States had bigger fish to fry with the Soviet Union. At the same time, during this period, the treatment of the Soviet Jews by their government became ominously more oppressive.

The Jews are suffering a more disquieting wound than perhaps they have yet realized. Not only are they beginning to feel a sense of unexpected impotence in America—but the fact is that, after only a generation, large segments of world Jewry are again being threatened with oppression and even extinction, and the American Jews are discovering that, as American Jews, they may not be able to do much more about it this time than last time.

In general there is a sense of an End of Normalcy for American Jews on a number of fronts—or, rather, the end of a series of normalcies.

## The End of the Jewish Political Frontier

FOR TWO CENTURIES Jewish history has been seen as a tale of progressive emancipation in a liberal society. America was the culmination of that development, a super-liberal society in which Jews were super-

emancipated. In fact, Jews have long been debating the question of whether they could preserve their identity in such a liberal, open society. Now it has suddenly become clear that this is no longer the question. The most direct threat to the American-Jewish community is not the seepage of assimilation but the growing inhospitability of the American political environment. This is part and parcel of the general crisis of liberalism. Since America is at the vanguard of this particular crisis, the developments probably signal the end of that chapter in Jewish history which automatically equated the growth of Western industrial democracy with the spread of Jewish emancipation. In that sense, the post-medieval Jewish political frontier, pushed to the utmost in America, is now closing.

For one thing, the America of today is the first America the modern Jewish community has known which does not bear an immigrant stamp. The end of the immigrant era predictably did not occur with the passage of the restrictive immigration law in the 20's but some generations later. Somewhere during the past two decades the quantum was added or subtracted which effectively severed the immigrant thrust of American culture. Textbook publishers began to drop standard chapters on immigration. Stock American immigrant characters disappeared from contemporary plays and novels. The immigrant memory is gone—still lingering on for some as nostalgia, but gone as a prime driving force in the country. And the end of the immigrant era had as much significance for the American character as did the closing of the frontier.

**A** BRAHAM CAHAN wrote of an evening in the Catskills when David Levin-sky was watching the musical conductor try to rouse the immigrant Jewish audience:

He was working every muscle and nerve in his body. He played selections from "Aida," the favorite opera of the Ghetto; he played the popular American songs of the day; he played celebrated "hits" of the Yiddish stage. All to no purpose. Finally, he had recourse to what was apparently his last resort. He struck up the "Star-Spangled Banner." The effect was overwhelming. The few hundred diners rose like one man, applauding. The children and many of the adults caught up the tune joyously, passionately. It was an interesting scene. Men and women were offering thanksgiving to the flag under which they were eating this good dinner, wearing these expensive clothes. There was the jingle of newly-acquired dollars in our applause. But there was something else in it as well. Many of those who were now paying tribute to the Stars and Stripes were listening to the tune with grave, solemn mien. It was as if they were saying: "We are not persecuted under this flag. At last we have found a home." Love for America blazed up in my soul. I shouted to the musicians, "My Country," and the cry spread like wildfire.

This was the essential experience of the immigrant, even if he hadn't made it, even if he wanted to turn the society inside out. The immigrant radicals in America tended to hate the inequities, the capitalist system, the exploiters of America—but not quite America itself. Out of their background, they sensed the critical difference between an unfair closed society and an unfair open society. Although there has always been a phobia about alien radicals, it is the native-born radical, cut off from historical memory and perspective, who is likely to be the more unrelenting critic of American society.

The immigrant culture carried with it an escape motif. The immigrants were escaping from the unyielding poverty and medieval odor of Europe; their children were escaping from the American ghetto; many of their grandchildren were escaping from the active memory of both. There was a concrete situation to flee from, a concrete situation to flee to—and the expectation that the flight could be successful. This was a classic Horatio Alger formula for motivation, a kind of motivation which is now lagging precipitously in America and whose loss is making inroads on our national character, for better or worse. In general, the immigrant mood and temperament of the America in which the Jewish community grew up has finally been lost.

The normalcy of big-city politics has also been altered. Just as the 1920 census reported for the first time that the cities had outstripped the countryside—so the 1970 census will report for the first time that the suburbs have outstripped the big cities. Whatever political power the American Jews developed, they developed in the crucible of big-city politics. In large part, this gave the Jews an illusion of "normal" political power which they never really had. It was not unlike the illusion of economic power: by and large the Jews, individually wealthy as they may be, do not control the financial or corporate structures which have economic power. Similarly, although the Jews accumulated a great deal of political power in those few big cities in which they were concentrated, it was transmissible to the centers of national power only under special circumstances. The acid test was the extent to which the Jews could exert influence on the most corporate power decisions of the nation: those concerning foreign policy. For the most part they have had and continue to have very little influence beyond what might be called the Rule of Marginal Effect. The sentiment of the American-Jewish community, no matter how strongly pressed, will influence American foreign policy only to the extent that it doesn't make any substantial difference to what are *otherwise* considered the best foreign-policy interests of the United States. Of course, this still leaves some room, sometimes, for movement. And there is a certain propriety in the formula, given the fact

that the Jews are a marginal slice of the population. But the illusion of a greater national power nevertheless developed among Jews—because of their impacted local vision of themselves, because of the furious programmatic activity of Jewish organizations, because of the adroitness of politicians themselves. It is only during recent years that American Jews have realized the extent to which their most revered politician, Franklin D. Roosevelt, deliberately avoided action in the matter of aiding refugees from Nazism. It was not that he did not want to do everything that might help the Jews, all other things being equal; it was that all other things weren't equal. The American-Jewish community would have been more forceful if it had grasped sooner what was really happening in Europe; and some more, if still relatively few, Jews might have been saved as a result. But as far as the major action of the U.S. government was concerned, the Rule of Marginal Effect would have continued in force.

In reviewing the tragic foot-dragging and double-dealing of the American government in the rescue considerations of the 1930's, Henry L. Feingold comments:\* "Roosevelt and many in the administration wanted to rescue Jews—if only the price weren't so high and the possibility so remote. In the absence of active measures, humanitarian rhetoric was substituted for action . . . while London and Berlin soon learned to dismiss the American initiative as a political gesture made for domestic consumption, American Jewry rarely directly questioned the sincerity of Roosevelt [who, in fact] knew precisely what was happening."

The American government responded in a similar fashion to the American Jewish community's pressures for the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Bartley C. Crum, a member of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine, said in 1947: "Since September 15, 1938, each time a promise was made to American Jewry regarding Palestine, the State Department promptly sent messages to the Arab rulers discounting it, and reassuring them in effect that regardless of what was promised publicly to the Jews nothing would be done to change the situation in Palestine."

**T**HE REALITY of Jewish national power probably came closest to measuring up to the illusion in 1948, when the New York vote was seen as unusually important to Harry Truman's hopes for reelection. He and Dewey vied with each other in escalating their platforms for the entry of Jewish refugees to Palestine and for the establishment of Israel. In the years of the "Golden Diaspora" that followed, American Jews, by and large, persisted in cling-

ing tightly to the warm thought that America and Israel were intertwined as closely as were the American Jews and the Israeli Jews. This was a kind of endearingly simpleminded projection of their own feelings about both America and Israel. But this fond image became more and more strained—and, during 1969 and 1970, in combination with other circumstances, began to shred away. It was becoming apparent that the political power which the Jews had seemed to exercise in 1948 was, at best, part of the past. The margin of national influence had been diminished, and this was a reflection of the fact that Jewish political influence in their own real bases of power, in the big cities, was becoming diminished. In turn, this reflected the end of another comfortable normalcy: the Grand Alliance of the 1930's through the 1950's, comprising in somewhat ragged formation the "ethnic" working class, the Negroes, and the Jews, under whose aegis the Jews had really made their substantive entrance into American society.

This was one of the aspects of the Black Revolution which caused concern in the Jewish community. It was not a concern with some hoary species of black anti-Semitism—although there was a tendency to simplify it in those terms—but, to begin with, a concern with the break-up of "That Old Gang of Mine." The extent of the shock in the Jewish community was partly a result of its romanticization of the Grand Alliance, and of America itself. Judeo-tolerance and even Judeophilia in America had somehow become a standard expectation of many American Jews.

So much more were the Jews dismayed by the actual emanation of political anti-Semitism from the fringes of the Black Revolution. This symptom, though never as newsworthy as during the New York teachers' strike, has stubbornly persisted, and become something of a sub-cultural staple. In April 1970, the International Coordinator of the Black Panther party, after suggesting that a large part of the Jewish population "are Zionists and are therefore racists," wrote: "It was a Zionist Judge, Judge Friedman, who sentenced Huey P. Newton to 2-15 years in jail. It was a Zionist judge, Judge Hoffman, who allowed the other Zionists to go free, but has kept Bobby Seale in jail. . . ." A few months later, the middle-class editor of a respectable black metropolitan newspaper wrote: "One significant observation to make is that most of the hard-nosed judges in the trials of black militants and white radicals happen to be Jewish jurists. Sometimes the truth hurts. Could it be that the Establishment has selected one minority, frequently victimized by anti-Semitism, to do its bidding against the revolutionary efforts of other minorities . . .?" The most significant observation to make about both of these statements is their parallel myth-hungry distance from the actual state of affairs.

\* *The Politics of Rescue*, Rutgers, 394 pp., \$12.50.

However, these open expressions of political anti-Semitism have not been disturbing because of the fear of black pogroms. They have been disturbing in part because they dramatized the end of certain imagined normalcies—one governing black-Jewish relations, and the other involving the belief that political anti-Semitism was irrevocably dead in America. This latter was an illusion the Jews desperately wanted to hold intact. But their experience in the world, and in America, during the decades between the two World Wars should have taught them something quite to the contrary. Political anti-Semitism is a normal—not inevitable, perhaps, but normal—aspect of a Western society in turmoil. Its potential at any given moment cannot be traced by attitude surveys, but by the state of politics. The behavior of the Black Panther party, for example, was disturbing not so much because of its sporadic anti-Semitism, but because of its part in creating expressive and anti-political turmoil. At the same time, the elite youth on the campus were rioting for fair; and the workers were beginning to indicate an active interest in repression and counter-violence.

Most troubling were the implications for the end of the coalition in which the Jews had politically thrived. It is not that there are no new coalitions building, but that the Jews *qua* Jews are no longer a natural part of them. From the early 1960's to 1970, the number of Irish Catholics on the eleven-man San Francisco Board of Supervisors went from seven to none; while the number of Jews went from one to three. In roughly the same period, the number of Catholics on the eight-member New York City Board of Estimate went from five to one; while the number of Jews went from two to five. But these Jews, like their numerous counterparts, acting as social experts and advisers in the larger City Halls, increasingly tend to be Jews who precisely do *not* represent the Jewish community or its ethnic interests. Their point of departure being "urban affairs," their points of reference are the "Third World" communities, not the Jewish community. This is not to be laid at the door of the Jewish community, which is increasingly outside looking in. The *ethnic* concerns of the Jews—whether they be Israel or the institutional needs of the Jewish community or just the protective comfort of political representation—are not concerns of the new coalition. Indeed, the new liberal big-city coalition, in which the only ethnicity is Third World, bears with it a bias which is, if anything, anti-Israel and cool to the Jewish community. And, of course, it is just as true that there are no coalition possibilities for the ethnic Jewish community among those who are in active contention with the new alliances, in the Agnew or Wallace sectors of the population.

However, the most significant point is not that the ethnic politics in which the Jewish commu-

nity operated is coming to an end; nor that Jewish political power has diminished as a result. These are perhaps enough to cause American Jews to feel a loss of normalcy, and a consequent loss of confidence. But there is an even deeper uneasiness. The American political environment in general is becoming more hostile, not just because the consensus is breaking up, and not just because the illiberal directions are inhospitable to Jewish life, but also because the prevailing *liberal* directions are themselves becoming inhospitable to Jewish life. If political liberalism, which opened the world to the Jews two centuries ago, has run its course for the Jews in *America*, and is now closing down for them, then it is not just the end of one episode of normalcy, but the possible end of the political frontier which has expanded for the Jews since the French Revolution. The fact that so many Jews did not see this possibility written in the events of the past fifty years; and, even more, the fact that so many Jews have actively participated—and still do—in helping to retract that political frontier are evidence of a massive and deadly innocence which affects not the Jews alone.

### The Innocences

A RECENT RANDOM sample of the Jewish population in one large community indicated the existence of four different issue-publics among the Jews. The "numbers" resulting from this survey are not to be taken as definitive, but they are clues to a significant differentiation among Jews. About a fifth of the respondents were called "Social Justice Liberals." They had a strong personal concern with, and a strong belief that the Jewish community should become involved in, such issues as poverty and racial discrimination. They were not at all concerned about problems of law and order. About a fourth of the sample were "Preservatists." They were not at all concerned about fighting poverty and racial discrimination, but were heavily preoccupied with problems of law and order and "excessive" demands by the black population. About a third of the population were concerned about poverty and racial discrimination, and were *also* concerned about the maintenance of law and order—presumably recognizing both as valid problems, and recognizing the connection between the two. A fourth group, about a fifth of the sample, were "Parochials." They didn't give a hang about poverty, racial discrimination, law and order, or anything else on the American scene. Their only public concern was the welfare of Israel.

There was one issue which tied together all four groups: Israel. All four groups were almost equally, and overwhelmingly, concerned with Israel. Conversely, the concern with Israel was so universal that it did not differentiate attitudes

on anything else. Perhaps the main importance of this pattern is that it provides a model for understanding some of the ways in which the American-Jewish condition is deteriorating—and some of the ways in which American Jews are accelerating that deterioration. The pathologies in American-Jewish ideology are identified with the extremes in those various Jewish interest-publics. They are all variations of a basic political innocence, which is a particularly appropriate word. Out of the context of harmlessness, innocence connotes a benevolent devotion to good causes. It also connotes a moral purity, which in the political arena is customarily more deadly than harmless.

THAT SPECIES of innocence among American Jews which is most revealing is a kind of liberal innocence. One calls it that, at great peril, simply because it describes a quality characteristically associated with so many programs which are *today* identified as “liberal” or “radical.” The disproportionate role of American Jews in this phenomenon must be seen not just in terms of Jewish intellectuals and students, but of the thousands of Jewish lawyers, businessmen, and housewives who are the backbone of workaday ideological liberalism in communities across the country. They should never be forgotten for the way in which they have heightened concern for human problems in the country; they should never be forgiven for the way they have tolerated and fostered a self-destructive liberal innocence while so engaged.

This innocence is related to the tendency of one Jewish issue-public, the “Social-Justice Liberals,” to worry about the problems of social and economic equality, but not about the problems of democratic order. The nature of such a liberal innocence has been dealt with at length in many different forms. But it is worth restating in the precise form in which it has relevance to the Jewish community’s current plight—and to the problem of American-Jewish identity.

In this case, the root of the innocence lies in a concept of social justice for the individual which is finally totalitarian rather than communitarian in nature. The conceit that the free-floating individual is the prime and self-sufficient unit of political action was a useful and perhaps a sophisticated conceit in the 18th century. But it is an innocent one today. This individualistic thrust of many early philosophers was more of a polemical attack against the small traditional group which stultified social change than it was a genuine dedication to the individual. It was the logic of this emphasis which led Rousseau to say that there must be “an absolute surrender of the individual, with all of his rights and all of his powers to the *community as a whole* . . . anyone who refuses obedience to the General Will is forced to it by the whole body. This merely

means that he is compelled to be free.” This was, of course, the Jacobin trail to the variety of radical socialism which came to dominate the European continent; and to the kind of politics which has led almost inevitably to the main assaults on Jews and Jewish life in the past fifty years.

The differing concepts of political individualism define the difference between an open and closed society. The open society is not necessarily a fair society. It can be marked by considerable injustice, inequity, and poverty. It is possible in an open society for men to be greedy, materialistic, hypocritical, unjust, exploitative, corrupt, and generally ugly. It is possible for judges to be dishonest, juries biased, the popular arts crass, the schools irrelevant, policemen brutal, and the air polluted. It can be all of these things, a dreadful place in which to live, and still be an open society. Obviously, then, openness does not comprise the totality of values one holds for a society. But openness is an enabling quality. It makes it politically possible—not automatic or inevitable, but possible—for dishonest judges to be reversed, greedy men to be curbed, and poverty to be reduced.

An open society is one in which the people can change their living situations, and can change them cumulatively rather than corporately. The metaphor of such a society is the ability of the individual to alter his life—or not—as he desires to, not as the “general will” of the people desires him to. This suggests a certain kind of disorganization, and one of the modern problems of an open society is how to organize disorganization. The highly organized modern world’s experiments with the open society have so far largely depended on two connected phenomena: the development of a tradition of political liberty and the existence of a genuine pluralism of identity and power.

The closed society is most obviously closed in terms of political power. Power is drained from the real individual in the name of the abstract individual. The rules are devised to assure that he does not have, and cannot have, any independent leverage of power with respect to the corporate body. Conversely, the rules that we know as “political liberty,” when operative, serve to provide some formal measure of independent leverage for the individual: free speech, assembly, due process, privacy. Political liberty is to be distinguished from “social justice,” as that term is now commonly used, with its emphasis on distributive justice. Henry Wallace, a model of liberal innocence, once counted himself among those who “believe that we have overemphasized what might be called political or Bill-of-Rights democracy.” So do those members of the Jewish community who were characterized earlier as “Social-Justice Liberals,” those who currently demphasize the problems of “political or Bill-of-

Rights democracy." This is, of course, a vulgarization of the concept of social justice—a term of great currency in the Jewish community—but it is a vulgarization with which the term has been almost immutably invested.

THE TRADITION of political liberty as a part of the political culture is significant because it is better than the aggregate political emotions of the populace at many given moments. It is quite clear from repeated examinations of popular attitudes that there is not an overwhelming internalized commitment to the values of political liberty. There is, however, some willingness to operate within the traditional institutions of political liberty as long as the allegiance to society's institutions in general endures. Of course, the tradition of political liberty can become a sham, and one of the conditions of political liberty in modern experiments with the open society has so far been an existential pluralism: multiple group allegiances, multiple communities, and multiple sources of power within the society.

The communitarian, pluralistic society, and the tradition of political liberty as mechanisms of the open society are in themselves obviously of significance to Jewish survival in the modern Diaspora. In their own ways, both Hitler and the Bolsheviks understood the need to destroy intervening groups of strong independent identity. Only three months after the Revolution, the Yevkom, the Jewish Commissariat, was set up to "establish the Communist dictatorship among the Jews," and its first responsibility was to try to eliminate the existing organized Jewish community and its institutions. And yet so many Jewish innocents have moved down this same Jacobin trail in their honest pursuit of social justice.

Perhaps there are two allegedly "Jewish" characteristics which, misapplied to political life, lead to this deadly innocence. One is the "Jewish heart." When Rabbi Johanan asked for definitions of the highest goal in life, he decided that Rabbi Elazar's answer was the best: "A good heart." But Rabbi Elazar's answer was not meant to apply directly and sufficiently to the complex political world of the 20th century, any more than the words of the biblical prophets were. Nor is the "Jewish mind," the penchant for rationality, a sufficient prescription for political action. A scientific rationality applied to politics, driven and legitimated by expressed compassion, have shaped the modern closed societies. The element that is missing is a relationship to history, to the process of history, to the meanings of longitudinal human experience. Indeed, the open society is most essentially defined as a society which is *open to history*. The images of the open society are of imperfect men inspired to grope imperfectly for decent solutions to problems

whose nature they can at best dimly perceive. The images of the closed society are of imperfect men, to whom there are perfect solutions for problems that are clearly evident. The open society is open to history: open to the past because groping men need to lean on their experience; open to the future because it is unknown. The closed society is closed to a past for whose experiences the present political blueprint substitutes; and is closed to the future, because the groping is no longer given full rein.

To be sure, there is always the possibility that America, as an open society, even as an unfair open society, has become a fraud. This is the premise of the new liberal innocence, which at first glance seems to be unalterably opposed to the closed society. It is, on its face, libertarian, communitarian, and passionately opposed to the mass society and scientific politics. It is in fact not primarily political at all. At core it is a counter-enlightenment protest against the unaesthetic qualities of the industrialized, bureaucratized, rationalized society of the 20th century. Mario Savio struck the spark on the Berkeley campus in 1964 when he talked about "a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart that you can't take part." "Machine" was meant almost literally. The basic thrust of "The Movement" was deeply conservative, anti-statist, anti-control. Freedom of individual expression was celebrated by hyperbole of language and dress. There was a reversion to older forms of social organization, like communes, the participatory democracy of town-hall meetings, revolving leadership. But The Movement inevitably became interwoven with concerns over the complex 20th-century political phenomena of the Vietnam war and pervasive American social injustices which could not be directly dealt with by such older forms of social organization. It was at this point, in a contradictory wrench from its own authentic philosophic directions, that The Movement tended to join the mainstream of liberal innocence.

When those in The Movement chant "Power to the People," they obviously don't mean the great benighted bulk of the people, who resist them; they mean that old magical and unmeasured "will of the people." They say, along with Herbert Marcuse, that constitutional "rights should not include the right to advocate aggressive war" or other anti-social acts—as defined by them. They implement this edict by preventing the "wrong" people from speaking. In short, they are ready, in all innocence, to "compel people to be free"—and thus they slip back on the Jacobin trail which they thought they were escaping.

The Movement is not so innocent, however, in its diagnostic perceptions. Many of its participants understand, for example, that massive imbalances of power—in government, in business,

in labor—can gut any real system of pluralism, leaving only an empty cliché for use by those who want to maintain the status quo. So much deeper, then, is the innocence which permits the new innocents to travel the back-roads to a closed society which they would detest. Repressive political diabolism is one of those back-roads; the use of violence as an offensive political weapon is another. The premises of the open society, of political liberty, of historical non-certainty are those of voluntarism and consent. Political violence as a norm subverts the style of an open society. It is the characteristic instrument of the closed society, used by the state—or to be used by revolutionaries to pry open a closed society which is invulnerable by political means.

Of course, if America is seen as an already closed society, whose substantial injustices are politically uncorrectable—if the destruction of the society is seen as an act of pure poetic expression, a Warsaw Ghetto gesture—then it is not so much a matter of innocence as a matter of sheer judgment. The judgment that America is threatened by the loss of its open quality is quite credible; the judgment that America has already become an irreparably closed society is incredible on its face. There is indeed evidence to the contrary in the very charges of “cooptation”—that America is thwarting revolution by instituting progressive social changes—and of “repressive tolerance”—that America is thwarting revolution by allowing its worst critics to speak freely, publish, assemble, and even, for the most part, to get due process in the courts. Whatever else these charges may suggest about the flawed nature of America, they do not suggest an immutably closed society.

One critic of America’s basic political structure, Robert Paul Wolff, writes:

Pluralist democracy with its virtue, tolerance, constitutes the highest stage in the political development of industrial capitalism. . . . But pluralism is fatally blind to the evils which afflict the entire body politic, and as a theory of society it obstructs consideration of precisely the sorts of thoroughgoing social revisions which may be needed to remedy those evils. . . . New problems confront America, not problems of distributive injustice but of the common good. . . . There is need for a new philosophy of community, beyond pluralism and beyond tolerance.

Wolff says in the same essay that American society has been very sluggish in accepting new and legitimate social groups into its pluralistic system, out of a built-in preservative bias. He mentions migrant workers, the poverty-stricken, and advocates of nuclear disarmament. The foot-dragging of American society on these fronts may well justify condemnation, but not the judgment that it has become a closed society. Wolff himself points out that the poverty-stricken have become

of late “the object of a national crusade,” and that disarmament talk which “had been unthinkable, absurd, naive, dangerous, even subversive, six months before, was now plausible, thoughtful, and—within another six months—official American policy.” Cesar Chavez can attest dramatically to the fact that American society, however unfair and callous in its treatment of migrant workers, is not closed to the processes of change.

Yet even if pluralism, as we have known it, were over the hill in America, the alternatives, the remedies, would still have to be judged by their implications for a relatively open or closed society—at least for anyone who claims to cherish those human values which are uniquely invested in the open society.

The liberal innocence which blithely ignores these implications is not restricted to the harsher doctrinaires of the Old or New Left. More seriously, it is shared by the bulk of those who fit the limited definition of Social-Justice Liberals, at least in the form of apologetics.

HERE IS, of course, the reverse side of the folly. If there were a fifth of the sampled Jews who could be classified as Social-Justice Liberals, there were a fourth of that population who could be roughly classified as Preservatists, who seemed to care only about the maintenance of law and order, and not about social injustices at all. The polar pathology associated with this tendency is the most simple-minded innocence of all. The Jewish Preservatists are not innocent in their backlash defense of their status; they are innocent, as Jews, in believing that this status, their freedom as American Jews, can be secure in a modern closed society. They are innocent in believing that the demands arising out of the massive racial inequities of American history can now be dealt with by repression without creating a closed society. To the contrary, it is an innocence to believe that the open society can now be secure—for anyone—without extraordinary and sacrificial efforts to bring the black people closer to the “too much” they are said by the Preservatists to want. Thomas Jefferson’s most prophetic words were these: “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free.” This is a statement about the nature of America as an open society: an unfair society which is open to change because it is open to the raw forces of history. But it is also a statement about the problems of an open society—and about the relation between the qualities of justice and openness in a society. Progress is not inevitable; certainly not in any short range; and its deliberate retardation at points of pres-

sure will by definition serve to close down a society. The time for Jeffersonian trembling is here for all Americans, and the Jewish Preservativists are trembling for some of the wrong reasons.

There is yet another kind of innocence manifested by those Jews whose measured attitudes toward American problems can be categorized as Parochial. The extreme of this tendency is the belief that Jews need only their own determination to survive. One of the sources of this innocence is probably a romanticization of the modern Israeli experience. Israel's initial string of brilliant and heroic military victories went beyond just inspiring American Jews. For some there developed a kind of primitive legend that physical and combative prowess was the best guarantee of Jewish survival, and indeed a positive Jewish value in itself. The Israelis, especially after the Soviet intervention, know better than that. There was also the influence of black militancy, physically expressed, and some of its early successes—as though the Jewish potential for effective “mass” disruptive action could be equated with that of the American black population. And, even so, some black militant realists have come to characterize as “Custerism” those tactics which are destined—against odds—to lead to isolation, defeat, and worse. Acts of Jewish hooliganism, such as beating up Arab representatives in America, breaking up furniture at In-tourist offices, throwing stink-bombs at Soviet ballet performances are certainly Custeristic in tendency, if indeed they are all that important. Mass demonstrations can be self-therapeutic in times of frustration, but also can be delusory as social action if Hay's image of “the Hebrews—poor dears” is not kept in mind. However, the chief hazard in the growing parochial temper is the tendency to “give up on America,” to relinquish too early the American-Jewish stake, and perhaps the world-Jewish stake, in certain American values.

These various innocences are shared by many Americans, but they are particularly pathological and self-destructive when practiced by Jews. It is not just that the Jews cannot expect to survive as Jews in the environment of a modern closed society—whose demands are more totalitarian than in some closed societies of the past. America means something more specific to the Jews than that.

### The Faltering American-Jewish Identity

THERE WAS, to begin with, an especially fortuitous conjunction of American and Jewish history. Leo Baeck wrote about the Jewish immigrants who “entered America, this new world without an antiquity and a Middle Ages of its own, and found something quite new ready to welcome them. Another language and not just an American English was

spoken here. The spirit of the Declaration of Independence which can be called the Grand Adventure, and of the Constitution which can be called the Grand Experiment, began to pervade them.” This was an echo in 1951 of David Levinsky's cry in 1917: “At last we have found a home.” Never before had a Diaspora country so explicitly codified and institutionalized those conditions under which the Jews in Exile could presumably live in equal, free, and Jewish terms.

But more than that: America was at the prow of history—and that was where the Jews belonged by historical temperament. The idiom of the Jew is change—the world's if not his own—and the idiom of America was change. The idiom of the Jew is achievement—his own as well as the world's—and the peculiar idiom of America was achievement. It is not that change and achievement—or freedom—are sugar-plum qualities. They do not gainsay the existence of grossness and brutality and inequity. But, at the least, Jews became unprecedentedly free and proportionate partners in an achieving society which was a vanguard force in changing the nature of human society. And America became in this way home for the largest Jewish population in the history of Jewish existence.

Against the background of this conjunction of history, there was an even deeper sense in which Jews developed an American-Jewish identity which was more authentic than any other hyphenated identity they have acquired in the modern world, other than that of the Israeli Jew. They tended to feel authentic as Americans, and authentic as Jews—but in addition they felt some direct relationship between the two. This comprised a special American-Jewish identity which had to do with the nature of the American political society. It is an identity which is being tested not just by the changing political condition of American Jews and by the changing political climate of America, but by the existence of Israel at this very moment—and by some disrupted expectations on that score.

Classical Zionism had posited that all Diaspora life was abnormal; and that only existence in the national homeland would normalize Jewish life. American Jews stretched that concept. They accepted the fact that Israel would normalize life for those Jews who lived there—which *they* were not about to do—but they also believed that it would normalize the status of Jews around the world. Jews are no longer homeless if they have a homeland, even if they don't go there. The stunning, scarcely credible accomplishments of the Israelis would build the dignity of Jews all over the world. American Jews consolidated around this expectation after June 1967, in the flush of Israel's heroic victory. But as the exultation ebbed; as it became evident that Israel was in even more trouble than before; and as American support seemed to become more shaky—it was

time for more American Jews to face certain realities which many Israelis had long begun to face. Israel had *not* normalized Jewish existence, in the social terms of which old Zionists spoke, not even for the Israelis. The Israelis would live indefinitely as an "alien" presence in a hostile environment. The existence of Israel had not put an end to anti-Semitism, but had become the focus of the greatest program of organized anti-Semitism since Hitler, with the axis stretching from Cairo to Moscow. And it has become quite clear that, romance aside, Israel has provided no magical change in the status of Jews in America.

As a matter of fact it has begun to raise some questions which American Jews had almost forgotten were there. Whatever sentimental attachment the non-Jewish American population may seem to have had for Israel, it is exposed as a very tenuous and non-salient attachment indeed when it conflicts with American geopolitics. The general tolerance for Jewish activity on behalf of Israel is limited. Before the 1967 war, less than half of the American population labeled as "false" the statement that "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to America." The organized efforts of the American-Jewish community on behalf of Israel have dramatically accelerated since then. After the Pompidou affair, and during the period when the United States was trying to engage a four-power conference on the Middle East, with other agenda in the side-pocket, the insistent vehemence of the American-Jewish community created some rather explicit backlash in the semi-private rooms of the nation's capital. High public officials complained about undue pressures, and were not loath to raise *The Issue*: the disproportionate extent of Jewish radicalism in general and anti-Vietnam activity in particular. The *National Observer* carried an extensive story about what the author clearly saw as undue and even illicit activity by the organized American-Jewish community on behalf of a foreign state. The *New York Times*, and *Time Magazine* had similar, if more cautious, stories. These were picked up by various media and commentators around the country. There has been the currently characteristic, uneasy half-silence from the Jewish community.

IT IS NOT that the American-Jewish community and its leadership have been driven into a classic American-Council-for-Judaism "dual loyalty" panic as a result of these developments. In Black Revolution America, American Jews are not as uncertain as they once were about their legitimate right openly and vigorously to press their concerns, even their world concerns, as an interest group. Nevertheless, serious questions of strategy are raised by those developments which will sooner or later have to be faced and

which are bound to lead into a more general reconsideration of the relation between the Jewish community and American society as a whole. And one dimension of the uneasiness has to do with what being an American Jew means to American Jews. Over the past decade, most American Jews have worked out for themselves, in one way or another, what Israel means for them. Despite the necessary preoccupation of the American-Jewish community with the security of Israel, most American Jews feel that while Israel is an essential part of their Jewish identity, it is not the whole or even a sufficient part. Just as being Israeli is important to being Jewish in Israel, so being American has somehow been important to being Jewish in America. The uncertainty of the Jews in America today coincides with their highest point of preoccupation with the security of Israel. It is precisely at this point that it becomes critical to develop a clearer consciousness of American-Jewish identity, of the relationship between being Jewish and being American.

Perhaps American Jews never fully understood the nature of that relationship, and probably they miscalculated it. It is not that the Jews have achieved a tripartite power status in America. They have not. It is not that they have overcome their marginal status in America. They have not. It is not that they are loved by Americans. They are not. It is not that the possibility of anti-Semitism has been rooted out in America. It has not been. It is not because America has provided a shining paradise of social justice or beauty. It has not. Nor is it just that America has provided a safe and free haven for many Jews, which it has. Most significantly, America has provided the locus and the vision of a world society which is consonant with Jewish existence, with universal Jewish values, with Jewish historical experience. It provided a vision of a society which can be open to change without being certain of its destination—open to history, open to both the past and the future. This is a Jewish vision. If a common denominator of Jewish identity is an identification with Jewish history, then it necessarily entails a certain Jewish stance toward history itself, toward being active in history and toward history being actionable. Arthur Cohen once posed a fundamental *Jewish* question: "How does my faith enable me to survive not *in spite* of history but *in and through* history?" America may have provided Jews an opportunity to take such a stance, to be active *in* history, and to help shape a human society in which history is actionable, that is, an *open* society struggling toward social justice. But the Jewish community can only seize that opportunity if it casts off the various forms of self-destructive innocence in which it has been caught and which are so deadly to its identity, to its meaning, and indeed to its very existence.